



# The North American Paul Tillich Society Newsletter

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### NEWS ABOUT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY IN TORONTO

The Annual meeting of the North American Paul Tillich Society will take place on November 22 and 23, 2002, in Toronto, Ontario. As always, the meeting will take place in conjunction with the American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature’s annual meeting from November 23 through November 26, 2002.

Registration for the meeting and housing reservations are currently available. “Super-Saver” registration rates are in effect until Sept. 15. You must be registered for the meeting to secure housing. Your AAR/SBL dues must be paid up to date by August 1, 2002.

To make reservations for the meeting and for housing (one method only):

#### ON LINE:

[www.aarweb.org](http://www.aarweb.org) OR [www.sbl-site.org](http://www.sbl-site.org)

FAX: (available 24 hours a day)

330.963.0319 (meeting registration and housing forms)

#### MAIL:

Annual Meeting of the AAR/SBL Registration  
and Housing  
c/o Conference Registration and Housing Bureau  
2450 Edison Blvd, Suite 2  
Twinsburg, OH 44087

#### QUESTIONS:

800.575.7185 (U.S. and Canada)  
330.425.9330 (outside U.S. and Canada)

Please note that the hotel prices quoted in the AAR/SBL Annual Meetings Bulletin are quoted in Canadian dollars. Thus, a room that costs \$150 CDN is the equivalent to \$94 USD.

The annual program book will be mailed in early September (allow a few weeks for delivery). The program for the North American Paul Tillich Society sessions on Friday afternoon and Saturday morning, along with the new AAR Group on Tillich, will be printed in the October Newsletter. The banquet as usual will be held on Friday evening. This year’s banquet speaker will be Peter John. Both Gert Hummel, President of the DPTG, and Marc Boss, President of the APTF, will be present at the meeting this year.

**NEW PUBLICATIONS ON or ABOUT TILlich  
OR BY MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY**

Thomas F. O'Meara, *Erich Przywara, S.J.: His Theology and His World*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002.

*From the Spring Newsletter:*

John J. Carey. *Paulus, Then and Now: A Study of Paul Tillich's Theological World and the Continuing Relevance of His Work*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2002.

The Paul Tillich Society of Brazil (Sociedade Paul Tillich do Brasil) is pleased to announce that their journal is now online:  
[www.metodista.br/Noticias/correlatio](http://www.metodista.br/Noticias/correlatio)

**REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL PAUL  
TILlich SYMPOSIUM**

The Ninth International Paul Tillich Symposium, under the sponsorship of the Deutsche-Paul-Tillich-Gesellschaft, was held in Frankfurt/ Main from 31 May to 2 June 2002. The theme of this year's symposium was "Trinity and/or Quaternity: Paul Tillich's Reopening of the Trinitarian Problem." As always, Bishop Prof. Dr. Gert Hummel was the organizer and gracious host of the Symposium. He was ably and amiably assisted by Doris Lax, Secretary of the DPTG. Accommodations at the Philipp-Jakob-Spener-Haus and Kolping-Haus were very pleasant and greatly enhanced the enjoyment of the meeting.

Bishop Hummel opened the meeting on Friday afternoon with an introduction to the theme of the ninth symposium and a warm welcome to the participants from fifteen different countries in Europe and North and South America.

In order to accommodate the number of papers, parallel working sessions were held throughout most of the conference. The topics for each session are as follows:

- Session I, Marc Boss, Chair  
Approaching the Issue
- Session II, Holger Strutwolf, Chair  
Experience as a Starting Point
- Session III, Théo Junker, Chair  
Biblical and Historical-Theological Approaches

- Session IV, Erdmann Sturm, Chair  
Systematic-Theological Approaches
- Session V, Werner Schüßler, Chair  
Symbolic Understanding as a Solution?
- Sessions VI, Ilona Nord, Chair  
Beyond Trinity
- Section VII, Wolf R. Wrege, Chair  
Chances for an Interreligious Dialogue?
- Section VIII, Theodor Mahlmann, Chair  
Ethical and Practical(-Theological) Aspects
- Section IX, Wessel Stoker, Chair  
Controversial Perspectives

The topic of Tillich and the Trinity evoked interesting and controversial papers and stimulating discussion and questions. Through the years, the Frankfurt Symposia on Paul Tillich have produced excellent papers and outstanding scholarship in the volumes published by Walter de Gruyter of Berlin and Lit Verlag of Münster. In addition, one of the special moments is the surprise that our host, Gert Hummel, prepares for the Saturday evening banquet. Not even the DPTG's Secretary, Doris Lax, knows of the destination. The evening was thoughtfully planned and perfectly executed, with an elegant table, splendid wine, and much good collegiality, friendship, and *Gemütlichkeit*.

