

INTERPRETING PAUL TILlich'S CONCEPTION OF RELIGION

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Abstract

The present paper is a modest attempt to study the concept of religion, a theme central to Paul Tillich's (1886-1965) many scholarly writings. Man's religiosity is largely understood by the religions of the world, especially those of the Semitic heritage, with reference to God, supposedly a supernatural being considered to be the creator and sustainer of the universe. Faith accordingly is defined as belief, testified by the sacred scriptures, in such a God. It is apparent that religiosity here derives its meaning and vitality from the relation man forges with God. Man is a being separated from God, and he becomes 'religious' only when he enters the religious arena of life and participates in religious activities. The problem with such an understanding of religiosity is that it harbors an inherent tendency to view life as divided between 'the sacred and secular', 'the holy and mundane'. The importance of Paul Tillich must be situated precisely at this juncture in overcoming this dichotomy. It is the one and the same man who is both

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religious and secular and hence there cannot be a division in his life as a totality. Tillich's unique position lies in going beyond these two opposing forces, by speaking of man's fundamental quest for being and meaning in terms of the ultimate concern.

INTRODUCTION

The question of Religion, God and Faith are matters of great philosophical and religious interest, despite there being no universal consensus on their definition and truth. It cannot be denied that they play an important role in man's life and his community. There is no society known to us, however primitive or technologically sophisticated, without a semblance of a religion, a sense of transcendence and a certain response to it. In the Judeo-Christian religious heritage, man relates himself to God as a subject would relate to an object. The focus in the relation is the almighty God who is said to demand reverence from man. Tillich, though hailing from the same Semitic religion, deviates from such traditional understanding, and explains man's religiosity in terms of man's 'ultimate concern'. He shifts the emphasis from theo-centrism to anthropocentrism and claims that religiosity can be properly understood only in the context of 'who man is'. Deeply influenced by Heidegger, Tillich conceives of man as a being circumscribed by space and time (*Dasein*). Hence man's religiosity must take into account his essential predicament. He goes beyond the traditional dichotomies, highlighting man's fundamental quest for being and meaning. What is of ultimate importance to man is that he acknowledges the truth that he is a finite being, who, nevertheless, has the courage to ask the question of his finitude. The question of the being of man is therefore of primary concern for Tillich. In asking the question of his finitude, man is said to discover the *ultimate concern*, or God, the ground of his finite being. For Tillich, the man who is truly concerned about the question of his being, is 'the' religious man – be he a priest, a scientist, a worker, or even an atheist. Therefore Tillich understands religion in terms of man's commitment to the ultimate concern, and not as something organized into an institution with its belief systems, intricate rituals and ethical codices.

What Tillich wants to assert, through his philosophy of ultimate concern, is that man's religiosity cannot be understood, if it is looked upon merely as an activity to which man can choose or choose not to attend. It is rather something given to man *qua* man. Religiosity is not a phase in the evolutionary development of human civilization as advocated by some social scientist, engaged in the study of religion. It is not what is imposed upon man from outside, but what comes from within. This line of Tillich's argument stands out, even if we were to take a historical perspective of the development of religious consciousness in man. Before the so called 'religions' of the world of the world were 'created', it is necessary that we ask the question: what preceded it? This opens up the possibility of looking at human religiosity as an integral part of the structure of human existence that demands an in-depth understanding. Religions come into being as the manifestation of a universal nature of man's being, and they are meant to give form to the religiousness of man. Such an analysis show that, before the conception of 'God', religious laws, rituals, sacraments and the sacred books were created and documented by priests, poets, philosophers and theologians, man was religious. And this religiosity, Tillich says, is man's concern about the question of his being and meaning. Being religious is basically a quest for knowing who one is and what one must be. In this sense man has always been religious, and will always be so, because he cannot ignore the question of his being and meaning as long as he is man. Against this backdrop of human religiosity, the attention of this paper is focused on illuminating the different dimensions of Tillich's philosophy of religion understood in terms of man's ultimate concern.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology Tillich employs to explicate the twofold sense of the ultimate concern is of fundamental importance, if we are to rightly understand the subsequent reflections of Tillich on ultimate concern. Tillich may be said to belong to the Platonic-Augustinian tradition in philosophy. This tradition believes that man discovers himself as he discovers God. In other words, man finds God, the ultimate, within himself as the ground of his being. This is the ontological approach in philosophy of religion. God here is treated as the ontological foundation of human existence and, indeed, of all limited existence of the finite beings. God is not reached as the conclusion of an inference, rather it is an immediate awareness of oneself as centered and anchored in the being of God (Tillich, 1959). The classical Christian expression of this approach

is found in Augustine, though its metaphysical moorings are in Platonic philosophy. Man discovers the answer to the problem of God's being in the nature of truth – truth is the presupposition of any statement of truth (Augustine, 1907). Even so, God is the presupposition of any question about God. But that God is encountered by man as the ground of his being and meaning.

