

KANT'S TRANSCENDENTALISM AND TILlich's ONTOLOGICAL THEOLOGY

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Abstract

The article discusses Paul Tillich's ontology against the background of Kant's transcendental philosophy, and attempts to show that Tillich criticizes Kant's critical demarcation of knowledge, on the one hand, and incorporates the categorial forms of Kant's transcendental philosophy into his ontology, on the other. When constructing the concept of ontology, Tillich uses Kant's categorial analysis and critique of metaphysics. Thus, Tillich's approach to Kant's epistemology is polemical and

requires a deeper analysis. Like Kant, Tillich raises the question of what it means to exist and how this existence relates to God. Although Kant's transcendental dialectic justifies the impossibility of proving God through intellectual operations, the mind can contemplate ultimate reality. For both thinkers, the main problem becomes the application of reason beyond its theoretical competence.

Keywords: Kant, Tillich, transcendental horizon, categories, ontology, finitude.

Kantov transcendentalizem in Tillichova ontološka teologija

Povzetek

Članek ontologijo Paula Tillicha obravnava na ozadju Kantove transcendentalne filozofije in skuša pokazati, da Tillich, na eni strani, kritizira Kantovo kritično razmejitev vednosti in, na drugi strani, vključuje kategorialne forme Kantove transcendentalne filozofije v svojo ontologijo. Ko vzpostavlja pojem ontologije, se Tillich poslužuje Kantove kategorialne analize in kritike metafizike. Tillichov pristop h Kantovi epistemologiji je potemtakem polemičen in zahteva poglobljeno analizo. Kakor Kant se tudi Tillich sprašuje o tem, kaj pomeni eksistirati in kako se takšna eksistenca nanaša na Boga. Čeprav Kantova transcendentalna dialektika spodbija možnost dokazovanja Boga s pomočjo intelektualne dejavnosti, dojemanje lahko kontemplira poslednjo resničnost. Za oba misleca postane poglavitni problem aplikacija uma onkraj njegove teoretske kompetence.

Ključne besede: Kant, Tillich, transcendentalni horizont, kategorije, ontologija, končnost.

Introduction: Kant's transcendental philosophy

Although the horizon of the philosophy of religion has expanded enormously in the 21st century, the relation between German idealism and theological tradition remains a fruitful field of research. Hence, in this article, we aim, focusing on a specific reading of Immanuel Kant—the occasion being the 300th anniversary of his birth—by Paul Tillich, in order to contribute to the discussion¹ of the indebtedness and/or creative revitalization of Kant in the settings of the particular (ontological) philosophy of religion.

In a 1960 lecture entitled “Philosophical Background of My Theology,” Tillich admits that he “got a lot” from Kant (Tillich 1989, 420). Palmquist (2019) has already scrupulously listed all of Tillich’s mentions of Kant, which is why we will concentrate in this article on certain specific aspects of this relation more in terms of a critical appropriation. Although Tillich constantly states that, for Kant, “epistemology precedes ontology” (Tillich 1971, I, 71), this means that for the philosophy of religion, the production of knowledge is primordial and complex, and cannot be dismissed by privileging any particular revelation or theological theme.² It is through this synthesis, then, that, as Palmquist notes, “Tillich’s theology can be regarded as one of the great theological affirmations of Kant’s philosophy of religion” (Palmquist 2019, 85).

Kant’s transcendental horizon³ is a serious challenge to any metaphysics of God. However, contrary to the most common way of interpreting Kant, whereby he is portrayed as seeking to destroy Christianity and all other historical faiths, Palmquist reads him as encouraging us to avoid the idolatrous assumption that the God of historical religion is above, and therefore a higher concern than, God as Ultimate (Palmquist 2019, 78).

It is well known that Descartes replaces external authority with self-reference, emphasizing the intellectual and personal autonomy of the subject. Thus, the subject loses its dependence on metaphysical reality; the subject itself becomes the guarantor of the stability and order of the world.

1 Cf., e.g.: Boss 2017; Perrottet 2009; Palmquist 2019; Love 2012; Briedis 2006.

2 Cf. Palmquist 2019 and Crockett 2001.

3 Cf. Kant 1998.

Cartesian theology's concept of consciousness as the locus of the obvious, the place of truth, takes individuality to another level. This turn to the subject is "fundamental to modernity and emerges most clearly in Kant's transcendental philosophy" (Adams 1965, 202).

Plato gave the transcendent world ontological priority over the sensuous. This world is characterized by absoluteness; it is pure, true being without the impurities of non-being. Transcendent dualism remains in modern rationalist philosophy, but it is addressed by epistemological means by asking how one can move from sensory perception to the universal and necessary principles of the intellect: what is the relationship between intelligence and the senses?

