Anxiety and Courage: The Philosophy and Theology of Paul Tillich[1]

Typographic convention: paragraphs in this font represent my comments. A **bold face** header in this font represents my summary of the quote to follow. The source quotes themselves are presented in this font.

Introduction

In the mid-twentieth century, Paul Tillich created a theology that integrates Christian thinking with elements not only of the Western philosophical tradition, but also with twentieth century developments in depth psychology and existential philosophy. It is this engagement with modern concerns, as much as his distinctive characterization of G-d as "the ground of being," that makes his ideas so compelling or challenging.

Tillich's thinking is almost entirely driven by the tension posed by the encounter of finite beings (humans) with the transcendent (G-d). The finite—our world—is rife with ambiguity, and our existence full of anxiety. This is the existentialist component of Tillich's thinking. His theology is based on his notion of G-d as the "ground of being."

We start by looking at Tillich's analysis of finite existence; then his notion of G-d. We will then consider how, in Tillich's philosophy, the gap between the finite and the transcendent is bridged: first, by considering how as finite beings we can even have any knowledge of G-d; then by pondering how that knowledge—revelation—provides us with the courage to persist in life despite its ambiguities and anxieties.

The Ambiguous Nature of the Finite

Tillich describes the finite world as existing between various pairs of poles: self/world, being/becoming, and freedom/destiny. In each of these three dimensions, each pole describes some essential aspect of the finite world.

The world itself exists between the poles of each dimension: *between* self and world, *between* being and becoming, *between* freedom and destiny. In other words, the world as it exists incorporates aspects of each opposite pole. We are both individuals *and* parts of a whole. We are beings *and yet* are in the process of becoming. We are both free *and* destined. Hence, the finite world is intrinsically ambiguous.

The first polarity is between self (individuals) and world (whole):

Being a self means being separated in some way from everything else, having everything else opposite one's self, being able to look at it and to act upon it. At the same time, however, this self is aware that it belongs to that at which it looks. The self is "in" it.

Every self has an environment in which it lives, and the ego-self has a world in which it lives. All beings have an environment which is their environment.

<div align="right">*Systematic Theology*, Vol 1., University of Chicago Press, 1951, p. 170</div>

Without its world the self would be an empty form. Self-consciousness would have no content, for every content, psychic as well as bodily, lies within the universe. There is no self-consciousness without world-consciousness, but the converse also is true. World-consciousness is possible only on the basis of a fully developed self-consciousness. Man must be completely separated from his world in order to look at it as a world. Otherwise he would remain in the bondage of mere environment. The interdependence of ego-self and world is the basic ontological structure and implies all the others.

<div align="right">*Systematic Theology*, Vol 1., p. 171</div>

The second polarity is between being (static form) and becoming (change):

The dynamic character of being implies the tendency of everything to transcend itself and to create new forms. At the same time everything tends to conserve its own form as the basis of its self-transcendence. It tends to unite identity and difference, rest and movement, conservation and change. Therefore, it is impossible to speak of being without also speaking of becoming. Becoming is just as genuine in the structure of being as is that which remains unchanged in the process of becoming. And, vice versa, becoming would be impossible if nothing were preserved in it as the measure of change.

…The growth of the individual is the most obvious example of self-transcendence based on self-conservation. It shows very clearly the simultaneous interdependence of the two poles. Inhibition of growth ultimately destroys the being which does not grow. Misguided growth destroys itself and that which transcends itself without self-conservation.

<div align="right">*Systematic Theology*, Vol 1., p. 181</div>

This polarity (being/becoming) is related to the question of selfhood by virtue of the fact that the self is always changing, not only physically but also cognitively, emotionally, etc.

