THE COURAGE TO CREATE AS A NECESSARY MEANS TO BEING

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ABSTRACT

This study sets out to examine the relationship between Paul Tillich's courage to be and Rollo May's courage to create. It examines the concerns of the existentialists whose predicament will foreshadow the overarching problems in May's and Tillich's time. The study examines being, the negation of being, and anxiety as a connection in Tillich's and May's thought. It seeks to understand the human being at a point where theological, philosophical, and psychological realms converge. Based on May's description of the creative encounter, this thesis proposes that May's courage to create exemplifies Tillich's courage to be. Where a split has occurred between humankind's perception of itself and its world, this thesis offers that the courage to create expresses a reconciliation between the two which can help to quell the threats of nonbeing (anxiety) against one's self-affirmation. What this analysis finds is that during creative process, one affirms himself in such a way as to promote his fuller being both as an individual and as a part of a greater whole. This thesis examines self-affirmation by creative encounter and finds that this engagement shows a unitive relationship between one's self and one's world, as is
represented by the philosophical notion being-in-the-world. The thesis also examines the characteristics of the creative person which should provide other persons who replicate those tendencies to experience more meaningfully their world. The thesis offers that if one harnesses a creative attitude, he will find himself more engaged, more unified, more whole, more his true self, more human, and more capable of perceiving the meaningful.
It was with great luck (and then with great enthusiasm) that I stumbled upon, resting on an old friend's roommate's bookshelf, Paul Tillich's *The Courage to Be*. I had read *The Courage to Create* as a requirement for a senior seminar called “Transpersonal Psychology” during my undergraduate study at Virginia Tech, and when I picked up *The Courage to Be*, I was immediately taken in by the possible connections to be drawn between Tillich's being and May's creating. That class had been a wake-up call.

It was taught by Dr. Joseph Germana, our bald-headed, shades-wearing professor--a grandfather with Japanese symbols tattooed up his arm who drew elaborate color-chalk-drawings on the blackboards in our classroom, adding to them throughout the semester. He never used a computer. There were no electronics. Every word of lecture was either memorized or improvised. It was always spot on, but it was spontaneous. It was playful. He, more than anyone I have met perhaps, exemplified the type of courage upon which Tillich and May will base their entire philosophies. After years of philosophy and psychology classes and studying the self as an object or subject as this thing removed, I was, in this class, reawakened to the realness of my own experience as one who necessarily participates in “our world.” I am reminded of Professor Germana saying, “It's not all this,” as he neatly and perfectly ordered and stacked a pile of papers. He then proceeded to violently
rattle and shake a desk in the front of the room. Everything was right in front of us. The desk, the chair, the board, windows, professor, each of us. It dawned on us that we were part of a world. Another day, he walked through the aisles, and while lecturing, sprinkled water on the faces of those of us who had sunken so deeply into the shells of our own mind that we stared far off, past the immediacy of our own experience. “Wake up,” he seemed to say. “You are here. You are in it.”
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The ideas of May, Maslow, and Nachmanovitch were all introduced to me in a class during my undergraduate study at Virginia Tech by Professor Joseph Germana. His senior seminar on Transpersonal Psychology was a “world” saturated with meaning, the kind which itself, and by our selves in it, exemplified the emergent properties of a world becoming. I wish to acknowledge Professor Germana for planting many of the seeds I sought to cultivate in this study and which have taken deep root in me.

I wish to thank Georgetown University for an encouraging and nurturing environment. I wish to thank the Liberal Studies Department for their particular emphasis on the value of being human.

I would especially like to thank Ms. Anne Ridder and Dr. Phyllis O'Callaghan, who both convinced me to partake in this meaningful endeavor and were so helpful and kind every step of the way. I would also especially like to thank Professors Jim Hershman, Michael Collins, Ariel Glucklich, Tod Linafelt, Chester Gillis, and Terrence Reynolds for all of their tremendously intriguing, enlightening, and cultivating classes. And lastly I wish to thank my mentor Bud Ruf for all of his help, patience, and insight throughout this project.
DEDICATION

To my parents:
Dad for understanding and guidance, encouragement and form
Mom for attitude and rhythm, lakes and adventure

To my grandparents who inspire every thought and poem
To my family and closest friends for love and dancing

And to my teachers:
Ms. Star Swanson for sparking creativity
Dr. Vic Shelburne for scouting oath
Dr. Robin Panneton for developing expression
Dr. Joseph Germana for giving birth
Dr. Fritz Oehlschlaeger for twisting apples
Dr. Bud Ruf for homing away
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INTRODUCTION

This thesis seeks to establish the connections which tie and bind the ideas of Paul Tillich and Rollo May from their books *The Courage to Be* (Tillich 1952) and *The Courage to Create* (May 1975). It is an in-depth analysis focusing specifically upon the philosophies which underlie their works in their particular fields. These ideas represent only a small sliver of an enormous content of thought based upon the problems of “modern man”; the problem of humankind's alienation has been especially the problem of the twentieth century, and has indeed been the theme of it not only for social critics, philosophers, and ethicists, but for artists, musicians, authors, and poets. The question of humankind dealing with itself given the enormous power technologically and in the wake of industrialization has been explored and explicated, and volumes have been written from different disciplines and schools of thought. The idea of the subject-object split traces the dichotomous tendencies of philosophies back through the ages. This thesis is by no means an attempt to be comprehensive. Scores of philosophers of life have studied the same problems, from Kierkegaard and Sartre, to Becker, Frankl, and Buber, to Heidegger, to Freud, to Nietzsche, all the way back to Leibnitz or Spinoza, or to Augustine or Seneca or Plato. But what this thesis does do (what I have chosen to explore) is to analyze the relationship between two particularly interesting approaches, each of which involves creativity. May and Tillich each emphasize the creative, and I
believe that the creative process provides a unique way of seeing the world with oneself in relation to it. This involves an interaction or unison, and this will act as a key towards solving this great problem.

Tillich and May met in January 1934, at Union Theological Seminary in New York, where May was earning his Master's degree in Divinity (May 1988) and Tillich was a professor of philosophy of religion. The two became friends. Years later, when May was working on his Ph.D. thesis at Columbia which would later be published as *The Meaning of Anxiety* (see May [1950] 1977), Tillich was one of his advisors. Tillich “said from time to time that *The Courage to Be* was written as an answer to *The Meaning of Anxiety,*” a statement which, according to May in his short biography of Tillich (1988), “honors me more than I can say” (Ibid., 23). The two were close friends, and May eventually honored Tillich by giving an address at Tillich's memorial service in 1966. Later May recalls how Tillich's “classes overflowed, and [Tillich] had become what many persons who studied with him in New York or Chicago or Harvard were later to call the most creative teacher they ever had” (Ibid., 7).

They were living during a period in Western history of great anxiety. Anxiety had become prevalent by the second half of the nineteenth century and was endemic both by the time these two scholars began their work and later by the time they published these two particular books, especially since each was written after
relatively recent periods of war: World War II for Tillich's *The Courage to Be* (1952) and Vietnam for May's *The Courage to Create* (1975). Though Tillich was May's elder by twenty-three years, they both lived through both world wars; by this time, branches of both philosophy and psychology had perceived Western society (both Europe and the United States) as having become terribly fragmented.

This thesis begins by examining the context in which Tillich's and May's ideas develop. Since Tillich and May are writing during a period of great anxiety in the Western world, each attempts to provide an answer to the problem of humankind, which is disintegration. In such a fragmented world, the tasks of the theologian (Tillich) and the psychologist (May) are the same: 1) to reconcile the disconnect which the human being perceives between her self and her world and 2) to re-establish value. Both Tillich and May approach these concerns by way of being, which involves the affirmation oneself and therefore also involves the affirmation of meanings. The idea of being is especially important to the existentialists, and the first chapter of this study offers to provide a basic framework in which to understand the existentialist perspective. This background will serve to illuminate the problems which have become prevalent by the time Tillich and May attempt to assuage them.

The second chapter of this thesis focuses full attention on being. Being is the critical element involved with existentialism, and both Tillich and May try to understand the prevailing predicaments of the time on an ontological level, at their
most fundamental basis. Tillich and May explain the relationship between being and nonbeing. Where nonbeing is that which tends to prevent the self from affirming itself, courage is self-affirmation in spite of that nonbeing, and both May and Tillich offer that courage is necessary in order to affirm one's own being. People are aware that ultimately nonbeing is unavoidable (for instance, they will die), and the knowledge of their own ultimate finitude produces anxiety. Anxiety is the form by which nonbeing threatens one's self-affirmation. If a person fails to confront anxiety and nonbeing courageously, his self is diminished and his anxiety takes greater hold of him. This is the condition of neurosis. In the worst cases of this condition, the victim is overwhelmed and can fall into a state of despair. In order to keep this from happening one must affirm himself, and a particularly helpful way to affirm oneself is through creativity.

Tillich suggests that there is not merely a relationship between being and the negation of being, but a unity of the two, where being by its nature harbors nonbeing within itself "as that which is eternally present and eternally overcome in the process of divine life" (1952, 34). According to Tillich, this dynamic activity--this actively engaged process which stands and acts as "the ground of everything"--represents a "living creativity" (34). This thesis explores the possible relationship between the living creativity at the ground of everything and the type of creativity which normal people can engage in every day. The questions are: How does a "living creativity"
at the root of everything manifest itself in the creative act of an individual? Or, perhaps more interestingly, how might the reverse be true; that is, how might the creative act of the individual manifest itself in the living creativity at the root of everything?

Rollo May suggests that the creative process entails a type of encounter which reconciles the split between oneself and one's world. This unitive process bears meaning psychologically, and it also bears meaning spiritually, in the realm of meanings and values. This idea will be examined in regard to the philosophical notion of “being-in-the-world.” It will be offered that the type of creative encounter which May describes shows both of the ways by which one affirms himself—as a part and as an individual.

This study next explores creativity and the creative process. It is argued that the creative individual has characteristics that are more likely to promote his being and his development. The creative individual affirms himself by the creative process, and sometimes this results in an experience that some might call “divine.” There is a feeling of unity and wholeness and oneness which can result from creativity, and this thesis examines the means by which one feels most one, most fulfilled, most himself, most human, most whole, and, perhaps by the same token, most holy.

Is this issue theological or is it psychological or is it philosophical? Is it out
of some spiritual need that one examines his true self, or is it to reconcile a split
within one's psyche, or is it to establish the metaphysical nature of our selves within
the universe? It seems to me that the answer is all three--these different fields each
attempt to find an answer to what, in the end, comes down to a very basic question:
“Why?” Or perhaps, more particularly, “Why me?”

May indicates that “the loss of the experience of one's own significance”
results in “the kind of anxiety that Paul Tillich called the anxiety of
meaninglessness” (May 1967, 37). “Symptomatic of the dislocation of human
consciousness in our time” (Ibid., 29), neurotic anxiety had become a sort of
common theme for humankind of the day. But May and Tillich will make a
distinction between neurotic anxiety (which is destructive) and normal anxiety,
which is “an inseparable part of growth and creativity” (Ibid., 81). Indeed, “the self
becomes more integrated and stronger as experiences of normal anxiety are
successfully confronted” (Ibid.), and this is part of the power of both the courage to
be and the courage to create.

There is a distinction between the trains of thought of Tillich and May and
psychologists Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, who will also be discussed.
Tillich discusses the nature of being with relation to God. May, Maslow, and Rogers
keep their attention focused on the nature of humanness. But I have wondered
during the examination of these many thoughts and ideas whether the two (the divine
and humanness) may be so clearly distinguishable after all—whether if, somehow, the line is not so distinct. It may be the case that these lines of thinking are more parallel than once thought and that, at least at times, they overlap, crisscross, merge together, become one.
CHAPTER ONE

CONCERNING THE EXISTENTIAL

This study will examine the connections which tie and bind the ideas of Paul Tillich's *The Courage to Be* and Rollo May's *The Courage to Create*. Because Tillich and May's ideas involve humankind's existential concerns, a basic understanding of existentialist concerns are necessary in order to proceed. The following section will offer to illuminate the existential perspective, first by way of "Existentialism," and then by way of the "existential-analytic movement." each of which addresses the problems which most concern Tillich and May. At their root, the existential concerns involve humankind's existence on an ontological basis. They concern one's being, and as such, they are the ultimate basis for human health.