As opposed to the ontological approach of immediate religious certainty, there is the alternate cosmological approach to philosophy of religion. This approach can be traced to Aristotle's philosophy, especially the doctrine of causation, which was later on adopted by Thomas Aquinas for his Judeo-Christian theory of creation. Here, God is treated as the transcendent first cause, the uncaused cause, the creator of the cosmos. God in it is a being 'out-there' (Tillich, 1959). This transcendent God is reached as the object of an inference. He is reached by a long and arduous syllogistic reasoning. The movement of reasoning is from the known cosmos to its unknown creator. Man is outside the *primum esse* and *primum veritas*, and so the human mind cannot directly reach God. But 'the heavens declare his glory', and reason demonstrate his existence and attributes. God therefore has to be reached either mediately by reasoning or by faith through authority. The intellect is moved by the will through authority, in the latter case, to accept what lies beyond it. Tillich fears that such Thomistic understanding to be partly responsible for the degeneration of the term 'faith' as mere belief with a low degree of evidence. He also believes that such an approach tends to destroy the nature of God, for God ceases to be Being-itself, and becomes a particular being like any other finite being of the created other.

Tillich therefore endorses wholeheartedly the ontological approach as the only proper way to our understanding of God, the ultimate concern. Neither God nor faith can be properly understood, if we adopt any method other than ontological. It is the immediate ontological awareness of the unconditioned that makes the act of faith itself possible, the state of being ultimately concerned (Tillich, 1959). To Tillich, unlike the many theologians, the awareness does not involve any risk, certainty is inbuilt into it. Faith, however, involves a different type of risk – it is a risk based on the fact that, for Tillich, the unconditional becomes an ultimate concern to man, only to the extent that it appears in a concrete embodiment (Tillich, 1959). Faith brings together, paradoxically, as it were, the ontological certainty of the unconditioned with the uncertainty of

the finite and the concrete embodiment. The latter clearly is drawn from the finite segment of our experienced world. Faith is not to be understood as belief (in something, much less, a dogma), which has a higher or lower degree of probability. It by no means represents the act of accepting assertions about God, man and world, which cannot be fully verified, but accepted on the authority of either the scriptures or the Church. Rather faith is, for Tillich, the act of accepting something concrete as a symbol of the ultimate, the ground of man's being, and it may involve the risk of the concrete claiming to be the ultimate itself. This indeed is the shipwreck of faith itself.

FAITH AND GOD

The concept of the ultimate concern, then suggests two aspects. First of all it is an act, a concern, an attitude of one's subjectivity. In this sense it stands for the ultimacy of all concerns. Secondly, it is the object towards which one's subjectivity is directed. In this sense, it stands for the ultimate, which at once God, or Being-itself. Ultimate concern, as an attitude, is not just any concern that man exhibits every now and then in the material and psychological satisfaction of his immediate needs. Such concerns, however important for survival at the individual and social level, are only preliminary concerns of human existence. The ultimate concern, on the other hand, is of ultimate importance in as much as it refers to the fulfillment of the being of man (Tillich, 1965). The being of man is structurally intentional to the Being-as-such. To a Christian philosopher that Tillich is, Being-as-such is of the nature of love. Hence, viewed as an attitude, the ultimate concern is the abstract version of the great Judeo-Christian imperative of 'love God with your whole heart, mind and soul', to Tillich. The ultimate concern as the object of faith, on the other hand, is the Being-itself, the ontological ground of human existence. There is an inextricable bond between the two senses of ultimate concern.