This year's banquet was held at the Hofgut Dippelshof, outside of Darmstadt. The private banquet room was as elegant as the menu. As each member entered the room, they were greeted with a glass of champagne. The menu consisted of: Odenwälder Lachsforellentatar mit Spargelsalat; Schaunsuppe von rotem Tai-Curry; Rind.-und Kalbsmedaillons unter der Kräuterkruste auf Portweinjus/ Jahreszeitliches Gemüse und Kartoffel-Roulade; Dessertvariationen "Dippelshof." Splendid wines added to the superb food. During the banquet, Robison James presented Gert Hummel with a contribution to the Church in Georgia and his apostolic work there.

The Symposium concluded on Sunday morning with a worship service conducted by Bishop Hummel at the inactive Dominican church across the street from the Spener-Haus. After the final two papers on Sunday morning in plenary session, Bishop Hummel concluded with words of gratitude to all present. He plans to convene a tenth symposium in 2004.

In addition to the members of the Deutsche-Paul-Tillich-Gesellschaft, members of other Tillich Societies—the Brazilian, the Dutch, the French-

speaking, and the North American—were present and presented papers. Members of the North American Paul Tillich Society in attendance included Young-Ho Chun, Donald Dreisbach, Robison James, Russell Manning, Jean Richard, Terence O’Keefe, Robert Scharlemann, Mary Ann Stenger, and Frederick J. Parrella.

This year’s proceedings will be edited by Gert Hummel and Doris Lax, and will be published by LIT Verlag of Münster, Hamburg, and London as a volume in the Tillich-Studien Series. All of the Symposia are the products of the vision, the efficiency, the generosity, and the gracious hospitality of Gert Hummel. The members of the North American Paul Tillich Society are very grateful to Bishop Hummel for his contributions to Tillich scholarship.



#### EDITOR’S NOTE:

The editor invites comments, preferably by Email, on any of the papers published in this issue or in previous issues of the Newsletter. Letters will be published in subsequent Newsletters.

#### IN SEARCH OF A GOD FOR EVOLUTION: PAUL TILlich AND TEILHARD DE CHARDIN

**John F. Haught**

The world’s religions, at least during the period of their emergence, knew nothing about Big Bang cosmology, deep time, or biological evolution. Generally speaking, they have still not caught up with these ideas. Even in the scientific West the findings of evolutionary biology and cosmology continue to lurk only at the fringes of contemporary theological awareness. The sensibilities of most believers in God, including theologians, have been fashioned in an imaginative context defined either by ancient cosmographies or, if philosophically tutored, by equally timeworn ontologies that are static and hierarchical. Our religious understandings of ultimate reality, our thoughts about the meaning of human existence and destiny, our intuitions about what is ultimately good and what the good life is, and our ideas of what is evil or unethical—all of these at least originally took up residence in a human awareness still innocent of the implications of deep cosmic time, and largely unaware of the prospect that the

universe may still be only at the dawn of its journey through time.

How, then, are we to think about God, if at all, in a manner proportionate to the new scientific understanding of biological evolution and cosmic process? Probably the majority of scientists have given up on such a project, settling into their impressions that the immense universe of contemporary natural science has by now vastly outgrown what astronomer Harlow Shapely once referred to as the anthropomorphic one-planet deity of our terrestrial religions. Theology, meanwhile, is just beginning to reconsider the idea of God in a way that would render it consonant with evolution.