A Brief Review of Existentialism

The word "existential" has come to mean many things since Karl Jaspers described a *Philosophy of Existence* in the 1930's ([1938] 1971) or since Gabriel Marcel examined *The Philosophy of Existence* ten years later (1948) or since Jean-Paul Sartre's *Existentialism and Humanism* that same decade ([1946] 1982). "Existentialism," as applied posthumously to its earliest "proponents" such as Søren Kierkegaard, has meant different things to its advocates. Rollo May, an existential psychotherapist, and Paul Tillich, an existential philosopher and theologian, use the
term in mostly similar ways despite their different backgrounds. There is an accord in their approach to each of their respective fields, partly because May understands philosophy and partly because Tillich understands psychology, but mainly because their existential views so overlap.

Existential concepts have much to do with ontology; that is, what is existential has to do with being. To study humankind from an existential perspective is to acknowledge certain insights about humanity “on an ontological basis” (May 1983, 87), where the individual being becomes the re-centered locus of significance. “Existentialism” can be distinguished in three forms, which are 1) as point of view, 2) as protest and 3) as expression (Tillich 1952, 126). The point of view of the existentialist is that the individual being determines the character of her own nature. This is especially relevant to the movement called Existentialism (the protest) which surfaces during a period in which the individual has lost her significance (the second half of the nineteenth century through the twentieth century). The movement Existentialism intended to focus attention back upon the individual, but in focusing that attention one could not help but recognize the evident loss of the individual's significance which had occurred. As such, this movement had a flavor both revolutionary and despairing, both inspired and disconsolate. This emotional amalgam is represented by the third form of existentialism, expression. This idea can be summed up by May, who defines existentialism as “an expression of
profound dimensions of the modern emotional and spiritual temper . . . shown in almost all aspects of our culture” (May 1983, 48). These dimensions especially interest both Tillich and May. Where May asserts that existentialism is “found not only in psychology and philosophy but in art” (Ibid.), Tillich maintains that the existential revolt has in many ways “determined the character of art and literature” (Tillich 1952, 136). May goes on to say that existentialism “is the unique and specific portrayal of the psychological predicament of contemporary Western man” (May 1983, 48), pointing out that one of the strengths of the existential psychology movement is that “it broadens its knowledge of man by historical perspective and scholarly depth[] by accepting the facts that human beings reveal themselves in art and literature and philosophy” (Ibid., 45). Tillich points to “existentialist revolutionaries like Baudelaire and Rimbaud in poetry, Flaubert and Dostoievsky in the novel,” and “Ibsen and Strindberg in the theater,” all of whose works “are full discoveries in the deserts and jungles of the human soul” (Tillich 1952, 137). Tillich goes on to cite Kafka's The Castle and The Trial, Camus' The Stranger, Sartre's No Exit and T. S. Eliot's The Wasteland (Ibid., 143-144), because all of these works “are full discoveries in the deserts and jungles of the human soul” (Tillich 1952, 137). Tillich goes on to cite Kafka's The Castle and The Trial, Camus' The Stranger, Sartre's No Exit and T. S. Eliot's The Wasteland (Ibid., 143-144), because all of these works, like those of Picasso (for example, Weeping Woman, 1937) and Munch (for example, The Scream, 1893) portray the “age of anxiety” (see Auden [1947] 1969; see also Leonard Bernstein's symphony inspired by Auden's poem, The Age of Anxiety (1949)). These creations are plagued with doubt and despair, and they reflect an age
whose existential problems are in many ways our burden still today--an age threatened to death by fate, guilt and condemnation, emptiness and meaninglessness.

Tillich establishes that “with July 31, 1914, the 19th century came to an end” and “the Existentialist revolt ceased to be a revolt” and “became the mirror of an experienced reality” (1952, 144). It had become incontrovertible “that a process was going on in which people were transformed into things, into pieces of reality which pure science can calculate and technical science can control” (Ibid.) Tillich explains that where the “idealistic wing of bourgeois thinking made of the person a vessel in which universals find a more or less adequate place,” the “naturalistic wing of bourgeois thinking made of the person an empty field into which sense impressions enter and prevail according to the degree of their intensity” (Ibid.). He proposes:

In both cases the individual self is an empty space and the bearer of something which is not himself, something strange by which the self is estranged from itself . . . both of them eliminate [the existing person’s] infinite significance and make him a space through which something else passes. Both philosophies are expressions of a society which was devised for the liberation of man but which fell under the bondage of objects it itself had created. The safety which is guaranteed by well-functioning mechanisms for the technical control of nature, by the refined psychological control of the person, by the rapidly increasing organizational control of society--this safety is bought at a high price: man, for whom all this was invented as a means, becomes a means himself in the service of means. (Tillich 1952, 138)

The elimination of the significant self is precisely the root of the backlash which resulted in Existentialism. Tillich asserts:
This is the background of Pascal's attack on the rule of mathematical rationality in the 17th century; it is the background of the romantics' attack on the rule of moral rationality in the late 18th century; it is the background of Kierkegaard's attack on the rule of depersonalizing logic in Hegel's thought. It is the background of Marx's fight against economic dehumanization, of Nietzsche's struggle for creativity, of Bergson's fight against the spatial realm of dead objects. It is the background of the desire of most of the philosophers of life to save life from the destructive power of self-objectivation. They struggled for the preservation of the person, for the self-affirmation of the self, in a situation in which the self was more and more lost in its world. They tried to indicate a way for the courage to be as oneself under conditions which annihilate the self and replace it by the thing. (Ibid., 138-139)

These are the existential wounds which both May and Tillich aim to heal, the existential pains they attempt to alleviate, the existential sickness they seek to remedy. In both Tillich and May's cases, the antidote involves a way of seeing the world as more whole, more true, more integrative and less repressive or fearful. The vein through which this remedy courses is a sort of attitude which is perhaps prototypical of the healthy individual, which fully reflects one's being. There is a link between existentialism as a brand of philosophy and an existential attitude which embraces the human being as the hero in his own life story: The existential concerns as cited above all find at their center the human being who has the capacity to choose how he wants to live and therefore who he wants to be.

Existence versus Essence

At the root of existentialism is this idea: Existence precedes essence. This
means that one's own existence determines his essence as a human being and not the other way around. It might be thought of this way: If what a human being is lies on a continuum between two poles, then one pole represents the human being as determining who and what he is by his own choices, and the other pole represents the human being as determined by the fact that his nature as a member of the human species imposes upon him certain essential characteristics. Where the second pole suggests that he acts in a certain way because these characteristics act upon him, May, as part of the existential psychotherapy movement, pushes away from that second pole--away from branches of psychology like Behaviorism which attempt like other reductionists to explain persons solely by urges and biological impulses. May's real emphasis, like Kierkegaard and Nietzsche and Sartre before him is on how a person chooses to be. “To this day you have the choice,” writes Nietzsche (1974, 86). There is a “subjective choice by which each living person makes himself a person,” asserts Sartre (1962, 155). “Choice itself,” Kierkegaard explains, “is decisive for a personality's content; in choice personality immerses itself in what is chosen, and when it does not choose it wastes consumptively away” ([1843] 1992). May highlights in this regard that “the central principle of existential psychoanalysis will not be libido or will to power, but the individual's choice of being” (May 1967, 144). Hence “being means not 'I am the subject,' but 'I am the being who can, among other things, know myself as the subject of what is occurring” (May 1983,
May's emphasis in his approach to the human being lies toward the pole which underscores that there is no essential nature of humankind until she (the specific individual about whose nature we are trying to infer) exists, and consequently shapes the nature of herself. In this way she also has the capacity to shape the nature of humankind generally, if she be cited as an example who represents that broad group. In effect this means that the nature of humankind depends upon how one chooses to create his own essence. This amounts to, from the existentialist's point of view, existence taking rank over essence.

Humankind's essential nature is used only as a framework within which to understand humankind's existence (Tillich 1961, 9-10). Existence may imply certain characteristics which are common then to “essence,” but this is not to be mistaken by the reverse. Tillich does claim that the human being participates in a system of being (namely, being-itself), and this fact does impose upon him certain characteristics. However, this is based not on the idea that the human being does not determine who or how he is, but rather it is based on Tillich's assertion that there is an underlying (or overarching) structure. Tillich argues that the existential philosophy must be conceptualized within an essentialist framework because “even the philosophical analyses of man's predicament [are] rooted in the implicit contrast between the negativities they show and the positives they silently presuppose” (Ibid., 10). While May's primary focus is elsewhere, he echoes Tillich's view, highlighting
Tillich's explanations of these circumstances several times and underscoring that “you cannot have freedom or a free individual without some structure in which (or in the case of defiance, against which) the individual acts” (May 1983, 141). Tillich and May refer to “man as man” (for instance, Tillich 1952, 35), but this essence of “man . . . as such” (for instance, May 1983, 109) is predicated on the fact that he does, in fact, first exist.

**Development of Alienation in the Modern Era--Tillich and May Enter the Discussion**

Tillich in *The Courage to Be* explores a cure for modern humankind's anxiety, which, as May discusses in *The Meaning of Anxiety*, takes root as our conscious or subconscious awareness of our own finitude and ultimately limited being. Humankind sees itself as alienated and estranged, distanced and divided. He is cut off, she is isolated, he is secluded, she is alone. He is irrelevant, she is insubstantial, he is marginal, she is a drone. Where one's concept of himself as an individual is undermined by a dissonant relationship between his self and world, both May as psychologist and therapist and Tillich as philosopher and theologian seek to reconcile humankind with the basis of her being. May credits Tillich's existential approach in his work generally but in specifically *The Courage to Be* as “in many ways . . . the best and most cogent presentation in English of existentialism as an approach to actual living” (May 1983, 56). What is it about their ideas that so
relate? How does Tillich's approach enhance May's, and what is it about May's approach that strengthens Tillich's?

May identifies the “Daseinsanalyse, or existential-analytic movement” (1983, 38) as a development in Europe wherein psychiatrists and psychologists sought to answer “the disquieting questions” and explore the “gnawing doubts which arise from [those] same half-suppressed and unasked questions” (Ibid., 37). This involved seeking a remedy, generally for humankind, specifically (within the realm of therapy) for the patient (Ibid., 37). As psychiatrists and psychologists, adherents of the existential-analytical movement sought to fill the “serious gaps” which existed “in our way of understanding human beings” (Ibid.). This group perceived a threatening change of manner in the way humankind was being studied. Indeed, what eventually materialized were psychological frameworks like those of of J. B. Watson, B. F. Skinner, and the behaviorists. By devising conceptual systems which sought to measure, gauge, and manipulate the human species as a whole, these men (either purposefully or inadvertently) undercut the validity of people's ability to choose and thereby demoted the human being to a set of stimulus-response reactions. B. F. Skinner's operant conditioning reduced humankind to a predictable program which merely reacts in order to either promote reinforcement or to avoid punishment (see Beyond Freedom and Dignity, 1971). J. B. Watson even claims the following:

Give me a dozen healthy infants, well-formed, and my own specified world to bring them up in and I'll guarantee to take any
one at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select--doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant-chief and yes, even beggar-man and thief, regardless of his talents, penchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations, and race of his ancestors. (Watson [1924] 1958, 104)

Each of these undercuts the influence of the individual's own choice. They undermine his very presence in any given situation. Freud's now-famous theories on drives and impulses had similarly reduced the individual to a series of urges and tendencies (for examples, see Freud [1923] (1989)). But impulses and urges do not do justice to the full human being these psychologists are actually attempting to understand. One cannot chop the human being into pieces and then analyze each part on its own. Each split-off characteristic betrays the fact that those pieces start with the person who first exists and experiences in the first place. As professor Eric Matthews explains, “the existential-analytic movement has in common with the phenomenological approach” that it stands in opposition to those systems of thinking, which like “both empiricism and intellectualism, in their different ways, start from the wrong end, from the scientific theories that we devise in order to explain [the] pre-theoretical experience” (Matthews 2002, 8). *Starting from the wrong end* leads to a failure to know or appreciate the individual as his own being, and when the complete individual--the whole human being actually existing there in her own way--is left out of the equation, the result is a loss of human importance and individual significance. In a sense, the goal of the existential-analytic movement
and of all existentialists is to bring back to significance the value of being human. More precisely, they want to bring back to significance the value of the human's being.