8 The fundamental dogma of traditional metaphysics is a belief in the divine powers of the mind, that is, in the human ability to know transcendent entities. However, in his seminal work *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant moves the analysis to the cognitive sphere, drawing the limit of human cognitive powers, thereby revealing the finite specificity of human being and mind. When analyzing the limits of knowledge, Kant's theory is based on the assumption that human knowledge must be limited due to the determinations of human existence. This assumption also plays a fundamental role in Tillich's ontology,⁴ one of the most important parts of which is the reflection of Kant's transcendental horizon and the effort to cross this horizon in the name of ontology.

The first evidence of human finitude (see further) is sensibility, the attachment to sensory experience and its objects. Sensory experience provides the object of cognition and thus initiates the cognitive act. Another fundamental source of knowledge is the intellect, which shapes the given object based on a priori categories. Without their respective other, these correlations are meaningless—the intellect would work in vain and the sensibility would be "manifest" as total chaos (lacking the transcendental apperception).

The situation of traditional metaphysics, according to Kant, is precisely the identification of the empty activity of the intellect with meaningful talk about the noumenal realm:

4 Cf. Tillich 1957 and 1971.

Human reason has this peculiar fate that in one species of its knowledge it is burdened by questions which, as prescribed by the very nature of reason itself, it is not able to ignore, but which, as transcending all its powers, it is also not able to answer. (Kant 1998, Preface, A.)

This is the ontological register of Kant's philosophy, because it seems to be refusing to discuss the ontological status of the object of knowledge. Thus, the transcendental realm of traditional metaphysics is replaced by the Kantian transcendental horizon, the content of which is, as it were, "between" the subject and the object—formed by the a priori properties of the first and presented in a certain way by the second. Unlike traditional metaphysics, the active nature of cognition is revealed here as opposed to passive receptivity. The transcendental object is already constructed by sensibility (thanks to a priori forms of intuition—space and time), and it is further processed and completed by the activity of the intellect. Sensibility gives form to the material of experience, intellect through categories. The levels of knowledge are connected by imagination, which actively produces the object, synthesizing sensory experience and intellectual activity. Yet, this active nature of cognition allows us to delve into the constitution of the subject or the epistemological order, and, as we will see, it is the latter that precedes the ontological order. The world does not appear as a structure absolutely external to the subject, but rather as fundamentally related to it and shaped by cognitive reflection. An opportunity opens up here, then, to talk about the "humanization" of the world and the humanized being itself.

As a critical thinker, Kant rejects the ontological procedure of proving God's existence by arguing that the perception of a supreme being is only a logical a priori knowledge of possibility. The a posteriori condition of knowledge of the concept as a reference to an existing object remains unsatisfied. In this way, the existence of an object is mistakenly identified with its concept. Kant emphasizes the process, by which intellectual categories form and schematize empirical information. According to Kant's modal thinking, existence is not a *real* predicate, so it cannot be verified through logical reasoning. A correlation of conceptual and empirical factors is necessary before declaring any existence. There is no straight path from the concept to the existence of what is conceptualized. These arguments, rejecting the ontological proof of God's

existence, unfold Kant's transcendental horizon in his discussion of the limits of human knowledge. Kant's critique of the proofs of God's existence is based on his prohibition of logical extension of the epistemological and metaphysical principles enshrined in his transcendental dialectic. In this sense, categories "are the internal constitution of the observer, so they cannot be transferred to the domain of the noumenon" (Morrison 1994, 87). A metaphysical error arises, when the principles of sensibility and intellectual knowledge are confused (the principles of sensibility are transferred to the domain of the intellect). Rather, the greatest metaphysical illusion arises from the hope that cognition can meaningfully transcend the limits of sensibility.

10 According to Kant, we cannot have any self-awareness or transcendental apperception without a consciousness of objects, which in turn requires the use of categories. These doctrines of traditional metaphysicians are illusions that arise from the attempt to apply the categories of cognition, in order to obtain information about objects beyond the horizon of the forms of intuition. Thus, Kant seeks to answer once and for all the question of how much the mind can know apart from experience. At the same time, this analysis highlights the contours of the place and ontology of faith, which do not fit into the plane of skeptical fideism alone.