The third polarity is freedom (free-will) vs. destiny (determinism):

Man is man because he has freedom, but he has freedom only in polar interdependence with destiny … Whenever freedom and necessity are set over against each other, necessity is understood in terms of mechanistic determinacy and freedom is thought of in terms of indeterministic contingency. Neither of these interpretations gasps the structure of being as it is experienced immediately in the one being who has the possibility of experiencing it because he is free, that is, in man. Man experiences the structure of the individual as the bearer of freedom within the larger structures to which the individual structure belongs. Destiny points to this situation in which man finds himself, facing the world to which, at the same time, he belongs.

The polarity between freedom and destiny is also closely related to the polarity of self vs. whole. The sense of freedom corresponds to one's sense of self, and the sense of being part of a whole suggests a more deterministic outlook.

Ambiguity as the Cause of Anxiety

Corresponding to the three types of ambiguity, there are three forms of existential anxiety that afflict humans simply by virtue of our existence in the finite world.

Corresponding to the ambiguity of being vs. becoming is the anxiety of non-being (the desire for survival, or the fear of death). This is closely related to the *conatus* in Spinoza, and to the will to power in Nietzsche. Tillich talks about the anxiety of non-being in terms of both time and space.

Time represents impermanence:

To be means to be present. But if the present is illusory, being is conquered by nonbeing. … It is impossible to call the present illusory, for it is only in the power of an experienced present that past and future and the movement from the one to the other can be measured. On the other hand, it is impossible to overlook the fact that time "swallows" what it has created, that the new becomes old and vanishes, and that creative evolution is accompanied in every movement by destructive disintegration. … As experienced in immediate self-awareness, time unites the anxiety of transitoriness with the courage of a self-affirming present. The melancholy awareness of the trend of being toward nonbeing, a theme which fills the literature of all nations, is most actual in the anticipation of one's own death. What is significant here is not the fear of death, that is, the moment of dying. It is anxiety about *having* to die which reveals the ontological character of time. … This anxiety is potentially present in every moment. It permeates the whole of man's being; it shapes soul and body and determines spiritual life …

Systematic Theology, Vol 1., p. 193-194

The need for space symbolizes human insecurity and finitude ("dust to dust"):

To have no definite and no final space means ultimate insecurity. To be finite is to be insecure. This is experienced in man's anxiety about tomorrow; it is expressed in anxious attempts to provide a secure space for himself, physically and socially. Every life-process has this character. The desire for security becomes dominant in special periods and in special social and psychological situations. Men create systems of security in order to protect their space. But they can only repress their anxiety; they cannot banish it, for this anxiety anticipates the final "spacelessness" which is implied in finitude.

On the other hand, man's anxiety about having to lose his space is balanced by the courage with which he affirms the present and, with it, space. Everything affirms the space which it has within the universe. As long as it lives, it successfully resists the anxiety of not-having-a-place. It courageously faces the occasions when not-having-a-place becomes an actual threat. It accepts its ontological insecurity and reaches a security in this acceptance. Yet it cannot escape the question how such courage is possible. How can a being which cannot be without space accept both preliminary and final spacelessness?

Systematic Theology, Vol 1., p. 195

In these two passages (above) about the anxiety of non-being, Tillich hints at the role of courage in facing the existential anxieties. We will take this up in more detail later.

The ambiguity of self vs. world produces an anxiety of aloneness, or the converse anxiety of being swallowed up, of losing one's identity, losing one's selfhood:

Finite individualization produces a dynamic tension with finite participation; the break of their unity is a possibility. Self-relatedness produces the threat of a loneliness in which world and communion are lost. On the other hand, being in the world and participating in it produces the threat of a complete collectivization, a loss of individuality and subjectivity where by the self loses its self-relatedness and is transformed into a mere part of an embracing whole. Man as finite is anxiously aware of this twofold threat. Anxiously he experiences the trend from possible loneliness to collectivity and from possible collectivity to loneliness. He oscillates anxiously between individualization and participation, aware of the fact that he ceases to be if one of the poles is lost, for the loss of either pole means the loss of both.