May indicates that the existentialists “sought, whether in art or philosophy or psychology... to portray the human being not as a collection of static substances or mechanisms or patterns but rather as emerging and becoming” (1983, 50) each in his own particular way. May writes:

For no matter how interesting or theoretically true is the fact that I am composed of such and such chemicals or act by such and such mechanisms or patterns, the crucial question is that I happen to exist at this given moment in time and space, and my problem is how I am to be aware of that fact and what I shall do about it. As we shall see later, the existential psychologists and psychiatrists do not rule out the study of dynamisms, drives, and patterns of behavior. But they hold that these cannot be understood in any given person except in the context of the overarching fact that here is a person who happens to exist, to be, and if we do not keep this in mind, all else we know about this person will lose its meaning. (Ibid.)

The existentialists recognized that scientific and philosophical trends had begun underscoring the nature of humankind in one of two ways. One way was to “see man only as a subject... as having reality only as a thinking being” (Ibid., 49). This way so heavily stressed a priori reason as above and apart from people's feelings or potentially doubtful, questionable, or biased experience that reason became seen as separate from one's supposedly tainted and sulliable subjective experiences. (Descartes' “I think, therefore I am,” for instance, is backwards to the
existentialists who perceive rather that “I am, therefore I think.”) The other way was to reduce humankind to “an object to be calculated and controlled, exemplified in the almost overwhelming tendencies in the Western world to make human beings into anonymous units to fit like robots into the vast industrial and political collectivisms of our day” (Ibid.), and May holds that “either alternative--making man subject or object--results in losing the living, existing person” (Ibid., 53).

When these ideas began seeping into societies' understanding of themselves, it affected not only their perspective on life but also their way of living it. A breakdown was occurring within the framework of the human identity. The individual ceased either to see himself as an individual or to see himself as a part (Tillich 1952, 113). A separation took place, and an indispensable part of his own makeup began to disintegrate. Breaking oneself down into bits and pieces resulted in a disconnected self which left one's understanding of himself as vitally dichotomized. A split took place in which she was alienated from her own being. She was divided. He was detached. She was losing her integrity. He was disuniting from what he meant to be. Her self was sick.

Testifying to the fact that it must have been answering “a widespread need in our times,” the existential-analytic movement “sprang up spontaneously in different parts of Europe and among different schools,” led by “a diverse body of researchers and creative thinkers” and (unlike other theoretical movements) not just one (May
1983, 39). Many thinkers and analysts from different psychological fields had recognized and were disquieted by “the fact that, although they were effecting cures by the techniques they had learned, they could not, so long as they confined themselves to Freudian and Jungian assumptions, arrive at any clear understanding of why these cures did or did not occur or what actually was happening in the patients' existence” (Ibid.). Many of the therapists “were aware, as Straus puts it, that the 'unconscious ideas of the patient are more often than not the conscious theories of the therapist’” (Ibid., 40), and as such the therapists of the existential-analytic movement attempted to bring the focus back to the individual patient at hand. Rather than to try to fit the patient within a theoretical mold supposed to fit a type, they intended to tailor their approach to the individual. Daseinanalyse, the existential-analytic movement, comes from “dasein,” literally “being there”—the being who is existing there before you (Heidegger [1927] 1973). By re-cognizing the being who is there, the existential psychoanalysts helped to begin to bridge the patient's divided understanding of himself.

This movement which emerged deviated from previous schools of thought because it sought “to analyze the structure of human existence—an enterprise, which, if successful, should yield an understanding of the reality underlying all situations of human beings in crises” (May 1983, 44). It should be noted that this is precisely what Paul Tillich sets out to do. The aims of the existential-analytic movement are
Tillich's aims. Their intents are precisely matched if it is understood that Tillich believes that “the reality underlying all situations of human beings in crises” is inextricably tied to anxiety's rootedness in humankind's awareness of her own finitude—in her awareness of the finitude of humankind as humankind. By “analyzing the structure of human existence,” Tillich argues that not only is it possible to understand the reality underlying all situations of humans in crises, but there is an answer to this problem which lies in the fact that the structure of human existence is inextricably bound to, in, and through the ground and source of all being. This answer, like May's, will involve creativity.

Over the course of the last century and a half, many came to perceive this growing problem within humankind. The loss of human significance can be viewed through many different disciplinary lenses—theologically, sociologically, psychologically, or philosophically. Tillich and May attempt to tackle this problem ontologically, acknowledging the fact that a key in the human being is off. She is out of tune. He is out of touch. The human being's relation to his own identity is warped and off-kilter. It is misshaped. It is an it. Her self is lacking.

The ideas which Tillich develops in his book *The Courage to Be* and the ideas which May develops in his book *The Courage to Create* correlate because both May's and Tillich's approaches toward the human dilemma concern a way of living which promotes self-affirmation. Self-affirmation implies a fuller expression
of one's being, and this leads not only to the reintegration of the human self but to
the re-significance of the human being. Where their ideas run mostly parallel, they
intersect at one particular point. This point is *courage*.  


CHAPTER TWO

BEING

Worlds Collide

Both May and Tillich are concerned with the human being. May is interested in at once the human psyche and, not to be removed from one's psyche, the individual's being with relation to her world. To put it another way, as a psychotherapist May is concerned with human health with regards to a unitive relationship between self and world. This is one meaning of psychological health. Tillich is also concerned with health. Tillich is interested in at once the human condition and, not to be removed from one's condition, the individual's being with relation to her world. To put it another way, as a theologian Tillich is concerned with human health with regards to a unitive relationship between self and God. This is one meaning of spiritual health. In other words, both Tillich and May are concerned with the welfare of persons, in each of whom is necessary an accord with his own being and the world in which he participates, the world wherein he relates to all people and things. May and Tillich are particularly concerned for the welfare of persons in whom this imperative relationship has been undercut, distorted, perverted, malformed, underdeveloped, or never fully realized.

The world of humankind is seeming to fall apart as humankind is becoming disengaged from the human self. Why does Tillich present courage as an answer?
Courage against what? And how does courage relate to being? Again Tillich and May explore some common ground.

**Courage as an Ethical Reality Which Bears Ontological Status**

Paul Tillich is both a philosopher and a theologian. As such he chooses for the topic of his book the “courage to be.” On a practical level, by choosing for his lecture courage, Tillich homes in on “a concept in which theological, sociological, and philosophical problems converge” (1952, 1). On an abstract level, courage is a notion which bestows upon humankind a sense of will. This implies that it is a concept one must actively engage in and take responsibility for, which will become important in the effort towards more fully developing one's self and therefore more directly shaping one's being and therefore relating more to and contributing more wholly to one's own world.

The concept of courage can be understood in ethical terms or ontological ones. Tillich unites both meanings. An ontological concept because it has directly to do with the nature of one's being, Tillich describes courage also as “an ethical reality . . . rooted in the whole breadth of human existence and ultimately in the structure of being itself” (Ibid.). Because “an understanding of courage presupposes an understanding of man and of his world, its structures and values” and only he who knows the world, its structures and its values, “knows what to affirm and what to negate,” then “the ethical question of the nature of courage leads inescapably to
the ontological question of the nature of being” (Ibid., 2). Further, “the procedure can be reversed,” whereby “the ontological question of the nature of being can be asked as the ethical question of the nature of courage.” In other words, “courage can show us what being is, and being can show us what courage is” (Ibid.).

May (who calls Paul Tillich's writing on the courage to be “very cogent and fertile for psychotherapy” (May 1983, 27)) points out that as opposed to the acorn which “becomes an oak by means of automatic growth” and “no commitment is necessary,” “a man or woman becomes fully human only by his or her choices and his or her commitment to them” (1975, 14). “This is why Paul Tillich speaks of courage as ontological,” argues May: because these choices we make are inherent to our being (Ibid.). As humans we make choices which affect our own being (there is no escaping this fact). It is the nature of our being as humans to make choices which affect the development of that being, and yet the nature of our being as humans is contingent upon these very choices which help to shape our being. These choices “require courage” (Ibid.) and without it one loses the fashioning force of his or her own being, a power not to be underemphasized. Put another way, in humans “being is never given automatically but depends upon the individual's courage, and without courage one loses one's being. This makes courage itself a necessary ontological corollary” (May 1983, 27; on Tillich's “courage to be”). Tillich's underscoring that courage is required of us as we choose how to be also explain why “courage as a
human act, as a matter of valuation, is an ethical concept” (Tillich, 1952, 2). As May puts it, “in human beings courage is necessary to make being and becoming possible” (May 1975, 13). And it is on these grounds, based both morally and ontologically, that May says both that courage “makes possible all the psychological virtues” and that “without courage other values wither away into mere facsimiles of virtue” (Ibid.).

The Meaning of Courage: Self-Affirmation of Being in Spite of Nonbeing

It is clear that the concept of courage bears both ontological and ethical status. It is clear that courage is necessary in order to make choices which affect being. But it is not yet clear what courage is.

Tillich declares that “courage is self affirmation 'in-spite-of,' that is in spite of that which tends to prevent the self from affirming itself” (Tillich 1952, 32). Tillich's definition of courage indicates an implicit relationship between self-affirmation and the denial of self. That is, as soon as Tillich presents being, he simultaneously presents an alternative to being which can never be fully unfastened from it. There is a foundational concession from the outset of Tillich's philosophy which recognizes a concept as genuine as the first. This concept is nonbeing.

This seemingly simple distinction between what is and what is not introduces a concept critical towards Tillich's explanation of and towards our understanding of being-itself. Tillich reinforces the concept of nonbeing by listing a long historical
line of thinkers who touch on it, from Democritus, Plato, and Aristotle, to Augustine, Boehme, Leibnitz, Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Heidegger, and Sartre, among others (Ibid., 33). May also highlights both Kierkegaard's and Freud's thought as especially pertinent to the same discussion (see May's The Meaning of Anxiety, The Discovery of Being, or Psychology and the Human Dilemma). Its notion deserves ample consideration.

Where it is “not a concept like others,” nonbeing “is the negation of every concept; but as such it is an inescapable content of thought” that, Tillich argues, is “the most important after being-itself” (Tillich 1952, 34). Indeed, nonbeing acts as a key concept for both Tillich's philosophy and for May's application of existential psychotherapy. Ultimately a recognition of and understanding of and acceptance of nonbeing will not only reveal the underlying ontological source of anxiety but will help to cast light upon that which is most important to one's meaning and towards living a fulfilled life. That is, the emphasis on nonbeing will help to emphasize the capacity of the overarching being and the value and significance of the affirmation of being in-spite-of--the value and significance of courage.

Ontologically, Tillich argues that nonbeing--“that which tends to prevent the self from affirming itself”--is as basic, as real, and as true as being (Ibid., 32). There exists being (in terms of life, process, becoming, and Yes), and then there exists nonbeing (nonlife, unbecoming, stillness, negation, No). “Nonbeing is dependent on
the being it negates” (Ibid., 40) both in terms of ontological status and in terms of its
character—“in itself nonbeing has no quality and no difference of qualities. . . but it
gets them in relation to being” because the character of nonbeing is determined by
that in being which is negated (Ibid.). Nonbeing implies being. Thus nonbeing and
being show an integral relationship present between and among two forces. This is
what May means when, with a slight yet profound twist on Hamlet's classic line, he
describes humankind's condition as “to be and not to be” (May 1983, 105). These
two poles stand opposed yet are inextricably tied and related, and when a person,
through courage, “opens the door to being,” she “finds, at the same time, being and
the negation of being and their unity” (Tillich 1952, 32).

Anxiety

In light of this relationship, a tension becomes clear between that which is
and that which is not, between that which affirms life and that which is the negation
of it. Humankind as humankind is aware of this tension, and the result of this
awareness is anxiety. May defines anxiety as “the state of the human being in the
struggle against what would destroy his being” (May 1983, 33). Tillich suggests
that this “state in which a being is aware of its possible nonbeing” represents “the
existential awareness of nonbeing”—“the awareness that nonbeing is a part of one's
own being” (Tillich 1952, 35). This “experience of the threat of immanent
nonbeing” “is not a peripheral threat which I can take or leave . . . or a reaction
which may be classified beside other reactions; it is always a threat to the foundation, the center of my existence” (May 1983, 109). Tillich describes this anxiety, impressed upon us by death and the “always latent awareness of our own having to die,” as “finitude, experienced as one's own finitude” (Tillich 1952, 35). As “an ontological characteristic of man, rooted in his very existence as such” (May 1983, 109), May goes on to note Kurt Goldstein's point that “anxiety is not something we 'have' but something we 'are’” (Ibid.). And yet it is this inner battle---this “conflict within the person as she confronts the choice of whether and how far she will stand against her own being, her own potentialities”--which is most “portentous and significant for psychotherapy” (Ibid., 33).