Kant discussed the human situation in a merciless, illusion-busting theoretical reflection. By raising the epistemological question as the starting point of an honest philosophy—"It is precisely in knowing its limits that philosophy consists" (Kant 1998, B)—, Kant, according to Tillich, deepened the study of the human situation in general. His philosophy avoided the unverifiable, mystical depths of subjective existence, and yet, at the same time, it did not reduce the human being to the schemes of natural sciences. A careful analysis of the relationship between humans and the world (primarily cognitive) led Tillich to draw on Kant's ideas in his ontology. At first glance, it would seem that such a transfer is impermissible, since Kant's horizon of the pure subject is incompatible with speculative considerations. However, the fact that Kant replaced ontology with an epistemological problematic does not mean that one cannot talk about the positive contributions of his work in relation to later attempts by other thinkers to construct an ontology. Such thinkers include Tillich whose thought is best understood as a theological

response to the philosophy of Kant.⁵ However, let us first see what other philosophical influences might help us elucidate how Tillich came to utilize Kant's philosophy in a unique way.

The influence of Heidegger's hermeneutics of *Dasein* on Tillich's philosophy of religion

Tillich's early thought was doubtlessly influenced by Kant's critical philosophy.⁶ For the most part, the early Tillich's Kant is entirely formalistic and epistemological. However, step by step an innovative use of the critical method leads Tillich to a definition of what constitutes the *religious* function of human mind.⁷ The relationship between Tillich and Kant was firstly mediated by way of Tillich's appropriation of Rudolf Otto, and in particular the latter's Kantian examination of religious experience.⁸ However, for the young Tillich (*The System of the Sciences According to Objects and Methods* and "Philosophy of Religion")⁹ another influence was crucial in the appropriation of Kant: namely, Martin Heidegger.¹⁰

After Tillich's blending of transcendental, existential-hermeneutic, and theological intuitions, already in these early writings one can see the paradoxical, existential nature of his ontological yearnings, which would come to be given a fuller shape in his later systematic writings. Here, logos, as theoretical reason, is already seen as what gives meaning to the world and what allows us humans to have awareness (hermeneutic distancing) of *the place (Da-Sein)* in the world. Hence, it is the source of both unification and estrangement. The initial ontic participation in the world via Logos or theoretical reason constitutes the conditions of estrangement and yet also provides the conditions for the hope to overcome such estrangement.¹¹

5 Cf. Love 2012, 10.

6 Cf. Palmquist 2019. The fact that Tillich studied in Halle under Fritz Medicus who produced important studies on Kant was also important for Tillich's understanding of Kant.

7 Cf. Perrottet 2009.

8 Cf. Firestone 2009.

9 Cf. Tillich 1923 and 1969.

10 Cf. Heidegger 2008.

11 Cf. Love 2012, 12.

Heidegger saw his philosophy as a preparation for a new phase of anti-metaphysical thinking. According to him, the oblivion of Being in philosophy meant that being was considered the object of research (scientific or philosophical), and Non-Being, which allows being to appear, is not reflected upon. Rather, the concept of the world-opening Non-Being is here positive, not negative: Non-Being is what non-Being is as being. Such non-objectivity presupposes the affectional hiddenness of the Nothingness.

Heidegger's analysis of *Dasein's* existence rejects the oblivion of Being in traditional metaphysics. This human being (being-here) consists of the revelation and understanding of Being (one's own or other beings via the experience of *Mitsein*). A prerequisite for authentic selfhood is the understanding and acceptance of the world-opening power of Non-Being. Thus, for Heidegger, the unfolding of one's own being is existence, but *Dasein* is fundamentally related not only to itself—it is only in the world. *Dasein's* self-opening makes it possible to appear to other beings, to the world. Thus, *Dasein* exists by opening, but this opening is finite due to the radical finitude of man.

12 For Tillich, "Dasein is the place where the structures of Being discover themselves" (Tillich 1971, I, 170). This (after the systematic treatment of the question) leads to the conclusion that man can answer the ontological question, because he directly experiences the structure of Being. On the other hand, Heidegger's hermeneutics of facticity, the projection of *Dasein* towards death, for Tillich, presents the seriousness of the threat of non-being, which points to the general finitude, contingency of being: in the physical structure, in moral decisions, and in rational doubt, the fragility of ontic being is revealed.¹²

Tillich calls this experience the ultimate concern, which is the most important criterion of his philosophical theology. The ontic dimension, discussed by Heidegger, for Tillich signifies the relationship in the empirical dimension of reality, the world of objects, to which man opposes himself as a subject, and the ontic God appears as theistic, personal, supernatural. This realm of reality (and its experiential grasp) is founded on categories (time, space, substance, causality), which Tillich uses in the sense broader than the

12 Cf. Tillich 1956.

Kantian one,¹³ yet without distinguishing observational and intellectual forms and semantic precision. Structuring consciousness and discrete perception are at work here, as the dualism of knowledge and reality presupposes the correlation of empirical and non-empirical factors.