Systematic Theology, Vol 1., p. 199

The ambiguity of freedom vs. destiny creates an anxiety of meaninglessness:

Man is threatened with the loss of freedom by the necessities implied in his destiny, and he is equally threatened with the loss of his destiny by the contingencies implied in his freedom. He is continually in danger of trying to preserve his freedom by arbitrarily defying his destiny and of trying to save his destiny by surrendering his freedom. He is embarrassed by the demand that he make decisions implied in his freedom, because he realizes that he lacks the complete cognitive and active unity with his destiny which should be the foundation of his decisions. And he is afraid of accepting his destiny without reservations, because he realizes that his decision will be partial, that he will accept only a part of his destiny … So he tries to save his freedom by arbitrariness, and then he is in danger of losing both his freedom and his destiny.

Systematic Theology, Vol 1., p. 200

To lose one's destiny is to lose the meaning of one's being. Destiny is not a meaningless fate. It is necessity united with meaning. The threat of possible meaninglessness is a social as well as an individual reality. There are periods in social life, as well as in personal life, during which the threat is especially acute. Our present situation is characterized by a profound and desperate feeling of meaninglessness. Individuals and groups have lost any faith they may have had in their destiny as well as any love of it. The question, "What for?" is cynically dismissed. Man's essential anxiety about the possible loss of his destiny has been transformed into an existential despair about destiny as such. Accordingly, freedom has been declared an absolute, separate from destiny (Sartre). But absolute freedom in a finite being becomes arbitrariness and falls under biological and psychological necessities. The loss of a meaningful destiny involves the loss of freedom also.

Systematic Theology, Vol 1., p. 201

In *The Courage To Be*, Tillich offers a somewhat different analysis, in which anxiety is a result not of ambiguity but of the threat of non-being. This is not necessarily contradictory: each of the three forms of ambiguity threatens a kind of non-being. However, in *The Courage To Be*, the three anxieties identified are that of *fate and death*,

that of *emptiness and meaninglessness,* and that of *guilt and condemnation.* The first two correspond to anxieties discussed in the *Systematic Theology*, but the anxiety of guilt seems to replace the anxiety of aloneness. We have already noted that the three ambiguities identified in the *Systematic Theology* are not independent of each other. In fact, Tillich does discuss the anxiety of aloneness in *The Courage To Be*, and he does discuss that anxiety of guilt in the *Systematic Theology*. The differences seem to me more in organization than in content.

G-d as the Ground of Being

G-d is that for which we have ultimate concern. However, "ultimate" and "concern" are in tension with each other—"ultimate" requires transcendence, while "concern" requires concreteness:

"G-d" is the answer to the question implied in man's finitude; he is the name for that which concerns man ultimately. This does not mean that first there is a being called G-d and then the demand that man should be ultimately concerned about him. It means that whatever concerns a man ultimately becomes god for him, and, conversely, it means that a man can be concerned ultimately only about that which is god for him. The phrase "being ultimately concerned" points to a tension in human experience. On the one hand, it is impossible to be concerned about something which cannot be encountered concretely, be it in the realm of reality or in the realm of imagination. Universals can become matters of ultimate concern only through their power of representing concrete experiences. The more concrete a thing is, the more the possible concern about it. The completely concrete being, the individual person, is the object of the most radical concern—the concern of love. On the other hand, ultimate concern must transcend every preliminary finite and concrete concern. It must transcend the whole realm of finitude in order to be the answer to the question implied in finitude. But in transcending the finite the religious concern loses the concreteness of a being-to-being relationship. It tends to become not only absolute but also abstract, provoking reactions from the concrete element. This is the inescapable inner tension in the idea of G-d.

Systematic Theology, Vol 1., p. 211

Tillich identifies three types of monotheism: monarchical, exclusive, and mystical. Monarchical monotheism, as he uses the term, is simply a hierarchical form of polytheism: there are many divine beings, but there is one at the top. In mystical monotheism as Tillich understands it, ultimacy swallows concreteness. Exclusive monotheism is the G-d of Israel, both absolute (exclusive, transcendent) and concrete (living, personal).