Tillich emphasizes that nonbeing threatens humankind's being by jeopardizing the ways in which one affirms oneself, particularly in three ways. Suggesting that nonbeing threatens one's self-affirmation ontically, spiritually, and morally, Tillich identifies three major forms of corresponding anxiety, and each form of anxiety manifests itself finitely and infinitely, or relatively and absolutely (Tillich 1952, 41). He states:

Nonbeing threatens man's ontic self-affirmation, relatively in terms of fate, absolutely in terms of death. It threatens man's spiritual self-affirmation, relatively in terms of emptiness, absolutely in terms of meaninglessness. It threatens man's moral self-affirmation, relatively in terms of guilt, absolutely in terms of condemnation. (Ibid.)

By these terms, anxiety can be defined as “the awareness of this threefold
threat” to one's self-affirmation (Ibid.). As opposed to fear which has a definite object, is not ontological, and “can be studied as an affect among other affects, a reaction among other reactions,” anxiety has no object and, since it is ontological, it “can be understood only as a threat to being itself” (May 1983, 110). Part of the real terror or dread of anxiety is that it lacks an object to attack or act upon (Tillich 1952, 36). Where does one focus his defenses? They seem aimless. It is swinging at air. May in his discussion of anxiety thus emphasizes angst, the word which Freud, Ludwig Binswanger, Goldstein, and Kierkegaard use to describe the same condition but which implies at once the “power and devastating qualities of anxiety;” it is “an experience of threat which carries both anguish and dread, indeed the most painful and basic threat which any being can suffer . . . the threat of loss of being” (May 1983, 111). May also highlights an idea from Goldstein's *The Organism: A Holistic Approach to Biology*:

> Goldstein suggests that it 'seems as if, in proportion to the increase of anxiety, objects and contents disappear more and more.' And he asks, 'Does not anxiety consist intrinsically of that inability to know from whence the danger threatens?' (May [1950] 1977, 61; quoting Goldstein 1939, 292)

Tillich would urge that *that inability to know from whence the danger threatens* is “the unknown of a special type which is met with anxiety. It is the unknown which by its very nature cannot be known, because it is nonbeing” (Tillich 1952, 37). Put another way, “the only object is the threat itself, but not the source of the threat,
because the source of the threat is 'nothingness'” (Ibid.).

Further emphasizing the difference between anxiety and fear, May calls attention once more to Goldstein's writings.

In fear, there is an appropriate defense reaction, a bodily expression of tension and of extreme attention to a certain part of the environment. In anxiety, on the other hand, we find meaningless frenzy, with rigid or distorted expression, accompanied by withdrawal from the world, a shut-off affectivity, in the light of which the world appears irrelevant, and any reference to the world, any useful perception and action is suspended. (Goldstein 1939, 293)

Goldstein suggests that whereas “fear sharpens the senses” and “drives them to action,” anxiety on the other hand “paralyzes the senses and renders them unusable” (Ibid.). It would be better, thusly, to transform anxiety into fear, but ultimately, these attempts are in vain because “the anxiety of a finite being about the threat of nonbeing[] cannot be eliminated” and “belongs to existence itself” (Tillich 1952, 39). The debilitating side of anxiety is that at its worst it can make one immobile by freezing him. In extreme forms, anxiety can disable humankind by seizing her core. Ontically, spiritually, and morally, anxiety is the form by which nonbeing threatens one's ability to affirm oneself.

It is clear now that nonbeing is that which tends to prevent the self from affirming itself and that the awareness of this threat is anxiety. Courage has been identified as self-affirmation in-spite-of nonbeing. The courage to be is the courage to affirm oneself in the face of anxiety--despite the threats against self-affirmation

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and in spite of that which tends to prevent the self from affirming itself (that is, despite nonbeing).

Perhaps on the most basic level, it is important to keep in mind during this discussion that the human being who is affirmed through courage indicates a work in progress with the potential to grow and change. A passage of May's is thus useful for interpreting the meaning of being human because it reveals the meaning of the term human being. May emphasizes:

The full meaning of the term human being will be clearer if the reader will keep in mind that being is a participle, a verb form implying that someone is in the process of being something. It is unfortunate that, when used as a general noun in English, the term being connotes a static substance, and when used as a particular noun such as a being, it is usually assumed to refer to an entity, say, such as a soldier to be counted as a unit. Rather, being should be understood, when used as a general noun, to mean potencia, the source of potentiality; being is the potentiality by which the acorn becomes the oak or each of us becomes what he truly is. And when used in a particular sense, such as a human being, it always has the dynamic connotation of someone in process, the person being something. (May 1983, 97)

As a supplement to the ways in which nonbeing threatens one's ontic, spiritual, and moral self-affirmation, May focuses on the way in which nonbeing threatens the human who, as one being, is in the process of being and becoming more himself. Nonbeing threatens the potential to become who he might be--who he potentially is.

Courage is thus required because although anxiety cannot be removed (“since anxiety is existential, it cannot be removed”), it is courage which “takes the anxiety
of nonbeing into itself” (Tillich 1952, 66). Courage is necessary not only in order to preserve oneself but also in order to foster one's own potentialities. It is “the readiness to take upon oneself negatives, anticipated by fear, for the sake of a fuller positivity” (Ibid., 78). “Fuller positivity” in this way pertains to one's own potential and development--what Abraham Maslow would call “full humanness” (1970). Another way to look at the term fuller positivity (and a way which might equally lead to full humanness and thereby also would involve developing more fully one's own potentialities), is to examine fuller positivity as an attitude. Positivity in this light could mean more constructive, more supportive, more improved, more approving, more optimistic, or more confident. And yet it could also mean more encouraging or more affirmative. The type of courage which is the readiness to take upon oneself negatives, anticipated by fear, for the sake of fuller courage and affirmation, speaks to the intrinsic value of courage and affirmation as states which strengthen, foster, promote, nurture, and help cultivate one's being. Not to disregard the biological function of fear and anxiety as warnings to threats against being (Tillich 1952, 78), but one must not be so taken by them as to freeze. Tillich remarks here that “the more vital strength a being has the more it is able to affirm itself in spite of the dangers announced by fear and anxiety” and that “without this self-affirmation life could not be [either] preserved or increased” (Ibid., italics my own). The concepts of attitude and full humanness will come up
Neurotic Anxiety

When anxiety is not met properly, if it can no longer be “confronted constructively on the conscious level,” as is the case with normal anxiety, then it becomes neurotic anxiety (May 1967, 80). One point of issue before continuing: May calls neurotic anxiety “inappropriate” (Ibid.) or “disproportionate to the threat” of a situation (Ibid., 105). I think that this statement if taken wrongly might misguide our intentions of getting to the root of this problem. The threat—nonbeing—is severe. Still, if what we have said so far is true, then one who meets anxiety most—one who most meets anxiety directly, head-on, and can take this ultimate threat into himself, courageously—will be less negatively affected by it. In this way one must confront more truly nonbeing as an ever-present threat to his very existence. What May intends is not that one should not engage anxiety, but rather that one should not be disabled by it. Neurotic anxiety is precisely that disabling sort—the type of anxiety which “involves repression,” “is expressed in symptom formation,” and “has destructive rather than constructive effects upon the organism” (Ibid., 105). In effect what is disproportionate is the neurotic's emphasis on nonbeing over being. But, if we keep in mind that there is a unitive relationship between and among these two forces and that ultimately nonbeing is a part of being (and not the other way around), we will find that this is indeed a reversal of their
ultimate rank, power, and ontological and existential status.

All of these “fallings away from full humanness, from the full blooming of human nature. . . are losses of human possibility, of what might have been and could yet be perhaps,” and it is for these reasons and in the same respect that Maslow cites neurosis as relating to “spiritual disorders, to loss of meanings . . . to loss of courage” (Maslow 1971, 31). Where Tillich reinforces these ideas by showing that “he who does not succeed in taking anxiety courageously upon himself can succeed in avoiding the extreme situation of despair by escaping into neurosis” (Tillich 1952, 66), May then emphasizes the inadequacy of the traditional definition of neurosis as a “failure of adjustment,” because “an adjustment is exactly what neurosis is; and that is just its trouble” (May 1983, 26). Tillich and May split on the exact measure by which one attempts to preserve himself and his existence against the threat of nonbeing: May calls this “adjustment by which centeredness can be preserved . . . a way of accepting nonbeing in order that some little being may be preserved” (Ibid.; italics modified for my own emphasis), while Tillich calls neurosis “the way of avoiding nonbeing by avoiding being” (1952, 66; italics modified for my own emphasis). But regardless of which is actually the case, what happens after this adjustment is the same: The neurotic “affirms himself but on a limited scale” (Ibid.). The safeguarded self which is affirmed “is a reduced one . . . less than his essential or potential being” (Ibid.). “He surrenders a part of his potentialities” (Ibid.) and
thus “in most cases it is a boon when this adjustment breaks down” (May 1983, 27).

It must be emphasized again that anxiety and nonbeing are never, should never, and cannot ever be extinguished. Rejecting the “illogical belief that 'mental health is living without anxiety,'” May calls “the delusion of living without anxiety” a “radical misperception of reality” ([1950] 1977, xiv). But this fact alone is not wholly negative. Discussing the harmful effects of using drugs to relieve anxiety, May argues that “neurotic anxiety is a symptom of the fact that some previous crisis has not been met, and to remove the symptom without helping the person get at his underlying conflict is to rob him of his best direction-finder and motivation for self-understanding and new growth” (1967, 82; italics mine). “To wipe away the anxiety is in principle to wipe away the opportunity for growth” (Ibid., 81) because “the confrontation with anxiety can (note the word can and not will) relieve us from boredom, sharpen our sensitivity, and assure the presence of the tension that is necessary to preserve human existence” ([1950] 1977, xiv). Tillich argues that even in despair when “nonbeing is felt as absolutely victorious,” “there is a limit to its victory” because “nonbeing is felt as victorious, and feeling presupposes being” (Tillich 1952, 54-55). Similarly, May urges not only that “anxiety is essential to the human condition” but that “the presence of anxiety indicates vitality” (May [1950] 1977, xiv). “Enough being is left” (Tillich 1952, 55), and “so long as this struggle continues, a constructive solution is possible” (May [1950] 1977, xiv).
Even the ontological concepts, inherent to humankind as humankind, which can be *most devastating*—nonbeing, the awareness of nonbeing which is anxiety, the extreme forms of anxiety which result in neurosis, and the extreme forms of grief, meaninglessness, loss of significance, emptiness, guilt, or condemnation which result from the threat of nonbeing and which make up despair—even these menacing threats which can be felt as ominous, these dangers which intimidate, terrify, and torment—even these perils, each and every one of them, *presupposes being*. The main point here is that there is always enough being left over, despite them, which constitutes meaning, existence, and the potential to affirm oneself in-spite-of. Nonbeing is ever-present, yes, but it is constantly *overcome*.

**“The Living Creativity”**

Tillich emphasizes not merely a relationship between being and the negation of being, but a unity of the two, where being by its nature harbors nonbeing within itself “as that which is eternally present and eternally overcome in the process of divine life” (1952, 34). The courage to be implies this relationship. When one affirms himself, when one affirms his own being, he does so despite nonbeing. According to Tillich, this dynamic activity—this actively engaged process which stands and acts as "the ground of everything"—represents a "living creativity" (Ibid., 34) which lies at the heart of the courage to be. This *ground of everything*—the ground of all being—is the ultimate answer. It is the ultimate end (as well as, it might
be said, the ultimate beginning). The ultimate ground of everything, being-itself, is
the birthplace of the power to overcome nonbeing and the three types of anxiety
fanned by it. This ultimate ground is the origin of the will to existence and the
ultimate source of the courage to be. It is being-itself, or Being. Tillich calls this
ultimate source God. He also calls it “the living creativity,” and this holds particular
interest for this thesis.

