**Paul Tillich,** ***The Dynamics of Faith***

**Review notes on the concept of faith**

**Chapter I What Faith Is**

**Faith as a dynamic state of Ultimate Concern.**

dynamic vs. static

not vital, nor cultural concerns, but a concern which is ultimate:

these concerns can be elevated to the state of ultimacy.

e.g., nation, success, money, fame, power, pleasure.

UC promises total fulfillment and demands total submission.

**Faith as a centered act of the personality:** all elements of the personality participate: reason, will, emotions; conscious and unconscious ; ego and superego, etc.

If the UC is not in the center, then a distortion of the personality has occurred and a distortion of Faith (as will, as a belief arrived at by reasoning, as an emotional urge)

**The source of faith:** subjective and objective polarity involved: the subject is concerned about an object...

subjective certainty (about being ultimately concerned)

objective uncertainty (We cannot know if the concrete object is truly ultimate...

However, if the object is concrete, then we can and should know that it is limited, and therefore unable to deliver on its promise of total fulfillment.

Tillich is referring to the expression of UC here... doctrines, fixed ideas, abstractions such as the nation, being a hero, being the greatest, being well-loved by people, etc. But he is also referring to the object itself: if it is concrete, then it cannot be truly ultimate.

But, we have the ability to transcend finitude: to be aware of our relationship to something ultimate, or infinite, etc., as in the experiences of the mystics, the prophets, the rishis or seers of India, those in nirvana or in satori, etc.

**Faith and the dynamics of the holy:**

The holy can be destructive or creative.... divine or demonic

The holy is not just that which is morally right or pure... that is the distorted meaning, the limited meaning of holy... but the holy in its original meaning includes the possibility of both the demonic and the divine.

The holy: mysterious, fascinating, and shaking qualities of it.

To be in the presence of the holy is to be in the presence of all of these at once. The power and mystery of it over against our own personal finitude... our powerlessness, our insignificance, etc. (e.g., as expressed in the Hindu cosmology, or the great and mysterious Tao in the writings of Chinese Taoism, or the God that speaks to Moses and Job.)

**Faith and doubt:**

Doubt as a necessary element in faith as a dynamic state. Subjectively there is certainty, but the object of faith is uncertain.... for all expressions of ultimacy are necessarily limited by language and human inability to comprehend and express the infinite.

Risk involved in every UC

Risk entails courage to be... existential courage to affirm and live according to one’s UC in spite of the risk and doubt.

**Faith and community:**

the problem of UC requiring a language, a tradition, to be expressed in symbolic form of some kind.

But this means that a community must exist in which the language of symbols is meaningful.

Can a community continue to exist without a belief system, a credal or dogmatic statement of some kind to unify it?

But that would require silencing all doubt and criticism.

But when criticism is silenced, faith is reduced to a matter of blind belief in a set of statements.

If the critical element is maintained in UC, then the community is at risk, for its object of ultimate concern is then also an object of doubt.

This is the risk every community of faith must take, as every individual must take. The doubt involved in the state of being ultimately concerned is the same doubt for the individual as it is for the community.

**Chapter II What faith is not**

**1. intellectualistic distortion of the meaning of faith**

Faith is not an act of knowledge that has a low degree of evidence to support it, but is supported by religious authority... the doctrines, the officials, or the sacred texts.

The dimension of faith is not that of science.

Certainty in math and logic... in science ... and in faith...

In faith, certainty is “existential” (page 34).

“meaning that the whole existence of man is involved**... it is an existential problem of ‘to be or not to be’**... risk and courage to stake one’s life on an ultimate concern which may end up being demonic or destructive.

**2. voluntaristic distortion of faith**

where one wills to believe: either by the grace of god, as in Roman Catholicism (where God gives us the will to believe supernaturally, in spite of our doubts), or by an arbitrary willful determination to believe something. “No command to believe and no will to believe can create faith.” p. 38

**3. emotionalistic distortion of faith**

Schleiermacher: 19th century theologian: religion as the feeling of unconditional dependence.

“feeling” — implies “that faith is merely a matter of subjective emotions, without a content to be known and a demand to be obeyed.” p. 39

This is to distort faith by limiting it to the emotional function of the personality, to the disregard of the totality of functions... reason is set aside, and the will to obey ones UC is also of greatly reduced importance. Religion is reduced to a mere feeling.

Emotion participates in UC but it is not the source of faith.

The totality of the personality must be involved. No function can be eliminated or a distortion of faith arises.

UC “claims truth and commitment.” p. 40