Heidegger further introduces the neologism *existentialia*, which refers to the ontological substitutes, the pre-categorical states of the ontic categories (“rules”) that form the cosmic order in Kant’s transcendental philosophy. Meaning is *Dasein’s existentialia*; it is not an attribute predicated on ontic being(s). Heidegger seeks to distinguish the *existentialia* from categories, and crucially asserts a kind of familiarity of the pre-conceptual state of *Dasein*—it is like a certain source for categories, operating in the ontic dimension of reality. This particular Heideggerian influence on Tillich consists in the analysis of *Dasein’s* power to shape Being, the specificity of the correlation of the world and the self, the hermeneutics of finitude, highlighting the difference between calculative and ontological reason, and thus raising the question of the meaning of Being anew.

In their own respective ways, Kant and Heidegger set new landmarks for the study of Being, looking for the origins of being not in the external experience of objects, but in the transcendental hermeneutic horizon, in the self-interpretation and self-understanding of the existing self. Tillich adopts this position by agreeing that human consciousness and self-awareness give order to the world as we know it. In turn, reflection of the world is possible only on the basis of phenomenological self-reflection, because, after all, this self-reflection experiences being by participating in its structures.

13

Tillich’s ontological question and the conditions of experience

In Tillich’s system, philosophical analysis is associated with the meaningful tasks of theology, where philosophy is subordinated to religion as form to substance, because “without a religious vision of the whole philosophy and culture would not exist at all” (Smith 1984, 245).

13 Cf. Palmquist 2019.

On the one hand, religion is fundamentally correlated with the philosophical-ontological expression of ultimate concern. Ultimate anxiety arises from the thematization of the dialectic of being and non-being, so “the reflection of religion must first of all be a reflection of the structure of Being” (Gilkey 1990, 23), because forms of consciousness participate in every experience and shape every thought, even religious.

14 On the other hand, the appeal to ultimacy is a necessary function of establishing reality as a meaningful whole. Tillich believes that a person experiences finitude as if “from the inside,” out of the phenomenology of subjectivity with the help of transcendental categories. In this case, Kant’s conditions of knowledge¹⁴ for Tillich become universal forms of finitude, which not only indicate the ontological structure, but also represent the meaning of being, the ways, in which the self perceives itself as the mixture of being and non-being, i.e., the unity of the entanglement of anxiety and courage, which raises the passionate question of God. According to Tillich, the ontological question is unavoidable even with a strict critical position, because knowledge is also an act of being, and the correlates of the process of knowledge (subject and object) also exist in some way, so they have a certain ontological status. The epistemological relation itself can be discussed in terms of the ontological status. Therefore, according to Tillich (1971), epistemology can (and must) be the first step to ontology, but in relation to the system, it is dependent on the latter. Epistemological analysis does not fully explain the situation; it does not reduce correlates, but describes certain characteristics of the situation (epistemological validity). In this sense, epistemology can provide further analysis that goes beyond its competence and enters the field of ontology. At the same time, the very possibility of epistemology is based on a certain a priori givenness, which is the primordial correlation of human being and the world “before” the reflection of cognitive powers. However, it is necessary to distinguish between epistemology and ontology, since it is their identification that formed the core of traditional metaphysics until Kant strictly separated them. Such separation does not presuppose the meaninglessness of

14 “The inscrutable wisdom through which we exist is not less worthy of veneration in respect to what it denies us than in respect to what it has granted.” (Kant 2015.)

any ontological enterprise, but only moves it “beyond” epistemology. Hence, Kant’s criticism of cognitive powers opens up the possibility for ontology, and even if Kant in a way represents the methodological tradition of the Western philosophy, according to Tillich, this can be reexamined in a manner that is productive for ontological theology:

Investigating the nature of reality itself means analyzing those structures, categories and concepts that are presupposed in the cognitive encounter with any sphere of reality [...] the question of the basic structures that make experience possible is always the same. This is a philosophical question. (Tillich 1971, I, 22.)

With this definition of philosophy, Tillich clearly states that the philosopher’s interest is in the analysis of the structure of reality or being, but of even more importance here is that the existence of such a structure makes the very experience possible. On the one hand, the conditions for the possibility of experience depend on certain properties of the objects of experience, which they must have, in order to be perceived. Only by being dependent on the structure of being can they be experienced. This idea, since the times of Parmenides, states that logos—grasping and shaping reality (subjective logos)—is possible, because reality itself is characterized by a certain structure of logos (objective logos). The job of the ontologist is to articulate this structure.¹⁵

Moreover, Tillich raises questions not only about the properties of experienced objects (that is, the properties, which make it possible to experience them), but also about the nature of the distinction between the experiencing subject and what is experienced: for experience to be possible, this distinction must be based on an ontological correlation between the self and its world. This ontological question is also formulated transcendently as a question about the conditions of experience. Certain properties of things make them experienceable, and these properties constitute the structure of being. Their feature is universality in terms of experience, and Tillich searches for the structure of being that makes cognition possible by examining what is common to all objects of experience (“common” not in the sense of a logical

15 Cf. Tillich 1952.

class or empirical similarity, but in the sense of dependence on a universal structure of being). In this respect, ontology is analytic: universality elevates some properties of reality above others and makes them the subject of an ontologist's study, which we will discuss later.