The famous Jesuit geologist and paleontologist, Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), was far ahead of professional theologians in perceiving evolution’s demand for a revitalized understanding of God. Our new awareness of nature’s immensities—in the domains of space, time, and organized physical complexity—provides us, he thought, with the exciting opportunity to enlarge our sense of God far beyond that of any previous age. Moreover, as Teilhard also emphasized, the new scientific picture of the universe has not only amplified our sense of cosmic immensity; it has also altered our whole understanding of the sort of thing the universe is. Science has now shown quite clearly that the cosmos is a story. Nature is narrative to the core. As physicist Karl Friedrich von Weizsäcker argues in *The History of Nature*, the greatest scientific discovery of the Twentieth Century was that the universe is historical (Weizsäcker; see also Toulmin and Goodfield; Pannenberg, 86-98). And Teilhard was one of the first scientists in the last century to have fully realized this fact. The cosmos, he often repeated, is not a fixed body of things, but a genesis—a still unfolding drama rather than merely a frozen agglomeration of spatially related objects. The world is still coming into being (1999).

It is now of utmost importance, therefore, for religious thought to reshape its ideas of nature, human existence, and reality as such in a manner proportionate to the idea of a cosmos still emerging in the remarkable ways that science is recording. Above all, evolution requires a revolution in our thoughts about God. But “who,” Teilhard asked, “will at last give evolution *its own* God?” (1969, 240)

Although Teilhard himself was a profoundly religious thinker, he was not a professional theologian, and so his own efforts to construe a “God for evolu-

tion” stopped short of the systematic development his intuitions demanded. The project of shaping theology in a manner fully apprised of evolution still remains to be done. It may be instructive, therefore, to look into a great theological system such as that of Paul Tillich as a possible resource for a contemporary theology of evolution. After giving a brief sketch of Teilhard’s central ideas immediately below, therefore, I will scan several facets of Tillich’s theology to see if it may prove capable of giving us “a God for evolution.”

### Teilhard’s Essential Ideas

For Teilhard, the whole universe is in evolution and there is a clear direction to the cosmic story. He consciously extended the term “evolution” beyond its biological meaning and applied it to the cosmic process. In spite of the obvious meandering or “branching” character of biological evolution, he observed, the universe as a whole has clearly moved in the direction of increasing organized complexity. The cosmic process has gone through the pre-atomic, atomic, molecular, unicellular, multicellular, vertebrate, primate, and human phases of evolution. During this journey, the universe has manifested a measurable growth in instances of organized complexity.

What gives significance to this story is that during the course of cosmic evolution there has been a gradual increase in what Teilhard called “consciousness”—in direct proportion to the increase in organized physical complexity. In obedience to the “law of complexity-consciousness,” as matter has become more complex in its organization, consciousness and eventually (in humans at least) self-awareness have emerged. The “inside” of things has become more and more intensified, more centered and more liberated from habitual physical routine. And there is no reason to suspect that the cosmic journey toward complexity, having reached the level of human consciousness, will now inevitably be suspended. Indeed our own hominized planet is now developing a “noosphere,” (a new geological stratum consisting of tightening webs of mind, culture, economics, politics, science, information, and technology), thus moving evolution in the direction of a new level of complexity-consciousness. Apparently, and in spite of the protests of many biologists to the contrary, a cosmological perspective shows that there is a net overall advance or “progress” in evolution after all.

Teilhard abstractly refers to the ultimate goal of this advance as “Omega” (1999, 191-94).

*Omega is “God.”* Nothing less than a transcendent force, radically distinct from but also intimately incarnate in matter, could ultimately explain evolutionary emergence. For Teilhard, it is the attraction of God—Omega that finally accounts for the world’s restless tendency to move beyond any specific level of development toward ontologically richer modes of being. In the world’s religions, the universe’s “search for a center” finally becomes conscious. At a deep level of explanation—deeper than science itself can reach—evolution can be said to occur because as God draws near to the world, the world explodes “upwards into God” (1964, 83). If we read beneath the surface of the world that science has discovered, we may understand both humanity’s long religious journey and the whole epic of evolution prior to it as one long cosmic search for an integrating and renewing Center. This quest recurrently gathers the past into a new present and carries the whole stream of creation toward the God who creates the world from “up ahead” (1964, 272-81).