Tillich finds the tension between ultimacy and concreteness in the G-d of Israel unstable:

Like the G-d of mystical monotheism, the G-d of exclusive monotheism is in danger of losing the concrete element in the idea of G-d. His ultimacy and universality tend to swallow his character as a living G-d. The personal traits in his picture are removed as anthropomorphisms which contradict his ultimacy, and the historical traits of his character are forgotten as accidental factors which contradict his universality. He can be amalgamated with the G-d of mystical monotheism or with the transformation of this G-d

into the philosophical absolute. But one thing cannot happen. There can be no relapse into polytheism.

Systematic Theology, Vol 1., p. 227-228

This passage suggests a strange unfamiliarity with how G-d is perceived in the Jewish tradition, in which G-d as historical agent is a primary theme. He seems to be arguing more against Spinoza's concept of G-d than against the Rabbinic notion (even the mystical Rabbinic notion).

For Tillich, the problem is resolved through the Christian Trinity:

While mystical monotheism and its philosophical transformations are inclusive of everything finite because they are reached by elevation above it, exclusive monotheism excludes the finite against whose demonic claims it has protested. Nevertheless, exclusive monotheism needs an expression of the concrete element in man's ultimate concern. This posits the trinitarian problem.

Trinitarian monotheism is not a matter of the number three. It is a qualitative and not a quantitative characterization of G-d. It is an attempt to speak of the living G-d, the G-d in whom the ultimate and the concrete are united.

Systematic Theology, Vol 1., p. 228

Even the Trinity does not eliminate the tension (it just expresses it):

The tension in the idea of G-d is transformed into the fundamental philosophical question how being-itself, if taken in its absolute sense, can account for the relativities of reality. The power of being must transcend every being that participates in it … On the other hand, the power of being is the power of everything that is, in so far as it *is* … this tension, in the last analysis, is the expression of man's basic situation: man is finite, yet at the same time he transcends his finitude.

Systematic Theology, Vol 1., p. 231

At the other side of the spectrum there is an overly concrete notion of G-d as naturalistic, which detracts from the transcendent quality of G-d:

In its philosophical transformation the universalistic type of polytheism appears as monistic naturalism. *Deus sive natura* is an expression of the universalistic feeling for the all-pervading presence of the divine. But it is an expression in which the numinous character of the universalistic idea of G-d has been replaced by the secular character of the monistic idea of nature.

Systematic Theology, Vol 1., p. 231-232

Spinoza is not mentioned explicitly in this passage, but the phrase *deus sive natura* ("G-d, in other words, nature") seems to refer to Spinoza's use of this phrase in the Ethics. Tillich thus relegates Spinoza's G-d to the "concrete" side of the tension between ultimacy and concreteness. He appears to overlook Spinoza's distinction between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* ("naturing" nature and "natured" nature), only the latter being what we usually think of in English as "nature," i.e., concrete things.

G-d is not *a* being, but rather being-itself:

The being of G-d is being-itself. The being of G-d cannot be understood as the existence of a being alongside others or above others. If G-d is *a* being, he is subject to the categories of finitude, especially to space and substance. Even if he is called the "highest being" in the sense of the "most perfect" and the "most powerful" being, this situation is not changed. When applied to G-d, superlatives become diminutives.

Systematic Theology, Vol 1., p. 235

G-d is not the universal essence in all things, but rather their *ground*:

… it is as wrong to speak of G-d as the universal essence as it is to speak of him as existing. If G-d is understood as universal essence, as the form of all forms, he is identified with the unity and totality of finite potentialities; but he has ceased to be the power of the ground in all of them, and therefore he has ceased to transcend them … This is what pantheism means.

Systematic Theology, Vol 1., p. 236

G-d is not just a transcendent oneness. Rather, as the ground of being, he is the source of separation (sin) as well as of healing:

If we call G-d the "living G-d," we deny that he is a pure identity of being as being; and we also deny that there is a definite separation of being from being in him. We assert that he is the eternal process in which separation is posited and is overcome by reunion. In this sense, G-d lives.