As can be seen, for Tillich, the object of philosophy is fundamental ontology. This emphasizes the uniqueness of philosophy, distinct as it is from any science as a methodology of the fragmentation of reality. The possibility of ontology is directed towards existence, towards *Dasein*. These are the existential foundations of ontology. Here, Tillich again draws on Heidegger's hermeneutics of *Dasein*.

16 While, for Kant, the starting point of philosophical thinking is epistemology, Heidegger links phenomenology and ontology. These are not two separate philosophical systems. Rather, according to Tillich, ontology is the object and content of the transcendental phenomenological method. For him, phenomenological ontology presupposes a hermeneutics of the existential structure of *Dasein* (and not the other way around), and Heidegger's thematization of understanding has epistemological priority over postulated or derived concepts and existential temporal subjectivity over Kant's transcendental subject.

The phenomenological method

Tillich finds the appropriate method for ontology in phenomenology, although he adapts it for the needs of ontological theology. After all, if philosophy in the form of theoretical knowledge about the world seeks that, which is universal and ultimate, in *Dasein*, then this differentiates it from specific sciences, focused as they are on a certain area of the world or *Dasein*. Rather, according to Tillich, it is precisely the merit of Kant's philosophy that it strives to connect every movement of the mind with the ultimate goal of man, to which all preliminary goals are subordinated, and seeks unity: the questions "What can I know?," "What must I do?," and "What can I expect?" are concentrated in the fourth: "What is a person?"¹⁶

16 Even Tillich's attempt to use the conception of Eros corresponds to Kant's attempt to use beauty as a bridge for theoretical and practical reason; cf. Love 2012.

In Tillich's philosophy, the phenomenological method does not relate research to separate entities or their spheres in a positive way, i.e., it does not postulate being (in the sense of an essential, highest metaphysical entity). What, then, is the specific object of philosophy, if the positive relationship with essences is left to science? Is this how philosophy discusses the Nothingness? What else can there be without nature, history, space, etc.? Recalling the German idiom "es gibt" ("there is"/"it gives"), something else is given in the midst of beings. Hence, following Heidegger, Tillich states that something is given that makes experience and understanding possible in terms of entities. We must understand being; we must be ready for actuality before any actual experience of actual entities. Such a priori foundations of understanding and direct experience constitute Tillich's phenomenology. Here, understanding is the ontological background of cognition. It is the unfolding of a single consciousness in which the cogito and its content are correlated. In this context, the basis of even Descartes's doubt is *verbum interius* (the inner word), a pre-reflective, concentrated experience of (a) some-thing. This non-verbality of the specific verbum is a state of obviousness, with words remaining in the realm of nominal copies.

17

Finite being

For Tillich, the structure of the mind is finite in essence, and not because of contingent errors. The question is: Can such a structure perform the movement of non-objective thinking? And, if so, how? The answer leads to the study of the center of individual existence: ontological anthropology. Hence, Tillich's answer to the critique of Kant's metaphysics is existential. First of all, "it delves into the correlation between 'subjective' rational processes (sensory experience, rational decisions) and the 'objective' structure of Being" (Gilkey 1990, 82).

The correlation of these poles is presupposed by any knowledge or action, where the noema coincides with the pragma. Since the time of Descartes, philosophy has raised the question of the reliability of this correlation: How can we know that thinking about reality provides knowledge of actuality itself? Tillich rejects the path of empirical argumentation that assumes such a

correlation, and instead claims a dynamic participation in the poles of the self-world correlation: we experience and can mark rational structures implicit in cognition. These categories become instruments for investigating the structure of Being itself, and their analysis shows the importance of the experience of finitude for ontology.

The structure of the objective world is known by directly perceiving the self that exists in it in relation to time and space through causality and substance. For Tillich, *Dasein* is “the analogue of the universal structure of Being” (Tillich 1971, I, 171). In what way is the self an essential element in the construction of the world? The self and the world together construct the reality that presupposes the objects of scientific cosmologies.