Tillich identifies two elements in faith. Firstly, there is the unconditional, or the infinite element, serving as the object of faith. Secondly, there is the conditioned, or the contingent element, serving as the symbol for divine 'incarnation'. The former is the universal element implicit in all acts of faith, irrespective of its physical or cultural expressions (Tillich, 1959). All these particular expressions of the act of faith participate in the universal element of the unconditionality. Faith is the absolute and the total concern for this infinite element. This is the

formal element of what constitutes faith. The latter is the finite particular drawn from the contingent segment of the world of our day-to-day experience. This is because of the fact that, though faith is the participation in the eternal, the medium, or the 'sacrament' through which it is experienced varies enormously. This finite content of faith is equally important for the man of faith, as it is in, and through, it that he experiences the ultimate concern (Tillich, 1957). Tillich warns us that we should not confuse between the content and the content, much less the content with the concept. Tillich, by way of this distinction, seems to be suggesting that faith is essentially the concern for the ultimate, whereas the medium through which this concern is expressed, significant though, is secondary in importance both ontologically and conceptually (Tillich, 1957). This distinction of faith in Tillich is roughly parallel to Kant's explanation of morality, where he draws an absolute distinction between the unconditional character of the moral imperative and the innumerable different contents the imperative can have (Kant, 2005). Tillich believes that the conflicts of religions can be better understood, and also solved, to an extent, if we first clearly comprehend such a concept of faith. The concrete content of faith must be taken as only the symbol or 'bearer of the holy', whereas the holy itself is the universal content. In the same spirit, we have to understand Tillich's assertion that 'God' is the symbol of God. Faith becomes both idolatrous, and even dangerous, if the symbols usurp the rightful place of the holy, the symbolized.

The true intentional object of faith is God, religiously speaking, and Being-itself, speaking philosophically. Tillich uses adjectives like 'unconditional', 'infinite', 'ultimate', to designate this ultimate concern of the act of faith. Unlike the finite concerns which are finite, conditional, partial and temporal, the true object of faith is eternal and total. Hence it is clear from Tillich's criterion of true ultimacy that he associates particularity with finitude, and universality with the infinitude, and that which is finite cannot be truly ultimate (Tillich, 1965). It now follows that everything, that can be a particular object of awareness and pursuit by an individual, is disqualified from being the true object of faith. Therefore the truly ultimate, it has been known by the religious man, everywhere, cannot be specified as far as our ordinary knowledge and ordinary language is concerned. Yet, a student of philosophy has to probe into seeking meaning even in the concept of incomprehensibility. As a philosopher, Tillich maintains that God, beyond all characterization of knowledge and language, must be Being-itself, the ground for there being

anything at all, and not nothing. It is thus obvious that Tillich uses the phrase ‘ultimate concern’ rather ambiguously. It can mean either the subjective attitude or the objective content. As a psychological attitude it is an act of faith, on the part of the believing individual. But, at the same time, ontologically it refers to the reality of God, or being-itself. What are we to make of the twofold aspects and more importantly, of the shift from psychology to ontology in Tillich’s thought? Has Tillich fallen a victim to the category mistake? Or, is it the case that, for Tillich, human psychology is inextricably linked with divine ontology? If so, we may have to throw some light on the close link between the two in the philosophy of Tillich.

Tillich resolves the ambiguity by identifying the two aspects of the ultimate concern. By doing this, Tillich is not making the ridiculous claim that human beings are infinite. He rather suggests that, though man is finite, ultimacy and unconditionality are integral part of the conceptual apparatus of human mind, which enables man to transcend finitude and also be ultimately concerned. Man’s transcendence here is of the form of participation of the human mind in the ground of its being (Tillich, 1965). God, as man’s ultimate concern, is not so radically ‘the other’, an object, that man may know or fail to know, but a subjectivity in which man participates by the very fact of his existence. God is already present to us as the ground of our being. For man to be ultimately concerned about God is at once a self-discovery in as much as man’s being is rooted in the being-itself, although it transcends him infinitely. It is the discovery of his ‘identity’ with the ground of his being. In this way, the cleavage between the subject and the object of faith, in the opinion of Tillich, may be said to be overcome by way rooting the human subjectivity in God’s own maximum subjectivity (Tillich, 1957). What Tillich has philosophically formulated is an experience of the mystics across the religious cultures. However, the identity and difference between the two aspects of the ultimate concern is liable to be mistaken, even when one proceeds on the right premises. Alston’s conclusion is a clear point in this regard. He questions aloud how Tillich can assert that the (psychological) ultimate concern must be a concern directed to what is (ontologically) ultimate. He thinks that Tillich plays with words, and uses the verbal similarity to assert the identity (Alston, 1961). Alston’s assessment here in this case may not be correct because he has overlooked an important feature. Tillich does accept the possibility of the psychological ultimate concern to have anything for its object. But if the object is not truly ultimate, or ultimate in itself, then, Tillich believes, the act is