Teilhard also thought in cosmic terms about the Christ of his own creed, deliberately following the cosmic Christology of St. Paul and some later Christian writers. As a Christian thinker, he pictured the whole vast universe as converging on and coming to a head in the Christ of the Parousia, the one who is to come. Redemption, for Teilhard as for St. Paul, coincides with the new creation of the whole universe in Christ (1975, 92-100; 203-08).

As his thought matured, Teilhard increasingly complained that traditional theology, insofar as it is focused on *esse* (the idea of *being*) is unable as such to contextualize the dramatic new sense of a world still in the process of becoming. Moreover, theology has conceived of God too much in terms of Aristotle’s notion of a Prime Mover impelling things from the past (*a retro*). Evolution demands that we think of God as drawing the world from up ahead (*ab ante*), pulling it forward into the future. Creation is a process of gathering the multiple strands of cosmic evolution into an ultimate unity located not so much up above as up ahead: *creatio est uniri*. For Teilhard, as for the author of Revelation, God is both Alpha and Omega. But after Darwin and the new cosmology, we must say that God is less Alpha than Omega: “Only a God who is functionally and totally ‘Omega’ can satisfy us,” Teilhard exclaims. But he persists with his question and now ours as well: “where shall we find such a God?” (1969, 240).

## Tillich and Teilhard

Half a century after Teilhard's death we have yet to answer this question. For the most part theologians still think and write almost as though Darwin, Einstein, and Hubble never existed. Their attention is fixed almost exclusively on questions about the meaning of human existence, human history, social justice, hermeneutics, gender issues, or the individual's spiritual journey. These are all worthy of attention, of course, but except for a smattering of ecologically interested theologies the natural world remains distant from dominant theological interest. In the Christian churches, redemption and eschatology are still typically thought of in terms of a harvesting of human souls rather than the coming to fulfillment of an entire universe. Furthermore, the divorce of theology from the cosmos persists no less glaringly in what has come to be called "postmodern theology," most of which ironically seems unable to move beyond modernity's sense of the fundamental estrangement of both God and ourselves from the non-human natural world.<sup>1</sup>

In view of the general failure of theology to respond adequately to evolution we may ask here whether the impressive theological work of Paul Tillich is perhaps of sufficient depth and breadth to bring out systematically the religious meaning of the new evolutionary picture of the universe that so energized Teilhard's own life and thought. In great measure, the contemporary value of Tillich's thought may be assessed in terms of its adequacy to this task. Toward the end of his life Tillich had become acquainted at least vaguely with some of Teilhard's ideas, and although he considered Teilhard's vision of the universe too "progressivistic" for his own tastes, he nevertheless felt "near" to the modest Jesuit in "so many respects" (Tillich, 1966, 90-91). Tillich did not say exactly what attracted him to Teilhard, so we can only guess. I suspect, though, that he found in Teilhard a deeply Christian thinker who mirrored many of Tillich's own religious and theological intuitions.

For example, Tillich and Teilhard both sought a reformulation of Christian spirituality in which we do not have to turn our backs on the universe or the earth in order to approach the Kingdom of God. Additionally, they agreed that life in a finite universe is inevitably, and not just accidentally, riddled with ambiguity, and that the estrangement of the universe from its essential being somehow coincides with the very fact of its existence. They both wrestled in

creative ways with how to balance the vertical (transcendent) and horizontal (immanent) dimensions of human aspiration. They both looked for a way in which the human person could experience religious meaning without heteronomy (Tillich's term for our being subjected to a law alien to our authentic being and freedom). That is, they longed for a kind of communion with God, with other humans, and with the universe that differentiates rather than obliterates personality and freedom. They held in common an intuition that love is the key to all unity, but that *agape* should never be separated from *eros*. Not insignificantly they also shared an appreciation of the dimension of the inorganic which had been largely overlooked, and is still seldom noticed, by theology. (See Drummy.) Similarly they both recognized that the materialist metaphysical foundation of modern science is, in Tillich's words, nothing less than an "ontology of death." (1963, Vol. III, 19), yet they both sought to address this baleful modern perspective without reverting to vitalism. Above all, they each placed special emphasis on the need for religious thought to open itself to the category of the New.