Why is the answer *creativity*? Tillich particularly names the ultimate ground
of all being *the living creativity* only a few times in *The Courage to Be* but this idea
is latent throughout the work. Why has the answer ultimately to do with *creative
being*? Or put another way: Why has the answer ultimately to do with *being
creative*?

It is significant that Tillich calls the ultimate ground of being-itself the living
creativity. I think May's focus during his approach towards creativity, the “necessary
sequel to being” (May 1975, 8), will help to illuminate not only what it means to be
creative. His approach will also help to illuminate the implicit relationship between
our selves and world, serving to reconcile the perspective of the two as split (an
unhealthy dichotomization). It will show a level of encounter, engagement, and
interaction which illustrates the two remaining facets of the courage to be--the
courage to be as oneself and the courage to be as a part. And it will, in the end,
demonstrate a tie between Being and human being, expressed by one who is wholly
and inseparably integrated as an integral being-in-the-world.
CHAPTER THREE
RECONCILING SELF AND WORLD

Courage to Be as Oneself, Courage to Be as a Part

Before creative courage can be discussed, there are two final facets of Tillich's courage to be which require exposition. These are the courage to be as oneself and the courage to be as a part. These two facets describe one of the predominant existential problems which has been surfacing throughout the last century and a half--the problem of finding a meaningful relationship between one's self and one's world. Courage, as we have discovered, is self-affirmation in-spite-of, and where it might seem strange that to be courageously as a part is to affirm oneself, Tillich explains:

The courage to be is essentially always the courage to be as a part and the courage to be as oneself, in interdependence. The courage to be as a part is an integral element of the courage to be as oneself, and the courage to be as oneself is an integral element of the courage to be as a part. (Tillich 1952, 89-90)

Tillich will emphasize the first pole of these interrelated ideas, the courage to be as oneself, through creative courage. I wish to emphasize the second pole by the same creative courage. The notion of “being-in-the-world” will help to show the interrelationship between self and world which has been wanting. I hope to show that Rollo May's approach to creativity--specifically his concept of “encounter”--illuminates being-in-the-world, the connection between self and world which often
has been wrongfully perceived as detached in modern humankind.

The section after this one, an introduction to the idea “the courage to create,” will briefly explain the two separate approaches (Tillich's and May's) to creative courage which will then be expounded upon. In the section following, Tillich's approach to creative courage as exemplary of the courage to be as oneself will be discussed. Following that will be a section devoted to being-in-the-world. Finally, a section concerning May's approach to creativity will be discussed, which I believe pertains to all of the concerns throughout this study so far.

To reiterate, Tillich uses the courage to create as an example of the courage to be as oneself. I will argue that the courage to create does more than that: I argue that the courage to create illustrates not only the courage to be as oneself but also the courage to be as a part, and I base this on May's idea of encounter, which illustrates being-in-the-world. Where Tillich asserts that the courage to be encompasses these two final facets (the courage to be as oneself and the courage to be as a part), I argue that the courage to create encompasses both of these two final facets, too.

Lastly, I offer that the courage to create can, in its truest form, demonstrate the courage to be. That is, where May offers that “we express our being by creating” (May 1975, 8), I will offer finally that we express our courage to be by our courage to create.
“The Courage to Create”

Creative courage will be approached in two regards. Tillich raises the idea of creative courage during his discussion of courage despite despair. Arguing how even in the extreme situation of despair one still affirms his being, Tillich illustrates this scenario by providing examples of existentialism as expression. Tillich focuses on the creative artist, novelist, and playwright, each of whom courageously takes despair upon himself and who, despite despair, affirms his own being by expressing himself.

Rollo May approaches creative courage in a different way. May uses the term “the courage to create” (perhaps the term which stood out most to him from Tillich's book *The Courage to Be*) to entitle his own book on the nature of creativity. Both Tillich's and May's approaches are important in their own right. They also bolster and augment each other.

Tillich's emphasis places creativity in its rightful realm--the spiritual. His emphasis also ties the creative to the artist and discerns the necessary existential quality of the courage to be as oneself. Tillich's emphasis will be discussed first.

In between Tillich and May's approaches, being-in-the-world will be discussed. Then May's emphasis will be explored. May focuses on the creative act itself. He focuses on creativity in terms of what happens during the creative process. The type of creativity which May describes--the kind involving courage *during*
creative act--will, in its own way, parallel the “living creativity” at the ground of Tillich's philosophy, and hence will help to finally underscore it.

**Creative Courage Despite the Anxiety of Meaninglessness--Courage to Be as Oneself**

Tillich raises the notion of creative courage during an analysis of those who express courage, despite the anxiety of nonbeing, through art and literature. It is within this context of art and literature, particularly during a discussion regarding Albert Camus' *The Stranger* ([1942] 1988), that Tillich mentions explicitly for the first time the “courage to create.” Camus vividly paints the portrait of his main character Meursault, whose predicament is based on precisely the sort of existential problems we have been discussing: He is an object. He is detached. He has not affirmed his being. His humanity is lost. He has sacrificed his potentialities. He has not reached full humanness.

When it comes to the three central types of anxiety which Tillich has described--the forms whereby nonbeing threatens one's ontic, spiritual, and moral self-affirmation--these types “are interwoven in such a way that one of them gives the predominant color but all of them participate in the coloring of the state of anxiety” (Tillich 1952, 54). Where they “are immanent in each other but normally under the dominance of one of them” (*Ibid.*, 42), the form of nonbeing which most burdens Camus' Meursault is that kind which threatens humankind's spiritual self-
affirmation: the anxiety of emptiness and meaninglessness. This dilemma, as mentioned earlier, runs as a theme through many works of art and literature during the twentieth century and is, in many ways, still a major existential predicament, today.

Tillich's description of Camus' hero (or anti-hero) again underscores the problem of meaninglessness and the danger to humankind of becoming estranged from himself.

[He] is a man without subjectivity. He is not extraordinary in any respect. He acts as any ordinary official in a small position would act. He is a stranger because he nowhere achieves an existential relation to himself or to his world. Whatever happens to him has no reality and meaning to him: a love which is not a real love, a trial which is not a real trial, an execution which has no justification in reality. There is neither guilt nor forgiveness, neither despair nor courage in him. He is described not as a person but as a psychological process which is completely conditioned, whether he works or loves or kills or eats or sleeps. He is an object among objects, without meaning for himself and therefore unable to find meaning in his world. (Tillich 1952, 144-145)

Tillich's point is that the portraits in art and literature of such characters and situations are indicative of a type of courage which is manifested by their creators—those who are (or at least those who perceive all around them those who are) riddled with doubt, plagued by a sense of meaninglessness, or struggling with despair. During these “periods of disintegration, of a world-wide loss of values and meanings” (Tillich 1955, 67), it takes a particular kind of courage to engage these
existential problems as comprehensively as Camus, and Tillich calls this *creative courage*. In expressing the anxiety of meaninglessness, “the courage to create” (Tillich 1952, 145) reveals “the courage to face things as they are” (Ibid., 143).

Kafka's main character in *The Trial*, Joseph K., finds himself in a predicament similar to Meursault's. K. is also in an existential crisis. K.'s identity has been misplaced, his self is “arrested,” he finds himself convicted and lost, and in a way, the crime he is guilty of committing is not knowing what he has done (Kafka [1925] 1998). Tillich calls attention to the creators of artistic works like these who have wrestled with the existential dilemmas, pointing to the individual who, in a period where “man has lost [both] a meaningful world and a self which lives in meanings and out of a spiritual center . . . still is aware of what he has lost or is continuously losing” and “is still man enough to experience his dehumanization *as despair*” (Tillich 1952, 139-140; italics mine). Tillich calls the experiencing of dehumanization as despair *the courage of despair*, because one courageously “take[s] despair upon himself and [ ] resist[s] the radical threat of nonbeing by the courage to be as oneself” (Ibid., 140). Tillich maintains that “*the courage to create* this figure [of Meursault] equals the courage with which Kafka has created the figure of Mr. K’” (Ibid., 145; emphasis added) because “the courage to take upon oneself the loneliness of such creativity and the horror of such visions” entails a risk of losing yourself in them (Ibid., 143). And it is in this regard that Tillich thusly calls
the courage to create “an outstanding expression of the courage to be as oneself” (Ibid., 143-144).

**Being-in-the-World**

The courage to be as oneself is critical. The courage to be as a part is equally vital. I believe that creative courage, as described by Tillich above, shows in actuality both of these two facets of the courage to be which is “united by the polar interdependence of individualization and participation” (Ibid., 160). I will attempt to show how creative courage encompasses this polar interdependence by May's analysis of creative encounter. As a preliminary, though, it will help to distinguish a concept called “being-in-the-world.”

Tillich explains that the human being must understand himself and affirm himself both as an individual and as a part. The individual shares and takes part in the whole, and if only one aspect of his affirmation as an individual who takes part is asserted, then the other level of his being goes unfulfilled (Ibid., 88).

To give an idea of what this means, Tillich points to the tribal collectivist societies which emphasize almost exclusively the affirmation of one's being by participation and not the affirmation of being oneself (Ibid. 90). In the extreme forms of such societies, inasmuch as one “affirms himself through the group in which he participates” (Ibid., 93), his “character is . . . determined by that participation” (Ibid., 92). If the “identification with the group is complete” (Ibid.,
93), he affirms himself by affirming the collective in which he participates” and “he receives himself back from the collective[] filled and fulfilled by it” (Ibid., 99). But his affirmation as a distinct and incomparable individual goes discarded. Tillich highlights those collectivist societies which developed most recently in Western History under fascism, nazism, and communism, and today perhaps the extremist-group mentality could be explained in the same way. In the former, due to the methods of the totalitarian state in which the courage to be as a part was “pushed in all spheres of life,” the “tendencies which could dissolve the collectivist system by alternatives and individual decisions” are suppressed (Ibid., 97). The “exclusive emphasis on self-affirmation by participation” results in one “surrendering himself to the cause of the collective,” but in doing so “he surrenders that in him which is not included in the self-affirmation of the collective; and this he does not deem worthy of affirmation” (Ibid., 99). The fact that one would not deem worthy of affirmation his own being as an individual shows the kind of “herd mentality” which outrages Nietzsche, who cries out against the unconcerned, dispassionate, and emotionless “sacrificial animal”--the “devoted instrument, ruthless against itself” (Nietzsche [1887] 1974, 93; italics modified). Nietzsche scorns those who only affirm themselves by participating, “who do not apply their whole strength and reason to their own preservation, development, elevation, promotion, and the expansion of their power, but rather live, in relation to themselves, modestly and
thoughtlessly, perhaps even with indifference” (Ibid, 94). (Nietzsche condemns “selflessness” in this regard (Ibid.), because in the midst of a society which acts with concern only for its own preservation, rejects anomalies, and incorporates, Nietzsche advocates more individual self and not less.)

Tillich does not go into as much detail about the extreme forms of individualization as he does in the extreme forms of participation, but he asserts that “we are threatened not only with losing our individual selves but also with losing participation in our world” (Tillich 1952, 89). Neither side is sufficient alone.

Still, in the end, it is a misconception to think that one can only be an individual, because each of our actions has an effect upon the world. One might not participate well, but his actions always have an effect. One can delude herself by thinking she is separate. He might truly feel isolated and alone. She might block herself off. One might be physically remote from others or be psychologically inaccessible. And these are all fallings away from full humanness of the sort that were mentioned earlier in regards to failing, like the neurotic, to actualize one's potentials as a human being. Part of being human is being part, and to fail to recognize this aspect of oneself is to contribute either to self-delusion or self-denial. One is, necessarily, a part. Indeed, being as oneself is never wholly separated from being as a part, and this point is made clearer by the concept being-in-the-world.

It is helpful (if not imperative) to understand the human being as being-in-
The world--that is, as an individual self who necessarily participates in the world, and whose existence is never such without a world, and who cannot be understood as being outside of the world. It makes little sense to try like scientists of the nineteenth century to view the world “objectively” as a thing we can withdraw from and view “in its natural state” as if we were not there viewing it. We are there viewing it. From within it.