misplaced. Faith can be 'idolatrous', in the sense that the finite has put on the garb of the ultimate. On the contrary, true faith is only where the act of faith is directed towards the infinite, the ultimate. Only in this sense, the act of faith and the object of faith invariably go together. In true faith both must coalesce as the ultimate. In this way, the ultimate act of faith and the ultimate of the act of faith cannot be understood without reference to each other; they cannot be seen in isolation.

ONTOLOGY AND RATIONALITY

The dual senses of the ultimate concern give rise to some problems from the perspective of ontology and rationality. This may be seen as necessitated, in as much as the subjective sense of ultimate concern is closely associated with the problem of being, even as the objective sense is likewise associated with the attitude of man, a rational being. A problem that engages the attention of a student of philosophy is the following – if the focus in the discussion of the ultimate concern is ontology, that is, the overcoming of the subject-object cleavage in the being of God, then it may suggest an identity of the humanity with the divinity (Tillich, 1957). This militates against the dualism of the Semitic religions, specially the radical separation of the two orders of reality, namely, the creator and creature. If, on the contrary, the focus is on the attitude itself, the two orders of reality can be equally argued for. However, one confronts philosophical problems in both cases. Tillich will have to clarify the meaning of 'ontological grounding' at some length. Secondly, one is also confronted with the possibility of explaining faith as an autonomous function of the human mind with any objective content, not necessarily the infinite, at any rate. Nay, more, it can be so autonomous without an objective content at all. Such a reasoning could lead one to do away with God, in the final analysis. It is not the case that first there is a being called God with whom man is ultimately concerned. It is rather the case that whatever concerns man can offer itself as the ultimate, or his God (Tillich, 1968). We can therefore either define God in terms of faith as a concern conceived as the ultimate. Or, conversely, we can define faith in terms of God as a concern for the ultimate. Thus the dual senses of the ultimate concern can take one in the direction of either naturalism or supernaturalism (Hick, 2000). How does Tillich explain these two diametrically opposite tendencies in his philosophy? The answer to this vexed question must be attempted from the combined perspective of ontology and rationality.

For Tillich, God is the answer to the question implied in man's finitude. The finite being of man itself is the question that demands an answer. This question is therefore not something which is thrust upon man from outside, therefore, something foreign. It is rather what wells up as a demand from within. It arises out of the structure of his being. Since Being constitutes everything, including man, an ontological analysis becomes imperative. Tillich speaks of four levels of ontological analysis: firstly, the basic ontological structure of the knower and the known; secondly, the polar 'elements', constituting that structure – individuality and participation, dynamics and forms, freedom and destiny; thirdly, the characteristics of being which the conditions of existence; and, finally, the categories of being and knowing – time, space, causality and substance. Through a careful analysis in his *Systematic Theology*, Tillich shows that the structure of human existence in all its levels manifests the character of finitude. Human being is an existence shot through and through with finitude. Finitude unites being with dialectical non-being. To be something is to be finite, to be circumscribed by space, time and causality. Yet, man, aware of this existential predicament, steeped in finitude, has the capacity to raise the question about his finitude. The fact that man can ask the question shows that man's reason, though finite, is not bound to its own finitude. In being aware of its limitations, it transcends itself and hence the close nexus between human ontology and rationality. It is this quality of man's rationality which at once makes faith possible. Hence faith is reason fulfilled, or 'the ecstasy' of reason, in the literal sense of the word. Thus only Being-itself or God, conceived as the ground of the finite being of man can be the proper and the true answer to the finitude asking the question about itself. Hence, Tillich contends that the concept of ultimate concern transcends both naturalism and supernaturalism, in as much as the limited human existence is the field of man's encounter with God (Tillich, 1968).