Tillich’s ontology

18 Philosophical analysis of finitude reveals the structure of finite being in general and the human situation in particular. Such an analysis is relevant to theology, because religious topics are of ultimate concern as questions concerning the dialectics between being and non-being. The basic ontological structure for Tillich is the correlation of the world and the self. This ontological category indicates that the correlation of experience and thinking with what is actually meant is the basis for any rationality, including ontological rationality. Although Tillich is an existentialist in the sense that the analysis of finiteness is applied to human beings, we see that, as a philosopher, he not only defends the possibility of ontology for the purposes of theology, but also asserts the logical priority of ontological categories over the schemes of sciences.

The world of objects and things is always connected to the experiencing self; it is not self-sufficient in its own existence. As such, the ontological analysis must turn to the self. “Beyond” the world projected by the self lies the secret of being, which we do not directly discover in the sciences. However, the structure of being is known to the self directly, by participating in that structure. The self is like an analogue of the universal structure of being. This is because the self has the power of reflection, the mind, or, as Tillich puts it, the spirit (1957), which consists of self-consciousness, self-transcendence, and world consciousness. These aspects of the self are fundamentally

interrelated. Without self-transcendence, there is no transcendence of the limited environment that makes world consciousness possible, that is to say, consciousness “looking at the world.” Hence, when looking at the world, the rational self gives order to the panorama of experience, the environment in the world, an orderly one. Tillich states that the power of negation is actualized, only when the self transcends its environment; only then is the consciousness of negative decisions and distinction possible: “if there were only being, there would be no world” (Tillich 1971, I, 187). Ontological categories, together with the scientific ones, are necessary to describe finite being. Although Tillich later combines the study of the structure of being with the question of the meaning of being (theology), ontology is an independent part of his systematic theology, which states, on the basis of philosophical analysis, that the self cannot be removed from the knowledge of reality.

Importantly, Tillich links the philosophical question of the structure of being with the theological question of meaning. The awareness of the meaning of finitude arises from the connection of human being with possible nothingness, but also with the infinite. Only in such a relationship can finitude experience itself. Otherwise, distance in relation to finite being would not be possible: self-transcendence, self-reflection, and negative decisions (“A is not B”). Rational decisions testify to human participation in the dialectic of being and non-being. Non-being is a positive, creative part of human being.

Ontology must demonstrate a shift in consciousness towards the ultimate. This is a necessary condition for making sense of reality prior to any rational and/or meaningful speech. Thus, Tillich’s philosophy of religion presupposes the reflection of being. Unlike Kant, for Tillich, metaphysics (which he calls ontology, because the name metaphysics has been compromised) is possible as a “science” that deals with the experienced, finite reality. The study of the structures of finite being is not only possible but necessary for philosophical theology. Without an original ontology, religiosity would be constrained. It must be a constant interpretation, where religiosity is organically grounded in the analysis of experience and the philosophical mind regains its depth. In Kant’s terms, the analysis of finitude reveals the antinomian nature of reality, which remains as such, until the experience of ultimate concern. Kant himself,

according to Tillich, affirms the possibility of getting out from this antinomian trap, for example:

That religion in which I must know in advance that something is a divine command in order to recognize it as my duty, is the revealed religion (or the one standing in need of a revelation); in contrast, that religion in which I must first know that something is my duty before I can accept it as a divine injunction is the natural religion. (Kant 2016, Book IV, Part 1.)

20 Precisely the ultimate concern as the unique experience provides the aspect of self-transcendence to human finitude, the power to actualize human potential, realizing the transition from “what he is” to “what he should be.” For Tillich, unlike the rationalist tradition, human capacities do not “come from man,” but rather flow through him from a primordial source and culminate in his creativity, actions, and ability (courage) to be. It is interesting that Tillich’s attempt to use Eros as the reunifying bridge between “is” and “ought to be” corresponds to Kant’s attempt to use beauty as the bridge for theoretical and practical reason in the third *Critique*.¹⁷

Finiteness and categories

Tillich also analyzed the specific invariable elements of experience, the so-called *categories* as listed by Kant. The study of categories determines the limits of the cognitive horizon in Kant’s transcendental philosophy, but for Tillich it is the basis for the analysis of the very structure of Being. Moreover, Kant’s reflection on transcendental philosophy allows (rather than forbids) him to talk about faith and the question of God. For Tillich, the question of God arises as a concern for one’s finite being—the ontological analysis of the categories of finitude is linked to the existential (and, by correlation, theological) analysis of the meaning of these categories for the finite being of man.

Moreover, for Tillich, the categories of being and knowledge, time, space, causality, and substance (these, according to Tillich, are the most

17 Cf. Love 2012, 12.

significant for theology, and their finite number is a matter for philosophy) are ontological and therefore present in every finitude. Tillich agrees with Kant that consciousness cannot experience reality other than in terms of categories. They are to be distinguished from logical forms, which are formally separated from the content of utterances, while categories determine the content: “they reveal their ontological character by uniting with themselves the negative and positive elements of being” (Tillich 1971, I, 191).