Systematic Theology, Vol 1., p. 242

In his relation to humans, G-d must be thought of as an object. Yet this way of thinking of him must at the same time be denied:

Every relation in which G-d becomes an object to a subject, in knowledge or in action, must be affirmed and denied at the same time. It must be affirmed because man is a centered self to whom every relation involves an object. It must be denied because G-d can never become an object for man's knowledge or action.

… The unapproachable character of G-d, or the impossibility of having a relation with him in the proper sense of the word, is expressed in the word "holiness." G-d is essentially holy, and every relation with him involves the consciousness that it is paradoxical to be related to that which is holy. G-d cannot become an object of knowledge or a partner in action. If we speak, as we must, of the ego-thou relation between G-d and man, the thou embraces the ego and consequently the entire relation.

Systematic Theology, Vol 1., p. 271

So: more ambiguity—in fact, paradox. The mention of ego-thou seems to be a reference to Martin Buber, with whom Tillich corresponded.

How is Knowledge of G-d Possible?

Given the tension between the finite and the transcendent, how can we, as finite beings, know anything about G-d at all? The short answer is "revelation," but that just replaces one phrase ("knowledge of G-d") with another. The deeper answer, for Tillich, lies again in ambiguity: although our knowledge is finite, and hence we cannot ever *really* know G-d, nevertheless in recognizing this fact we transcend, to some extent, our limitations. By persisting in the desire to know G-d, we affirm a kind of courage.

Human reason is inadequate, but transcends itself in knowing it is inadequate:

The nature of finite reason is described in classical form by Nicolaus Cusanus and Immanuel Kant. The former speaks of the "learned ignorance," which acknowledges the finitude of man's cognitive reason and its inability to grasp its own infinite ground. But, in recognizing this situation, man is at the same time aware of the infinite which is present in everything finite, though infinitely transcending it. This presence of the inexhaustible ground in all beings is called by Cusanus the "coincidence of the opposites.: In spite of its finitude, reason is aware of its infinite depth. It cannot express it in terms of rational knowledge (ignorance), but the knowledge that this is impossible is real knowledge (learned). The finitude of reason does not like in the fact that it lacks perfection in grasping and shaping reality. Such imperfection is accidental to reason. Finitude is essential for reason, as it is for everything that participates in being. The structure of this finitude is described in the most profound and comprehensive way in Kant's "critiques."

Systematic Theology, Vol 1., p. 82

Knowledge is both union and separation:

Knowledge is a form of union. In every act of knowledge the knower and that which is known are united; the gap between subject and object is overcome. The subject "grasps" the object, adapts it to itself, and, at the same time, adapts itself to the object. But the union of knowledge is a peculiar one; it is a union through separation. Detachment is the condition of cognitive union. In order to know, one must "look": at a thing, and, in order to look at a thing, one must be "at a distance." Cognitive distance is the presupposition of cognitive union.

Systematic Theology, Vol 1., p. 94

Religious knowledge and scientific knowledge are different, independent domains:

Knowledge of revelation cannot interfere with ordinary knowledge. Likewise, ordinary knowledge cannot interfere with knowledge of revelation. There is no scientific theory which is more favorable to the truth of revelation than any other theory. It is disastrous for theology if theologians prefer one scientific view to others on theological grounds. And it was humiliating for theology when theologians were afraid of new theories for religious reasons, trying to resist them as long as possible, and finally giving in when resistance had become impossible.

Systematic Theology, Vol 1., p. 130

Human knowledge of G-d is intrinsically analogous or symbolic because our language is that of the finite world.