Where being-in-the-world is an all-important foundational principle of phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Matthews 2002), Eric Matthews summarizes this idea by emphasizing that “the world of objects is not something apart from us as subjects, acting upon as casually, but the place we as subjects inhabit” (Matthews 2002, 8). “Field work” means going into, participating in, that field. An observation is observed upon, by the one who is observing. Space-time is altered by my presence in and effect upon it. As Matthews puts it, since “a subject cannot be identified with a pure reason or a pure consciousness able to take in the whole of reality at once and make sense of it as a whole” and because “only a subject that is inseparable from a particular body can have a place in the world, in space and time,” the “necessarily embodied” subject has essentially to be “in-the-world” (Ibid.).

While this concept expresses the faultiness of perceiving “pure” reason as separated from or somehow better than “purely” physical experience, it also echoes
the discussion earlier about the dichotomization of subject and object (or self and world). Matthews explains:

... in order for us to 'have a world', we need to regard our relationship to objects in 'perception' or 'experience' as different from the relationship of one object to another. It is true that we can for certain (e.g. scientific) purposes treat perceptions as if they were objects like any others; but we could not even have the notion of a perception in the first place unless we had the first-person experience of a perceiving, unless perceiving were not an object we contemplated, but [was in fact] our own involvement with the world. (Ibid., 48)

What this means is that “our primary relation to the world as experiencing subjects is not a cognitive relationship to a purely objective reality... our relation to the world is neither a detached “view from nowhere” nor like that [relation] between objects [and objects] in the world (Ibid.). Indeed, “the very notion of 'experience' implies that the experiencing subject is not contemplating the world from some position outside it, but is itself part of that world” (Ibid., 45; italics modified for my own emphasis). This is all to say, as May does, that “the subject, man, can never be separated from the object which he observes” (May 1983, 70).

This “inseparability of subject and world” (Matthews 2002, 8) is a key to understanding our own being, because by recognizing the fact that the self always exists as inhabiting the world as part of that world, one must affirm himself both as an individual and as a participant. The subject of self-affirmation, writes Tillich, is always “the individual self which participates in the world... the structural universe
of being” (Tillich 1952, 86). It is in this regard that, as May puts it, “one cannot be in a vacuum” (May 1975, 8).

One last point is indispensable. In the same way that our essence is determined in part by how we choose to be, *the way we exist also affects the essence of the world in which we participate.* In the same way the world affects us by interacting with us, we affect our world by interacting with it. World is not stagnant. World's “unity and meaning for us come[s] from the fact *that we live and act* and move about *in it*” (Matthews 2002, 8; my emphasis). Our entanglement with our world, in our world, as part of our world, is thus in part inevitable, but “*our active involvement in our world*” (Ibid., 7; emphasis mine) is nonetheless invaluable. This is the meaning of being-in-the-world.

Where the overarching **courage to be** encompasses both the courage to be as a part and the courage to be as an individual, Tillich identifies these two interdependent levels as “distinguishable but not separable” (Tillich 1952, 86). On a practical level, May stresses not only that “if you do not express your own original ideas, if you do not listen to your own being, you will have betrayed yourself” but also that “you will have betrayed our community in failing to make your contribution to the whole (May 1975, 12-13). You will have failed to affirm yourself as being-in-the-world. Both sides are necessary, and if one is not met then neither fully is the human being and neither fully is one's world.
Creative Courage through Encounter--
The Courage to Be Both

Tillich's focus within creative courage has been on the person who courageously takes despair upon himself, expresses the courage to be as oneself, and who, by that expression, shows how “enough being is left to feel” (Tillich 1952, 55). May's focus is different. May focuses on creativity itself. He explores the nature of creativity, analyzing what creativity is in terms of encounter, process, the unconscious, and “passion for form” (May 1975).

In his examination of creativity, May proposes a theory. Based upon his own creative (artistic) experiences and upon his interactions and discussions with artists and poets (Ibid., 77), May distinguishes an experience which seems common in their creative undertakings. With the intention of “trying to describe as accurately as possible what actually happens in individuals at the moment of the creative act” (Ibid., 40), May attempts to produce an “analysis of the nature of creativity” which “will apply to all men and women during their creative moments” (Ibid., 41). May proposes that “creativity occurs in an act of encounter and is to be understood with this encounter as its center” (Ibid., 76). This encounter is the pivotal point which I believe augments Tillich's courage to create. May argues that the courage to create is “the most important kind of courage of all” (Ibid., 21). This is because it is “essential for the creative act” (Ibid., 8). The moment of the creative act when one
“encounters” entails “a specific quality of engagement” (Ibid.) where one is enraptured in her world.

May begins a chapter on encounter in this way:

Cézanne sees a tree. He sees it in a way no one else has ever seen it. He experiences, as he no doubt would have said, 'being grasped by the tree.' The arching grandeur of the tree, the mothering spread, the delicate balance as the tree grips the earth—all these and many more characteristics of the tree are absorbed into his perception and are felt throughout his nervous structure. These are part of the vision he experiences. This vision involves an omission of some aspects of the scene and a greater emphasis on other aspects and the ensuing rearrangement of the whole; but it is more than the sum of all these. Primarily it is a vision that is now not tree, but Tree; the concrete tree Cézanne looked at is formed into the essence of the tree. However original and unrepeatable his vision is, it is still a vision of all trees triggered by his encounter with this particular one. (May 1975, 77-78)

The creative encounter suggests a level of absorption centered in one's own personal being. It implies a level of absorption showing the courage to participate. It also involves “discovering . . . new forms, new symbols, [and] new patterns” (Ibid., 21) within the realm of one's own experience as being-in-the-world. The creative act itself, or more accurately, what happens when a person engages himself during the act or process of creating (during May's encounter), exhibits the coupling between self and world as elucidated by the notion “being-in-the-world,” and this coupling prescribes the meaning it exhibits. May's approach to creativity thus enhances Tillich's courage to create because it expresses a type of encounter, engagement, and interaction which exemplifies the all-important self-world relationship and thereby
illustrates Tillich’s final two facets of the courage to be. Characterized by “the degree of absorption, the degree of intensity” (Ibid., 41)—full “absorption, being caught up in” and being “wholly involved” (Ibid., 44)—encounter is the moment during the creative act which shows that characteristic of courage which is “a centeredness within our own being” (Ibid., 13).

**Bringing to Being**

The encounter which exemplifies being-in-the-world implies a oneness, wherein both poles, self and world, come to fruition by the interaction with the other. To use the example of art and artist, if an artist takes what was a palette of paints and what was a blank canvas and he paints, he exhibits through the painting a connection between himself and the paints and canvas. One might say that the potential of the paint is actualized, as is the potential of the canvas, as well as is the potential of the individual's creative expression of her being. The products of such creative interactions or engagements are, in the words of Professor Joseph Germana, “emergent properties based on the ongoing reciprocal determination between person and world” (Germana 2007, 71). In other words, the actualized self and the actualized world both unfold via our interrelationship with world as one being-in-the-world. Germana points to a passage of May's entitled “Encounter as Interrelating with the World,” where May explains:

> World is interrelated with the person at every moment. A
continuous dialectical process goes on between world and self, self and world; one implies the other, and neither can be understood if we omit the other. (May, 1975, 50)

May goes on:

This is why one can never localize creativity as a subjective phenomenon; one can never study it simply in terms of what goes on within the other person. The pole of world is an inseparable part of the creativity of an individual. What occurs is always a process, a doing--specifically a process interrelating the person and his or her world. (Ibid.)

This process shows the significance of the individual in the self-world engagement. Each pole is actualized by interaction with the other. Stephen Nachmanovitch (an author, violinist, composer, poet, and artist with a background in psychology and literature and a Ph.D. in the history of consciousness) explains that playing the violin is much like the act of sex, where player must inextricably “fuse” with instrument to harmoniously make music. Where “taut bow hairs, ever moving,” become “an extension of the player’s right arm... an extension of brain,” he explains that each interrelates with the other, as male and female with sexual polarity, necessarily complementing each other in an emerging way which is totally new compared with the split and separate parts (1990, 65). This “fusion” (see also Maslow 1970, 105-125) must be seen less as a solid bundle and more of a dynamic interplay in constant interaction, but the point is that by the playing, by the joining of hand and instrument, the purpose of the violins becomes actualized, as does the purpose of the fingers and the arm.
In this way, where Tillich argues that “contingently we are put into the whole web of causal relations,” and “contingently we are determined by them in every moment” (1952, 44), in the same way, the web of causal relations is determined in every moment by us who participate in it. In this respect we come to understand the significance of our selves—that how one chooses to be bears meaning in the world. The creative individual is perhaps most likely to understand not only the effect of the world upon her being, but also the effect of her being upon the world. The creative individual acknowledges the bearing of her own being, and perhaps this is one way to understand Tillich's assertion that ultimately, “by affirming our being we participate in the self-affirmation of being-itself” (Ibid., 181).

The being who encounters shows what it means not only to be oneself, but to be as a part, and thus, by illustrating being-in-the-world, provides the utmost instance of self-affirmation, where by our participation in-the-world, we affirm not only our being but also being-itself. The source of the courage to be (or of the courage to create) is the ultimate ground of all being, Being. By the courage to be or by courageously creating, we affirm that source which is “the living creativity” at the ground of being-itself. Where the danger involving immersing oneself fully is the threat of losing oneself completely (May 1983, 27), the courage to commit oneself fully into an encounter therefore also represents the ultimate example of being in-spite-of. By highlighting an act of courage which both affirms one's being in spite of
anxiety and nonbeing, and which exemplifies a unitive interrelationship between self and world by one's particular engagement as a part of that world through his own particular being, May's creative encounter augments Tillich's courage to create because it brings Tillich's courage to create into the realm of not only courage to be as an individual, but courage to be as a part. In doing so, the courage to create as May describes it substantiates and exemplifies Tillich's courage to be.
CHAPTER FOUR
CREATIVITY AS THE ANSWER

Spiritual Self-Affirmation and Meaning

Tillich offers that “spiritual self-affirmation occurs in every moment in which man lives creatively in the various spheres of meaning” and that “everyone who lives creatively in meanings affirms himself as a participant in these meanings” (Tillich 1952, 46). Though the encounter May describes is common in the artist or musician, anyone, May offers, who engages himself in those meanings, affirms himself by them. May states:

But in our appreciation of the created work--let us say a Mozart quintet--we also are performing a creative act. When we engage a painting, which we have to do especially in modern art if we are authentically to see it, we are experiencing some new moment of sensibility. Some new vision is triggered in us by our contact with the painting; something unique is born in us . . . Appreciation of the music or painting or other works . . . is also a creative act on our part. (May 1975, 22)

This is what Tillich means when he states that “everyone who lives creatively in meanings affirms himself as a participant in those meanings” (Tillich 1952, 46). Where “an assertion of the self, a commitment is essential if the self is to have any reality” (May 1975, 13), the encounter “involves the total person” (Ibid., 49), where the individual affirms himself as a participant by engaging the whole of his being in the world, where “every cell of his body participates in his freedom and spirituality,
and every act of his spiritual creativity is nourished by his vital dynamics” (Tillich 1952, 83). These moments of full immersion—when one is fully present with the whole, or centeredness, of his being—resemble the positive kind of result one hopes to achieve from psychotherapy. As psychotherapist Carl Rogers describes, this “involves a change in the manner of his experiencing” (1989, 64). “Initially [one] is remote from his experiences,” Rogers writes, as in the case of “the intellectualizing person who talks about himself and his feelings in abstractions, leaving you wondering what is actually going on within him” (Ibid.). But “from remoteness,” Rogers continues, “he moves toward an immediacy of his experiencing in which he lives openly in his experiencing” (Ibid.). Once in his experiencing, he “knows that he can turn to it to discover its current meanings” (Ibid.). To return to May's encounter with Cézanne's tree, May explains:

The painting that issues out of this encounter between a human being, Cézanne, and an objective reality, the tree, is literally new, unique and original. Something is born, comes into being, something that did not exist before—which is as good a definition of creativity as we can get. Thereafter everyone who looks at the painting with intensity of awareness and lets it speak to him or her will see the tree with the unique powerful movement, the intimacy between the tree and the landscape, and the architectural beauty which literally did not exist in our relation with trees until Cézanne experienced and painted them. I can say without exaggeration that I never really saw a tree until I had seen and absorbed Cézanne's paintings of them. (May 1975, 78)

May through his absorption now knows that he can turn, like Cézanne did, to his own experiencing to discover, similarly, its meanings. This reflects Tillich's
portrayal of “the scientist held by the content of his discovery”: That is, even “if he has not discovered but only participates in the discovery, it is equally spiritual self-affirmation” (1952, 47; emphasis added). To encounter means to be fully in-the-world in a way which resonates with meanings. When one is fully in-tune, he affirms his spiritual self-affirmation and “through it, ultimate reality becomes manifest” (Ibid.).