Systematic theology cannot avoid the reflection of the categories of experience when considering the question of ultimate reality, because in relation to the self (rather than the world) these categories combine theologically reflected fear and courage.¹⁸ These categories appear in a twofold relation to being and non-being. As forms of finitude, they combine positive and negative elements that unite concern with courage in the pursuit of meaning. Therefore, the analysis of this duality is essential to the theological formulation of the question of God.

Tillich's existential ontology also deals with the positive and negative elements of time. Positive time is a new creative process. At the same time, the “temporality” of time is expressed: the “no longer” of the past, the “not yet” of the future, and the nature of the present as a movable boundary make time illusory, manifesting the power of Non-Being in its very finitude. The present presupposes a space where “to be” means “to have space”: it is a physical location that extends the body into the world (as well as into social space). But this space does not obey the body; it is constantly lost, eventually losing the presence itself. In everyday situations, the individual affirms the present moment and its spatial fulfillment, but the nature of the constant flow of time and eventual loss of space returns anxiety as a concern with finitude.

The power of a cause is to make its effects real. This causality refers to the power of being and its opposition to non-being. On the one hand, the reality of effects depends on the cause, so causality refers to contingency, that is, the inability of beings to discover the basis of being in themselves. Therefore, the anxiety posed by the finitude and contingency calls for a courage whose origins cannot be traced to a chain of finite beings. Hence, considering Heidegger's

18 Cf. Tillich 1952.

facticity, it can be argued that causality equates necessity and contingency. The fact that a person is bound by causal relations makes his being unnecessary—finite. Substance refers to that, which grounds the constant change of visibility, the power of being over non-being. On the other hand, substance is nothing beyond the accidents, in which it is expressed, and the latter are constantly changing. This substance signals Non-Being.

Man's finitude is the only fulcrum for knowing being. The analytic of pure reason opens the door to an ontology of finitude. Hence, Kant does not abandon the knowledge of being, but radically limits it to the sphere of finite experience. Noumena also exist, but only in the sense that they participate in the existence of the phenomenon as something that is silenced, invisible, but nonetheless allows the phenomenon to manifest itself.

The question of the meaning of Being and authentic existence

22 The hermeneutics of finitude allows Tillich to supplement a rather abstract speculative ontology with the aspect of human concern. The courage to be (self-affirmation despite the threat of Non-Being) testifies to an authentic life, which is not simply won once and for all, but must rather be dynamically affirmed and reaffirmed, as, analogically speaking (*analogia entis* in a symbolic, not cognitive sense), Being constantly denies its negation—Non-Being. The reality of the threat of non-being is like a human microcosm of the dynamics of the divine. It is a constant actualization of the possibility of human self-transcendence. The possibility of ultimate concern (whose object is Non-Being) offers the possibility of self-transcendence “despite” the threat of Non-Being.

Hence, Tillich's humanism, while combining the modeling of Kant's active subject and Heidegger's finite being of *Dasein*, states that the purpose of life and culture is to actualize human spiritual potential (as witnessed by ultimate concern). However, ultimacy is by no means immanent to the subject; it seizes the subject itself, supplementing its ontic powers with the dimension of ontological depth.¹⁹ Such an ontological a priori is central

19 Cf. Tillich 1957 and 1971.

to Tillich's ontology and reflection on epistemology. It is the spiritual act, creativity of the mind that underpins human authenticity in relation to its depth that produces culture, including existential individuality and the universality of thought: these aspects can only be separated and dealt with by way of abstraction. Questions of meaning, by contrast, give the structures of thought an ontological dimension. Thus, spiritual acts include epistemology and metaphysics (for Tillich, ontology). This method corresponds to the dynamic life of the universe. Hence, while Kant's critical philosophy rejects the interpretation of *Dasein's* existence by constructing a world beyond the world (still interconnected by some mysterious causal relation), it lacks a dynamic logic that could connect universal categories with the concreteness of existential interest. Transcendental dialectics rationalizes what is essentially a testimony of spirituality, so it does not grasp the positive appearance of the meaning of being, because it rejects such a possibility as a flawed metaphysics. But according to Tillich's voluntarism, rational, negative talk (about God) is inadequate, because it involves the form of talk (language game), and not the reality. Tillich's "metalogue" unites rationality, which forms the power of the intellect, with irrationality, vitality, depth, and a sense of infinity, and opens up the ultimate content. It is a "philosophy of paradox, affirming the immanence of the transcendent" (Adams 1965, 155).