Both Tillich and Teilhard were also extremely sensitive to the ways in which dualism and "supernaturalism" had sickened Christianity. Although Teilhard was not directly influenced as much by Nietzsche as was Tillich, he was sensitive to Nietzsche's accusations that Christian piety often fosters a hatred of the earth that saps human existence of a wholesome "zest for living" (1970, 231-43). He also agreed with modern secularistic critiques that Platonic influences in Christian thought had robbed the world's "becoming" of any real significance, of the capacity to bring about anything truly new. Indeed, there are passages in Teilhard's books, as well as in his letters, that sound hauntingly Nietzschean in tone.

In the end, however, Teilhard no less than Tillich found the Nietzschean outlook suffocating. Any vision of things that ultimately closes off the world to new being, however friendly to becoming it may initially seem to be, is no domicile for the human spirit or for the religious adventure. Both the metaphysics of eternity, in which everything important has already happened, and the modern materialist ideology that explains everything "new" as simply the outcome of a past sequence of deterministic causes, have the effect of stifling hope and depleting human energy. Only a universe in which the truly



new can occur will ever be a suitable setting for religious faith and hope in the future.

Another point of comparison is that of original sin. Aware that the traditional explanation of a historical "Fall" of actual humans from an earthly paradise could no longer be taken literally as the explanation of our estrangement from the essential, Tillich and Teilhard both sought new ways to account for the ambiguities of life and the presence of evil. They wrote at a time when biblical scholarship and a growing awareness of evolution had already exposed the questionable nature of a plain reading of Genesis; and they received harsh criticism as they sought deeper meanings in the story of the so-called "Fall." In fact, they are still demonized by biblical or dogmatic literalists and anti-evolutionists.

On the question of original sin, what continues to require theological discussion is the role of human freedom and responsibility in accounting for evil. Both Tillich and Teilhard moved decisively in the direction of interpreting sin, evil, suffering and death as tragic, or as "somehow" inevitable. Their intention in doing so was in each case to widen the sweep of our sense of the redemption of the world by God. They shared the belief that a one-sidedly anthropocentric interpretation of evil always risks diminishing the compass of divine love. But by pointing to the tragic "inevitability" of evil, they raised troubling questions about how much responsibility for evil can then be attributed to individual human persons.

In one of several early notes not intended for publication (reflections that may have led at least indirectly to his being virtually exiled to China by his religious superiors) Teilhard wrote that original sin, taken in its widest sense, is not a malady specific to the earth, nor is it bound up with human generation. It simply symbolizes the inevitable chance of evil (*Necesse est ut eveniant scandala*) which accompanies the existence of all participated being. Wherever being *in fieri* [in process of becoming] is produced, suffering and wrong immediately appear as its shadow: not only as a result of the tendency towards inaction and selfishness found in creatures, but also (which is more disturbing) as an inevitable consequence of their effort to progress. Original sin is the essential reaction of the finite to the creative act. Inevitably it insinuates itself into existence through the medium of all creation. It is the *reverse side* of all creation (1969, 40).

For Teilhard, the most noteworthy theological consequence of this universalizing of evil is that it

considerably enlarges the scope and import of the redemption in Christ:

If we are to retain the Christian view of Christ-the-Redeemer it is evident that we must also retain an original sin as vast as the world: otherwise Christ would have saved only a part of the world and would not truly be the center of all. Further, scientific research has shown that, in space and duration, the world is vast beyond anything conceived by the apostles and the first generations of Christianity (1969, 54).

It follows that by failing to expand our minds in a way that represents the temporal and spatial immensities given to us by the new scientific epic of evolution, we will also inevitably fail to do justice to the notions of Christ and divine redemption: "How, then, can we contrive still to make first original sin, and then the figure of Christ, cover the enormous and daily expanding panorama of the universe? How are we to maintain the possibility of *a fault as cosmic* as the Redemption?" (1969, 54) Teilhard's answer: "The only way in which we can do so is by spreading the Fall throughout the whole of universal history..." (1969, 54). And in this respect, he comments: "The spirit of the Bible and the Church is perfectly clear: the whole world has been corrupted by the Fall and the *whole* of everything has been redeemed. Christ's glory, beauty, and irresistible attraction radiate, in short, from his *universal* kingship. If his dominance is restricted to the sublunary regions, then he is eclipsed, he is abjectly extinguished by the universe" (1969, 39).