THE BEING-ITSELF

In the context of the foregone discussion it is important to note that Tillich strongly disagree with the traditional understanding, especially of the Scholastic mould, concerning the existence and nature of God. The traditional understanding has been largely cosmological in its approach, and is riddled with many a philosophical pitfall. Against this backdrop, if he contends that God cannot be said to exist, his statement is made not to substantiate either atheism or agnosticism, but to illumine the difficulties in our discourse on God (Tillich, 1968). The problem with our

knowledge of God, to Tillich, is one of God's infinitude. God's infinitude suggests that we cannot attribute anything finite to God, including existence. For every predication is at once a limitation of the unlimited. Spinoza had long back recognized the problems of predication in respect of the infinite. Tillich therefore thinks that the questions about the existence of God cannot be asked. Consequently, any answer to the question, be it the affirmation or the negation, would implicitly deny the nature of God. Tillich is, thus, in stating that 'God does not exist', is only restricting the meaning of the word 'existence' to the finite world, for the sake of safeguarding God's infinite nature (Tillich, 1968). When we speak of God as ultimate concern, Tillich observes that we must focus our attention on the ultimacy implicit in the concept. The theistic philosophers, notably, the medieval Scholastics, thought it necessary to associate God's ultimacy or infinitude with God's existence. In other words, since God is infinite, (further the notion of perfection was associated with infinitude), he *must* exist. Or, God's existence was argued for in order to account for the finite existence. However, Tillich marks a departure from these theistic philosophers. Tillich, too, holds that God is infinite, unconditional and limitless. But unlike the others, it is this insistence, which led Tillich to assert that we should not even say that God exists, since this would be a limiting statement; it would imply a contradiction in the nature of God, by driving a wedge between God's essential and existential being. It is important to note here that Tillich presupposes the meaning of existence to be 'as we exist' (existence as a characteristic of specific entities). Such a concept of existence can be called into question. It is precisely such questionable existence that Tillich rejects as incompatible with the concept of God as Being-itself. The Being-itself has the nature of *esse ipsum*, along with Augustine's *verum ipsum* and Kant's *bonum ipsum*.

Tillich rejects the cosmological method of arguing for the existence of God, as advanced by the Thomists. In the arguments for the existence of God, the world is given and God is sought. Some characteristics of the given world make possible the conclusion of 'God's existence'; God's existence is made to appear as necessary. God is derived from the world. Tillich holds that, if we derive God from the world, he cannot be that which transcends the world infinitely. It does violence to the infinite nature of God. He rather starts from the reality of God as being-itself. It is the ground of being, and so there are beings. The so called proofs for God's existence do not prove anything; God rather is the presupposition of anything existing at all. Nor can the nature of

God be explained literally, because it transcends the realm of the finite where literal language operates. One can however refer symbolically in all matters concerning the being-itself. This brings us to the problem of religious language in Tillich.

RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

Tillich asserts that our language of the ultimate concern can be only symbolic, since the truly ultimate must transcend the finite infinitely (Tillich, 1957). No finite reality can therefore ever express the ultimate directly and properly. God's nature is so transcendent that our grasp of it, however refined our language be, is hopelessly inadequate. Tillich's insight, here, is profoundly significant to man of religion everywhere. Its implications are however not always understood by religions that tend to absolutize their dogmas, despite the facile acceptance that God transcends both human experience and expression. Tillich succinctly says that God transcends his own name. Whatever we speak of God, therefore, must have only a symbolic meaning. To preserve the meaning of symbolism intact, and to prevent, at the same time, the whole argument of symbolism from moving in a vicious circle, Tillich acknowledges a direct and non-symbolic religious statement, namely, "God is Being-itself" (Kegly & Bretall, 1952, p.334). Beyond this, all discourses about God, (God is 'love', 'eternal', 'personal'; God is 'creator', 'savior'; names of God; etc.), is symbolic. A religious symbol represents the religious reality through its participative nature. But the segment of finite reality used as symbol, becomes a vehicle, however inadequate, for conveying a sense of the ultimacy. Tillich places great emphasis for the right understanding of the nature of symbols, precisely because the risk of faith originates from the certainty of the concrete accepted as a symbol. If religions are not careful, they are almost certain to elevate the symbols themselves to the status of what is symbolized, that is, the Beyond of the religious experience (Agera, 1997). Hence a true symbol is what "affirms" and "denies" simultaneously: Proper meaning is negated by what it points to, and, yet, a general meaning is affirmed, without making the assertion itself vacuous. The affirmation in a symbol is of the power of pointing beyond itself to that in which it participates. The negation is of the symbol itself taken from the finite segment of our finite experience. The symbol thus by its very nature should be fragile, for it has to make room for the symbolized, lending itself to be 'broken-up', or 'deconstructed'. 'Iconoclasm' is an integral part of symbolism. Another important point in the discussion of symbolism is the concept of participation. On the objective side, it is obvious that

every contingent being must be said to ‘participate’ in being-itself, or it would not exist. This ontological necessity built into the structure of the contingent beings at once suggests that every being is potentially a religious symbol. On the subjective side, it is pertinent to elaborate on the ‘religious situation’, where this potential becomes ‘alive’ in the life of man, making for the realization of the sacredness of human life, intentional to ultimate concern, through the intermediary of finite symbols.