The knowledge of revelation, directly or indirectly, is knowledge of G-d, and therefore it is analogous or symbolic. The nature of this kind of knowing is dependent on the nature of the relation between G-d and the world and can be discussed only in the context of the doctrine of G-d …If the knowledge of revelation is called "analogous," this certainly refers to the classical doctrine of the *analogia entis* between the finite and the infinite. Without such an analogy nothing could be said about G-d. But the *analogia entis* is in no way able to create a natural theology. It is not a method of discovering truth about G-d; it is the form in which every knowledge of revelation must be expressed. In this sense *analogia entis*, like "religious symbol," points to the necessity of using material taken from finite reality in order to give content to the cognitive function in revelation. This necessity, however, does not diminish the cognitive value of revelatory knowledge. The phrase "only a symbol": should be avoided, because nonanalogous or nonsymbolic knowledge of G-d has less truth than analogous or symbolic knowledge. The use of finite materials in their ordinary sense for the knowledge of revelation destroys the meaning of revelation and deprives G-d of his divinity.

Systematic Theology, Vol 1., p. 131

We must use symbolic language when talking about G-d and revelation:

… the relation of the ground of revelation to those who receive revelation can be conceived only in personal categories; for that which is the ultimate concern of a person cannot be less than a person, although it can be and must be more than personality. Under these circumstances, the theologian must emphasize the symbolic character of all concepts which are used to describe the divine act of self-revelation, and he must try to use terms which indicate that their meaning is not categorical. "Ground" is such a term. It oscillates between cause and substance and transcends both of them. It indicates that the ground of revelation is neither a cause which keeps itself at a distance from the revelatory effect nor a substance which effuses itself into the effect, but rather the mystery which appears in revelation and which remains a mystery in its appearance.

Systematic Theology, Vol. 1, p. 156.

In Christianity, the ultimate example of the interplay between transcendent divinity and the concrete world is the notion of Jesus (a real person, hence concrete) as the Christ:

In accord with the circular character of systematic theology, the criterion of final revelation is derived from what Christianity considers to be the final revelation, the appearance of Jesus as the Christ. Theologians should not be afraid to admit this circle. It is not a shortcoming; rather it is the necessary expression of the existential character of theology. It provides a description of final revelation in two ways, first in terms of an abstract principle which is the criterion of every assumed or real revelation and, second, in terms of a concrete picture which mirrors the occurrence of the final revelation.

Systematic Theology, Vol. 1, p. 135.

Courage as a Response to Anxiety

To persist in the face of anxiety is courage:

Courage is self-affirmation "in spite of," that is in spite of that which tends to prevent the self from affirming itself.

The Courage To Be, Collins (Fountain Books), 1952, reprinted 1972, p. 41.

The anxiety of aloneness or of being swallowed is answered by the courage to be oneself as part of a whole:

… the self-affirmation of the self as an individual self always includes the affirmation of the power of being in which the self participates … Self-affirmation, if it is done in spite of the threat of non-being, is the courage to be. But it is not the courage to be as oneself, it is the "courage to be as a part".

The Courage To Be, p. 92.

Tillich spends a large part of The Courage To Be discussing various unbalanced forms of this type of courage: collectivism, democratic conformism, romantic individualism, and existential individualism. He analyzes each as a response to the anxiety either of aloneness or of being swallowed, and finds each insufficiently responsive to the ambiguity that underlies the anxiety.

The source of courage must transcend the anxieties:

[Courage] is the act of the individual self in taking the anxiety of non-being upon itself by affirming itself either as part of an embracing whole or in its individual selfhood. Courage always includes a risk, it is always threatened by non-being, whether the risk of losing oneself and becoming a thing within the whole of things or of losing one's world in an empty self-relatedness. Courage needs the power of being, a power transcending the non-being which is experienced in the anxiety of fate and death, which is present in the anxiety of emptiness and meaninglessness, which is effective in the anxiety of guilt and condemnation. The courage which takes this threefold anxiety into itself must be rooted in a power of being that is greater than the power of oneself and the power of one's world.

The Courage To Be, p. 152.