The creative process involves delving into the immediate experience of one’s own being. It shows a sort of wrestling between being and nonbeing at the edge of known and not-known. It is on the boundary, pushing for the world to emerge. The creative process exemplifies becoming—taking that which was not and making that which is. Thus May defines creativity as “the process of bringing something new into being” (1975, 39). If the moment before encounter is pregnant with possibility, potential, and meaning, “something is born” out of full engagement which harbors meaning. In regards to creating a poem, for instance, Nachmanovitch suggests that “giving birth to a line of poetry brings with it an incredible rush of energy, coherence and clarity, exaltation and exultation” and “in that moment, beauty is palpable, living” (1990, 18).

The courage to create encompasses these moments of encounter which illustrate the courage to be, and these moments often portray a vivid kind of experience. Something peculiar happens when one most affirms her being by
absorption in the encounter. May explains:

Kierkegaard uses the engaging term *Augenblick*, literally meaning the 'blinking of an eye' and generally translated 'the pregnant moment.' It is the moment when a person suddenly grasps the meaning of some important event in the past or future in the present. Its pregnancy consists of the fact that it is never an intellectual act alone. The grasping of the new meaning always presents the possibility and necessity of some personal decision, some shift in Gestalt, some new orientation of the person toward the world and future. This is experienced by most people as the moment of most heightened awareness; it is referred to in psychological literature as the 'aha' experience. On the philosophical level, Paul Tillich describes it as the moment when 'eternity touches time,' for which moment he has developed the concept of *Kairos*, 'time fulfilled.' In religion and literature this moment when eternity touches time is known as an epiphany. (1983, 141-142)

Nachmanovitch describes this experience as the “moment when the whole thing slides into shape” (1990, 111). Abraham Maslow calls it the “peak-experience” (1970).

**Peak-Experience--Grasping and Being Grasped**

When a person engages fully in the encounter with the wholeness of her being in such a way as that she feels wholly absorbed into it, she might get the strange sense of having forgotten herself; that is, when one is so captured and enthralled, it is as if the person “transcends” one's individual self alone and participates in a larger whole. These peak-experiences are characterized by feelings of wholeness and oneness, and they are possibly one of the results which Tillich
hopes to bring about by the courage to be. According to Maslow, “it is quite characteristic in peak-experiences that the whole universe is perceived as an integrated and unified whole” (1970, 59). This, in effect, echoes Tillich's main point. Whereas “the self, cut off from participation in its world, is an empty shell, a mere possibility” (Tillich 1952, 151), Tillich asserts that “by affirming our being we participate in the self-affirmation of being-itself” (Ibid., 181), the unifying whole which is the structure of all (and is itself all) that exists.

The superstructure of existence, the living creativity, is the ultimate ground which we ourselves participate in when we affirm ourselves by such ways as the creative encounter. These moments of encounter are so saturated with meaning that their qualities feel timeless and enduring, as if the permanent is breaking through the temporary. The infinite seems to manifest itself through the finite, showing “a kind of immutable, eternal quality” which May describes artists as feeling sometimes when they paint (1975, 69). Nachmanovitch describes similarly the moments in which jazz musicians improvise. “Creative, in this context,” writes Tillich, “has the sense not of original creativity as performed by the genius but of living spontaneously, in action and reaction, with the contents of one's cultural life” (Tillich 1952, 46). These moments of encounter entail certain “characteristics of Being” (Maslow 1970, 91), and these characteristics might be said to be especially manifest in those who live creatively in meanings.
May refers to a level of enduring or “mature” values “which transcend the immediate situation[,] encompass past and future,” and help to assuage the negative consequences of anxiety (May 1967, 82), and I believe these correlate with what Maslow calls “the intrinsic values of Being” which are acknowledged or recognized during the peak-experience (1970, 64). Maslow describes the the “Being-values” as either a “list of the described attributes of reality when perceived in peak-experiences” or “a list of the irreducible, intrinsic values of this reality,” but in either case they “are paralleled also by the characteristics of selfhood (identity) in peak-experiences” (Ibid.). Certain of these attributes also parallel the experience of the creative being-in-the-world. These include:

. . . form . . . integration . . . wholeness . . . unity . . . oneness . . . interconnectedness . . . dynamic . . . eternal . . . aliveness . . . self-perpetuating . . . self-forming . . . expressing itself . . . non-comparability . . . finality . . . fulfillment . . . nothing missing or lacking . . . totality . . . rhythm . . . playfulness . . . (Ibid., 93-94)

Maslow describes “peakers”--those inclined to have peak-experiences or “transcendent experiences”--as having “B-cognition” (i.e., “Being-cognition”), a kind of perception wherein “the percept is exclusively and fully attended to” by “a tremendous concentration of a kind which does not normally occur” (Ibid., 60). Still, this concentration is not strained but is rather a kind of effortless effort (Nachmanovitch 1990, 52), where one's attention, though fully-focused, is “non-evaluating, non-comparing, non-judging” (Maslow 1970, 60). During such
participation, “there is a tendency for things to become equally important rather than to be ranged in a hierarchy from very important to quite unimportant” (Ibid.). Marked by the characteristic of seeing the world “in its own Being (as an end itself) rather than as something to be used . . . or reacted to,” the peak-experience “justifies not only itself but even living itself,” proving to the experiencer “that there are ends in the world, that there are things or objects or experiences to yearn for which are worthwhile in themselves” (Ibid., 61-62). “This in itself,” says Maslow, “is a refutation of the proposition that life and living is meaningless” (Ibid., 63), showing how the courage to create, through an encounter imbued with meaning, can strengthen one's spiritual self-affirmation in-spite-of.

Maslow calls those who can achieve this experience more “fully human” (95) because they experience with the whole of themselves and not just parts. Those most fully human creatively engage with their entirety. The “organized bundle of potentialities” which is the human being (May 1986, 13) actualizes himself by expressing through participation the whole of himself, thereby affirming his being (and perhaps all Being).

Still, there are also those who are blocked from such experiences. Maslow's description of “non-peakers” parallels those whose perception is dichotomized by the subject-object split as depicted earlier. These persons “try to be extremely or completely rational or 'materialistic' or mechanistic” (1970, 22), mirroring those with
tendencies of the “ultra-scientific” who espouse “the nineteenth-century conception of science as an unemotional or anti-emotional activity” (Ibid.) But the non-peakers who are “ruled entirely by logic and rationality” (Ibid.) are wrong in thinking that experiences like peak-experiences are unreasonable. The encounter as viewed by the non-peaker is in this regard misperceived, because according to May, the encounter “is not to be thought of merely as a Bacchic 'letting go',” but rather it “involves the total person, with the subconscious and unconscious acting in unity with the conscious. It is not, thus irrational; it is, rather, suprarational,” bringing “intellectual, volitional, and emotional functions into play all together” (May 1975, 48-49). It is in this light that “the creative person, in the inspirational phase of the creative furor, loses his past and future and lives only in the moment” (Maslow 1971, 61). He is “all there” with his entire being, “totally immersed, fascinated and absorbed in the present, in the current situation, in the here-now, with the matter-in-hand” (Ibid.). Maslow thus calls for “a pervasively holistic attitude and way of thinking” (1975, xi), and this in turn may result in a sort of playful, self-affirming spontaneity with which one interacts with her world when she expresses the courage to create.

The view of life of the non-peaker, however, is such that, according Maslow, “the person regard[s] his peak- and transcendent experiences as a kind of insanity, a complete loss of control, a sense of being overwhelmed by irrational emotions, etc”
These characteristics of the non-peaker also correlate with the patterns of neurotic anxiety as have been discussed.

The person who is afraid of going insane and who is, therefore, desperately hanging on to stability, control, reality, etc., seems to be frightened by peak-experiences and tends to fight them off. For the compulsive-obsessive person, who organizes his life around the denying and the controlling of emotion, the fear of being overwhelmed by an emotion (which is interpreted as a loss of control) is enough for him to mobilize all his stamping-out and defensive activities against the peak-experience. (Ibid., 23)

There seems to be a significant relationship between the person who cannot “peak” and the person unable to affirm his being in-spite-of, and also between the creative being and the peak-experiencer. To show the relationship between being and creating, and to show ultimately the relationship between the courage to create and the courage to be, some final characteristics of the creative individual will be examined before drawing to a close.

The being who harnesses the courage to create by way of “the creative attitude” (Maslow 1971, 57-71) will best be situated to affirm himself in-spite-of. I believe this courageous state of being encompasses characteristics common among creative humans being, and these characteristics promote human health by fostering self-affirmation in Tillich's three forms (ontic, spiritual, and moral). These common characteristics of creative humans being are encounter (immersion), process (adaptation), and flow (play). They result in a sort of acceptance by the individual being on his own behalf, they all imply meaning, and each is the result of a creative
attitude which exemplifies the courage to create and the courage to be.

The Courage to Create and the Healthy Personality—
Developing a Creative Attitude

Several psychologists have explicitly proposed that a connection exists between creativity and the healthy human being. For instance, May urges that “the creative process must be explored . . . as representing the highest degree of emotional health” (Ibid., 40). Rogers suggests that “there is a desperate social need for the creative behavior of creative individuals” (1989, 347). He goes on, “it has been found that when the individual is 'open' to all of his experience . . . then his behavior will be creative, and his creativity may be trusted to be essentially constructive” (Ibid., 352). Abraham Maslow goes as far as to offer that “the concept of creativeness and the concept of the healthy, self-actualizing, fully human person seem to be coming closer and closer together, and may perhaps turn out to be the same thing” (1971, 57). There are a number of benefits which result from being creative, possibly resulting from traits characteristic of the creative personality. The first characteristic is that one participates by encounter. The second involves process.

Process

The creative individual acknowledges process. To use examples from art, a painting does not just appear from the ether. Rather, it emerges, stroke by stroke. A
sculpture does not merely materialize instantaneously, but rather, it emerges, by the sculptor chipping away. Perhaps by the process of creating or participating in an *emerging work of art*, the creative being begins to see her *self* as one. That is, one who understands the nature of creative process may more readily recognize her own *being as also a creative process*. In this way, life would imitate art, because life would be art. As Nachmanovitch puts it, “the noun of self becomes a verb” (1990, 52). This “willingness to be a process” (Rogers 1989, 122) indicates that “the person . . . emerges” (Ibid., 115) in the same way the painting or sculpture does--not instantaneously, but by chipping away, and by progressive strokes. This is accompanied by a feeling of “being 'me in action,' or being an actualization of potentialities in himself which heretofore have not existed and are now emerging into existence” (Ibid., 354).

In identifying some characteristics of his *healthy* patients who come to understand themselves as a process, Rogers reflects more characteristics of the *creative* individual. This person is not only “more open to all the elements of his organic experience” as he develops “a trust in his own organism as an instrument of sensitive living,” but he also learns to live “in his life as a participant in a fluid, ongoing process, in which he is continually discovering new aspects of himself in the flow of his experience” (Ibid., 124). The point has been raised but might be reemphasized that *process* also highlights a characteristic of the living creativity of
being-itself; that is, Being, as has been established, is, itself, a process. Tillich puts it this way:

The ground of everything that is is not a dead identity without movement and becoming; it is living creativity. Creatively it affirms itself, eternally conquering its own nonbeing. As such it is the pattern of self-affirmation of every finite being and the source of the courage to be. (Tillich 1952, 34)

It is an ongoing and dynamic process of overcoming. It might be called an emerging forever-flux, or the fluidly emanating. It brings us to the third characteristic of the creative being: flow.