Tillich’s theory of symbolism is philosophically rich. Yet, this is one theory that is repeatedly attacked by his critics. One of the grounds of this attack has been the contention that the theory of symbolic expression can also be developed in a purely naturalistic direction, by no means intended by Tillich. Tillich himself, in spite of his denial of the God of ‘theism’, has developed the theory in a theistic direction. For him, symbols derive their power from something beyond themselves, described by Tillich as ‘the unconditional’, ‘the infinite’, or simply as ‘Reality’. This obviously suggests some sort of a super-naturalistic nuance, which he could not do away with as a Christian philosopher. But, then, other philosophers, not necessarily subscribing to the Christian philosophies, have been quick to point out that it is not necessary to anchor symbols to some extra natural ‘power’ as Tillich does. It is plausible to explain symbols purely naturalistically, for instance, in terms of its cultural functions. J. H. Randall, paradoxically claiming to have been inspired by Tillich’s symbolic theory, has done precisely this. He has developed an equally tenable naturalistic explanation of religious symbols (Randall, 1958).

Tillich’s theory of religious symbols can be contrasted with another theistic interpretation of religious language, namely, the Scholastic doctrine of Analogy. The two theories however, are similar in the sense of containing within themselves both a positive and a negative content. It is the philosophical insight of both that human language cannot be used univocally, while speaking of the ultimate. On the other hand, the meaning of religious language cannot be just the rejection of literalism, it must assert something affirmative in order to be meaningful. This is the positive element in both. But, Tillich, if he were to accept the analogical theory of the Scholastics, would be cosmological, and not ontological in his approach. Tillich is however consistent in his approach, for he does not anchor his theory of religious language on the causal relation between the creator and the creature and the doctrine of analogy of being, subscribed to by the

Scholastics. Rather he is dependent on the ontology of being, while speaking of the positive assertion of symbolic language in terms of the power of symbols for pointing beyond themselves. Thus, while Tillich's theory of religious language has, to be sure, some similarity with the Scholastic analogical theory, it can by no means be reduced to the latter (Tillich, 1968). The difference between the two, perhaps, is in the conception of the nature of the referent of the language they adopt. While the Scholastics conceived of God as the creator, Tillich conceived of God as the ground of being. For him, being-itself serves as a brake against all forms of 'idolatry' in its manifestation through symbols, through which the individual relates himself to his ultimate concern. Tillich, thus, still keeps himself close to a type of philosophical reasoning that may be said to be ontological, in as much as his ultimate concern symbolized through a concrete object, is at once the ground of both being and meaning of human life.

CONCLUSION

Tillich's greatest contribution to philosophy of religion is his fresh thinking on the concept of religion itself. As though he were a master painter, he pictured religion on the broad canvas of the spirit of man. For this purpose he was prepared, despite his being a Christian philosopher and theologian, to relegate the term 'God' to the back-burner and make it a symbol. 'God' is a symbol, a name, for the ultimate concern of man. The focus of the traditional religions is turned away from the 'almightiness' and the 'absolute-in-itself' to the discovery of the unique authenticity of one's own individuality as a unique spirit, intentional to the ultimate concern. He therefore rejected the claims of all religions, Christianity included, to be the sole representative of the true ultimate. In this way, he fought against the 'holier-than-thou' attitude religions exhibit towards one another. In this sense, he proved to be an 'iconoclast', in more than one sense. After rejecting the 'in-itself' meaningfulness of traditional religions, he gave a new meaning to it based on the power of symbolic representation. Religions are the symbolic expressions of what has concerned man always – the questions of being and meaning. Tillich in this way urges for dialogue between religions but, at the same time, he goes a step further in speaking about reconciliation between culture and religion. He felt viscerally the need for breaking the dichotomy between the two.

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