Experiencing G-d is partly a mystical union and partly a personal encounter:

The pole of individualization expresses itself in the religious experience as a personal encounter with G-d. And the courage derived from it is the courage of confidence in the personal reality which is manifest in the religious experience. In contradistinction to the mystical union one can call this relation a personal communion with the source of courage. Although the two types are in contrast they do not exclude each other. For they are united by the polar interdependence of individualization and participation.

The Courage To Be, p. 156-157.

Tillich interprets the history of the Christian Church, and of religions generally, as a playing out of the ambiguities in our encounter with the Divine. Every attempt to institutionalize this encounter—as a human-made endeavor—falls short of reflecting its true nature, and eventually must be compensated by a new movement that emphasizes the opposite pole.

Faith is the experience of connection with the Ground of Being despite being separated from it:

Being-itself transcends every finite being infinitely; G-d in the divine-human encounter transcends man unconditionally. Faith bridges this infinite gap by accepting the fact that in spite of it the power of being is present, that he who is separated is accepted. Faith accepts "in spite of"; and out of the "in spite of" of faith the "in spite of" of courage is born. Faith is not a theoretical affirmation of something uncertain, it is the existential acceptance of something transcending ordinary experience. Faith is not an opinion but a state. It is the state of being grasped by the power of being which transcends everything that is and in which everything that is participates. He who is grasped by this power is able to affirm himself because he knows that he is affirmed by the power of being-itself. In this point mystical experience and personal encounter are identical. In both of them faith is the basis of the courage to be.

The Courage To Be, p. 167-168.

How can this state of faith can occur in the face of meaninglessness:

Is there a courage which can conquer the anxiety of meaninglessness and doubt? Or in other words, can the faith which accepts acceptance resist the power of non-being in its most radical forms? Can faith resist meaninglessness? Is there a kind of faith which can exist together with doubt and meaninglessness? … How is the courage to be possible if all the ways to create it are barred by the experience of their ultimate insufficiency? If life is as meaningless as death, if guilt is as questionable as perfection, if being is no more meaningful than non-being, on what can one base the courage to be?

The Courage To Be, p. 169.

Absolute faith conquers meaninglessness by asserting itself despite meaninglessness:

The faith which makes the courage of despair possible is the acceptance of the power of being, even in the grip of non-being. Even in the despair about meaning being affirms itself through us. The act of accepting meaninglessness is in itself a meaningful act. It is an act of faith. We have seen that he who has the courage to affirm his being in spite of fate and guilt has not removed them. He remains threatened and hit by them. But he accepts his acceptance by the power of being-itself in which he participates and which gives him the courage to take the anxieties of fate and guilt upon himself. The same is true of doubt and meaninglessness. The faith which creates the courage to take them into itself has no special content. It is simply faith, undirected, absolute. It is undefinable, since everything defined is dissolved by doubt and meaninglessness.

The Courage To Be, p. 171.

Absolute faith, by asserting itself "despite" doubt, includes that element of doubt:

This faith transcends both the mystical experience and the divine-human encounter. The mystical experience seems to be near to absolute faith but it is not. Absolute faith includes an element of skepticism which one cannot find in the mystical experience.

The Courage To Be, p. 172.

The notion of a faith that includes its own doubt leads Tillich to offer an understanding of G-d beyond theism.

Theism in all its forms is transcended in the experience we have called absolute faith. It is the accepting of the acceptance without somebody or something that accepts. It is the power of being-itself that accepts and gives the courage to be.

The Courage To Be, p. 179.

The G-d above the G-d of theism is present, although hidden, in every divine-human encounter.

The Courage To Be, p. 180.

The courage to be which is rooted in the experience of the G-d above the G-d of theism unites and transcends the courage to be as a part and the courage to be as oneself.

The Courage To Be, p. 181.

My favorite sentence of all of the Tillich that I've read is the final sentence of *The Courage To Be:*

The courage to be is rooted in the G-d who appears when G-d has disappeared in the anxiety of doubt.

The Courage To Be, p. 183.