23

Such a concept of God is articulated by the limits of the *via negativa* tradition. In a way, this tradition draws a transcendental horizon, not one of understanding but of speaking: there can be no absolute negativity, according to Tillich, because, if there would be a perception beyond consciousness, we would not even be able to describe such a situation and would have no understanding of such a perception. Therefore, statements about God's inexpressibility and transcendence are reinterpreted not as a horizon of perception but as a revelation of God's radical otherness from what is seen.

Hence, despite the heavy influence of Kant's transcendentalism, this article argues for Tillich's originality, which consists of a philosophical-theological attempt to link subjective and objective truth, while interpreting Christianity as the ultimate answer to the existential question. In this sense, any critique of knowledge presupposes the question of philosophical anthropology, i.e.: "What is man?" This allows Tillich to complement the philosophical study of the structures

of being with the religious question of meaning, and to address the problems of transcendental subjectivity from an existential point of view. This transition from Kant's transcendental idealist approach to existential anthropology underlies Tillich's ontology. As such, it is based on and complements Kant's transcendental philosophy. What in Kant's philosophy is a limit, manifested in a radical doubt about the knowledge of noumena, is for Tillich an answer: the doubt overcomes itself, and the unacceptable becomes accepted.

Conclusions

24

Kant's critical philosophy successfully complements Tillich's analysis of the human situation. Kant does not limit himself to the analysis of immanent structures of consciousness, thus Kant's transcendental philosophy opens up the way to ontology. Epistemology, according to Tillich, can (and must) be the first step towards ontology. To study the nature of reality itself means to analyze those structures, categories, and concepts that are presupposed in the cognitive encounter with any sphere of reality. The ontological question is thus formulated as a question about the conditions of experience. Tillich transforms Kant's pure transcendental subject with the correlation of the self and the world. The analysis of this structure must be the first step towards an ontology. If the subject alone gives form to the formless experiential chaos, according to Tillich, the unity of the self-world correlation that underpins the opposition of subject and object is lost.

Considering the question of the meaning of being as a religious one, Tillich asserts transcendental philosophy on the basis of religious experience, and the latter shows that it is methodologically dependent on the methods of philosophy. These methods, for Tillich, are built on the phenomenological-ontological analysis of finiteness. In Tillich's ontological theology, a necessary condition for establishing reality as a meaningful whole is a religiously interested (passionate) appeal to ultimacy. Kant's transcendental philosophy, in turn, underpins the constitution of consciousness and/or the unity of reality. For Tillich, this is a crucial contribution of critical philosophy to the philosophy of religion. Religion is a relationship with ultimate reality, and without an experiential grasp of reality as a whole, such a question would be

meaningless. At the same time, without a relationship with ultimate reality, thinking would be meaningless, that is to say, it would be disconnected from being. It is the experience of ultimate reality (ultimate concern) that grounds the connection between thinking and being.

The ultimate reality manifests itself in both the structure of the mind and the depth of the unconditional imperative. However, according to Tillich, Kant's division of the spheres of reason retains a serious problem in the reduction of religiosity to the practical sphere. Agreeing with Kant on the limitations of cognitive powers and the depth opened up by the moral imperative, Tillich seeks to unify these areas in a single ontological mind that unites the various mental functions of human beings and perceives the depth of Being that sustains it. Tillich succinctly synthesizes Kant's pure and practical reason, arguing that the analysis of both is necessary for a full-fledged ontology and analysis of religiosity.

Although Kant introduces practical rationality into religion, such formal morality is ahistorical for Tillich—transcendental subjectivity presupposes universal faith, which has no place for personal, subjective elements of faith and its cultural correlates. Being significantly influenced by Kant, Tillich at the same time deconstructs idealistic philosophy, in order to understand the historicity, temporality, actuality, and self-transcendence of man, which means that man's transcendental openness to the transcendent is found in the ontological structure of the existing self.

25

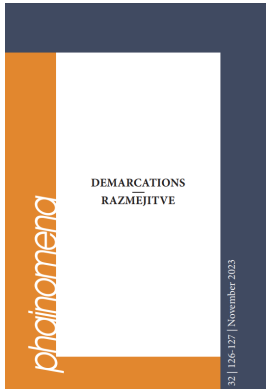
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phainomena

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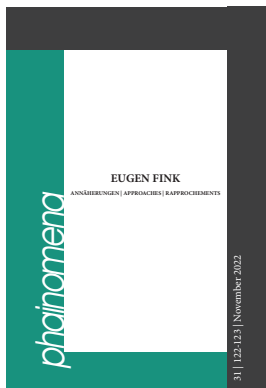
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