**Flow**

The creative individual is able to appreciate the flow in which he participates. As indicated during the discussion on being-in-the-world, world is not stagnant. This being the case, Maslow urges that, especially due to “a change of pace in history” where “life moves far more rapidly now,” perhaps more so than ever “we need a different kind of human being” who is “able to live in a world which changes perpetually” (1971, 58). The creative being exhibits an ability to accept flow and change. Maslow argues that “the farther reaches of human nature” (1971) imply “trying to make ourselves over into people who don't need to staticize the world, who don't need to freeze it and to make it stable” (Ibid., 59). Being creative indicates an ability to adapt. Perhaps the most creative individuals are those most adept at adapting in the midst of flow and change—those who still have the courage
to affirm themselves, despite the ways in which nonbeing tends to prevent the self from affirming itself. The creative individual can “go with flow” if need be, and she is more willing to play in and with a world which, like her, constantly emerges.

All of these elements characterize the creative individual as she embodies a creative attitude in her approach toward all aspects of life. This embodiment is consistent with what Carl Rogers identifies as “a trend which is evident in [the] process of becoming a person” (1989, 119). It involves the ability “to play spontaneously” (Ibid., 355). Nachmanovitch points out that where “we know what might happen in the next day or minute . . . we cannot know what will happen” (1990, 21). “To the extent that we feel sure of what will happen,” writes Nachmanovitch, “we lock into the future and insulate ourselves against those essential surprises” (Ibid.); this correlates with the way the neurotic attempts to preserve his being by avoiding nonbeing, spending energy to preserve with certainty what he already is (to protect his self from his anxieties) while yet sacrificing the (surprising) potential of what he could possibly be. Both imply an inability to accept that which as of yet is not. Nachmanovitch thus endorses a type of “surrender,” whereby one relinquishes some of his ability to control things and cultivates “a comfortable attitude towards not-knowing and being nurtured by the mystery of moments that are dependably surprising, ever fresh” (Ibid., 21-22). For May and Tillich this implies confronting nonbeing not in order to conquer it, but in a way
which receives or accepts it in an integrative way. Being creative involves a willingness to put oneself forward and “play” along the border of known and not-yet-known, along the edge of that which is and that which is not. To play is to participate meaningfully in-spite-of in order to better actualize one's potentials.

The Unconscious Potential and Passion for Form

The last two aspects of May's courage to create have to do with the third and fourth ways in which May analyzes the nature of creativity. After encounter and process, the third way May examines the creative is by relation to the unconscious.

Norman Brown discusses art in terms of that “struggle against repression” during which the repressed unconscious is liberated (Brown 1959, 64). To May, the complexity of this repression is that “it involves a struggle of the individual's being against the possibility of nonbeing” (May 1983, 18). The matter is what the self could be against that which would prevent the self from becoming what the self could be. Similarly, May urges that the “unconscious,” from which some would suggest creative bursts flow, must be thought of in like terms. Instead of considering the “unconscious dimensions (or aspects or sources) of experience” (1975, 55) as “a reservoir of impulses [or] wishes which are culturally unacceptable,” May defines the unconscious as “those potentialities for knowing and experiencing which the individual cannot or will not actualize” (1983, 17-18). Where Tillich asserts that “to participate meaningfully. . . is creative insofar as it changes that in which one
participates” (Tillich 1952, 46), in terms of one's consciousness (or unconscious), what changes is oneself. Where the unconscious self is on the verge of becoming but does not, through creative courage and self-affirmation, that buried potential self crosses a threshold and comes into being as that which is.

May's final aspect of creativity, the “passion for form,” means filling the perceived gaps which one experiences the world as having in order to recognize “the wholistic scene” (Ibid., 131). It means seeing the forest through the trees, so to speak, with a lively fervor appreciative of an experiencing identity where one has the power to form—“to shape feelings, sensibilities, enjoyments, hopes into a pattern that makes me aware of myself” (May 1975, 135). The creative human being recognizes such patterns in the process, 1) confronting what he as yet is not on the verge towards what he might be and 2) actualizing those potentialities while flowing forth with his individual being in a participating way.

**The Courage to Create and Be**

Rogers highlights a significant step in growth whereby the individual increasingly comes to feel that the “locus of evaluation [i.e. the source of his choices and decisions] lies within himself” (Rogers 1989, 119). When this happens, one of the primary steps in achieving healthy personality (a step which the existentialists acknowledged) is taken—the individual “recognizes that it rests within himself to choose” (Ibid., 119). By acknowledging this choice, one gets closer to asking what
is “perhaps the most important question for the creative individual,” which is, “Am I living in a way which is deeply satisfying to me, and which truly expresses me?” (Ibid.; italics modified).

Where “we are living at a time when one age is dying and the new age is not yet born,” May urges that “a choice confronts us” (1975, 11). “Shall we,” May asks, “as we feel our foundations shaking, withdraw in anxiety and panic? Frightened by the loss of our familiar mooring places, shall we become paralyzed and cover our inaction with apathy?” (Ibid.) Where in doing those things we “will have surrendered our chance to participate in the forming of the future,” May proposes that we must “seize the courage necessary” in order to “consciously participate, on however small the scale, in the forming of the new . . . ” (Ibid., 11-12), thus re-emphasizing the character of courage not only as ontological, but as an ethical act.

May emphasizes that “anxiety occurs at the point where some emerging potentiality or possibility faces the individual, some possibility of fulfilling his existence; but this very possibility involves the destroying of present security, which thereupon gives rise to the tendency to deny the new potentiality” (1983, 111). Confronting this anxiety constructively (and not withdrawing from it) proves healthy. That is, if the present security is destroyed, and yet the tendency to deny the new possibility is met with courage and taken in (i.e., if the new possibility is embraced rather than denied), then the emerging potentiality--the possibility of
fulfilling his existence--not only remains possible, but can be more likely achieved, realized, and actualized on the path towards becoming fully human. As Tillich proposes, “life must risk itself to win itself” (Tillich 1971, 53). The creative individual courageously affirms herself in spite of the threats of nonbeing (and the anxieties) and harnesses the source of being by means of an attitude which welcomes encounter and through which she engages fully. As a result, she more fluidly actualizes the potential of her being, and in doing so, she affirms herself, invaluably and inimitably, as a vital and meaningful being-in-the-world. When one expresses the courage to create, he exemplifies the courage to be.
CONCLUSION

Most of the ideas which have developed in this thesis have to do with establishing meaning, and this pertains to the "spiritual realm" of self-affirmation which Tillich describes. It is conceivable that none of the ideas developed in this analysis are viewed in a religious light, but there are implicit ties which could be distinguished which may at least be worth notice. It has been noted that when Tillich refers to the living creativity, he is referring to God. For Tillich, God is not "a being" but rather *is* Being (Tillich [1964] 1990, 254). Tillich is Protestant, but this idea hardly represents Protestantism as a whole. The ideas of being and a greater Being in many ways reflect the Hindu atman-Brahman relationship. The ideas might imply precisely that sort of individual self and greater Self tie. The idea that we need to become "more fully human" might echo the Muslim notion of getting back to *fitra*, humankind in her purest form, because we have, in a sense, forgotten ourselves. Part of the psychological therapeutic methods seem to imply remembering who it is we are--a coming back to, of sorts, which might reflect the Christian fall from grace and an attempt to "recuperate." The idea that each of us is endowed with a creative potential represents an idea from my own personal religion, Judaism, in terms of the "divine spark." The idea of being new correlates with what Tillich calls the New Being. The idea of surrendering oneself in the awe of the peak-experience resonates with Islam. The idea of an ultimate oneness correlates again
with Judaism. The idea of flow and acceptance indicates a Taoistic receptivity. The idea of encounter and self-transcendence resonates with Zen Buddhism. The idea of the encounter can be viewed as a divine-human encounter, or it could be viewed as most holy because it is most human and most natural. Perhaps the “being there” (dasein) is echoed by the authors of the Hebrew Bible who wrote that God answered, “Here I am.” In three words, this greater Dasein would sum up the ultimate Being-there. The idea of a subtle divine essence which comprises all of existence and our selves ties to what the boy Svetaketu's father Uddalaka tells him in the Chandogya Upanishad: “That is the truth. That is the Self. And that, Svetaketu, that art thou.”

Nachmanovitch's prologue is about the boy with the new flute, who, after consecutive failures of trying to please his master, plays again after many years but this time having nothing to gain and nothing to lose. “Like a god!” the oldest man from the audience exclaims (1990, 3). If we engage ourselves in such a way as to make whatever it is we are doing an end itself, if we can escalate our state to a level of “complete absorption . . . as if the percept had become for the moment the whole of Being” (Maslow 1968, 74), then we can live creatively in the meanings which we help to prescribe. This is what May means when he says that “persons . . . are not simply engaged in knowing their world: what they are engaged in is a passionate re-forming of their world by virtue of their interrelationship with it” (1975, 134). Creativity is not merely trying to find and constitute meaning in life—it is
demonstrating that meaning by virtue of being. The human being expresses meaning, at least according to Tillich, by representing the source of his courage to be--the ultimate ground of all being. If we see God as the dynamic Being of existence, then when one “feels the flow” or is “in the zone,” is he tapping into (or out of), somehow, that source of his courage to be? Further, if God is Being, and we express our own being by creating, then when we create, do we become more Being-like? Are the expressions of one's being perhaps manifestations of all-Being, or God? And if God “is pure actuality and therefore divine” (Tillich 1990, 254), then is to self-actualize divine?

I only want to offer that sometimes, through absorption and fullest immersion in encounter, a person will perceive with passion as the lover looks at his beloved, affirming himself while at the same time so engaging himself that he forgets himself and in this way transcends himself. Sometimes, moments feel saturated with meaning and value, and if one might, as in a lucid dream, capture that dynamic flow and move herself as a changing process on the verge, accepting whatever comes without angst or fright, then she will perhaps be more able to play more freely with the known and not-known and to confront that which tends to prevent her from affirming her self. Is this somehow divine? It may not be “religious” at all. Henry Miller, in The Colossus of Maroussi, writes:

In the Western world, this link between the human and the divine is broken. The scepticism and paralysis produced by this schism
in the very nature of man provides the clue to the inevitable destruction of our present civilization. If men cease to believe they will one day become gods then they will surely become worms. ([1941] 1958, 235)

I offer similarly that if humankind ceases to believe that it can one day change or grow or become fully human, it will it right. In terms of therapy, Rogers asserts:

If I accept the other person as something fixed, already diagnosed and classified, already shaped by his past, then I am doing my part to confirm this limited hypothesis. If I accept him as a process of becoming, then I am doing what I can to confirm or make real his potentialities. (1989, 55)

I want to offer that there seems to be a connection between getting to be the best of oneself and the type of experience as described in the “peak” moments and creative encounters. This connection is critical. Still, the many in-between moments should not be taken for granted. As Sam Keen writes, “I am here and now” and “although I hope that I will continue to grow toward a richer and more satisfying style of life, there is no future perfection I must achieve before I may accept myself” (Keen 1970, 36).

When those moment do come, they may be so powerful that “if it were never to happen again, the power of the experience could permanently affect the attitude toward life” (Maslow 1970, 76). Maslow writes:

A single glimpse of heaven is enough to confirm its existence even if it is never experienced again. It is my strong suspicion that even one such experience might be able to prevent suicide, for instance, and perhaps many varieties of slow self-destruction. (Ibid., 75; for a literary expression of such a moment, see
Archibald Macleish's *J. B.* (1961), specifically Sarah's experience with the forsythia, where “Even the forsythia beside the Stair could stop me.”

Whatever it is that people feel in the moment of that exultation, they feel it. It does not have to be “God.” Call it anything. But call it something.

During his analysis on creativity, May asks, “What are the nature and characteristics of the creativity that has its source in these unconscious depths of personality?” (1975, 56; emphasis added). I think Tillich provides an interesting answer which I will use as the final thought to bring this study to an end.

Tillich proposes:

The name of this infinite and inexhaustible depth and ground of all being is *God*. That depth is what the word *God* means. . . if that word has not much meaning for you, translate it, and speak of the depths of your life, of the source of your being, of your ultimate concern, of what you take seriously without any reservation. Perhaps, in order to do so, you must forget everything traditional that you have learned about God, perhaps even the word itself. For if you know that God means depth, you know much . . . For you cannot think or say: [“]Life has no depth! Life itself is shallow. Being-itself is surface only . . . [”] (1948, 57)
REFERENCE LIST


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