Paul Tillich would surely sympathize with Teilhard's attempt to widen the scope of redemption. In fact, for Tillich the redemption extends not only into the whole of the physical universe and its history, but into the very heart of being as such. (See Part II of his five-part *Systematic Theology*, vol. I, 163-210.) However, for Tillich no less than for Teilhard, the question remains as to whether, by universalizing the primordial fault and correspondingly the compass of redemption, he has unduly lessened the role of human responsibility in accounting for evil. Many theologians have resisted a broad extension of the scheme of redemption precisely because such expansionism seems to dilute and even nullify the role of human freedom in accounting for the most horrendous evils in our world. (See, for example, Niebuhr, 219.)

Although Teilhard does not pretend to remove the mystery of evil, he rightly claims that the reality of evil has a cosmic dimension; and evil appears to

be not quite the same thing when viewed in the context of evolution as when interpreted in terms of a static universe, although too few theologians have bothered to notice the difference. We may ask whether even as significant a theologian as Paul Tillich has taken evolution and the idea of an unfinished universe sufficiently into account in his own understanding of God and the theology of redemption.

Cosmic and biological evolution instruct us as never before that we live in a universe that is in great measure not yet created. The incompleteness of the cosmic project *logically* implies, therefore, that the universe and human existence have never, under any circumstances, been situated in a condition of ideal fullness and perfection. In an evolving cosmos *created* being as such has *not yet* achieved the state of integrity. Moreover, this is nobody's fault, including the Creator's, because the only kind of universe a loving and caring God could create in the first place is an unfinished one. For God's love of creation to be actualized, after all, the beloved world must be truly "other" than God. And an instantaneously finished universe, one from which our present condition of historical becoming and existential ambiguity could be envisaged as a subsequent *estrangement*, would in principle have been only an emanation or appendage of deity and not something truly other than God and hence able to be the recipient of divine love. It could never have established any independent existence vis-a-vis its creator. The idea of a world perfectly constituted *ab initio* would, in other words, be logically incompatible with any idea of a divine creation emerging from the depths of selfless love.

Moreover, the pre-scientific sense of a non-evolving universe has tended too easily to sponsor scapegoating quests for the "culprit" or "culprits" that allegedly befouled the primordial purity of being. If creation had been originally a fully accomplished affair, after all, we would understandably want to identify whoever or whatever it was that messed things up so badly for us. The assumption of an original perfection of creation has in fact led religious speculation to imagine that the source of the enormous evil and suffering in the world would be either an extramundane principle of evil—an idea unacceptable to biblical theism according to which the principle of all being is inherently good—or else some intraworldly being or event. That such a supposition has led to the demonizing of various events, persons, animals, genders, aliens, etc. requires no

new documentation here. It is enough for us simply to wonder what would happen if religious thought were now to take the reality of evolution with complete seriousness.

In 1933 Teilhard reflected, in words that apply to much Christian thought even today:

In spite of the subtle distinctions of the theologians, it is a matter *of fact* that Christianity has developed under the over-riding impression that all the evil round us was born from an initial transgression. So far as dogma is concerned we are still living in the atmosphere of a universe in which what matters most is reparation and expiation. The vital problem, both for Christ and ourselves, is to get rid of a stain (1969, 81).

As long as we had assumed that creation was instantaneous, and the cosmos fully formed in an initial creative act, the only way we could make sense of present evil and suffering was to posit a secondary distortion. But this assumption opened up the possibility of interpreting suffering essentially as punishment and fostered an ethic tolerant of retribution. Such a view, one that still informs both religious and social life, can only render expiation an interminable affair, thereby robbing suffering of the possibility of being interpreted as part of the process of ongoing creation itself. "A primary disorder," Teilhard goes on, "cannot be justified in a world which is created fully formed: a culprit has to be found. But in a world which emerges gradually from matter there is no longer any need to assume a primordial mishap in order to explain the appearance of the multiple and its inevitable satellite, evil." (1969, 83-84)

Evolution, to repeat our theme, means that the world is unfinished. But if it is unfinished then we cannot justifiably expect it yet to be perfect. It *inevitably* has a dark side. Redemption, therefore, if it means anything at all, must mean—perhaps above everything else—the healing of the *tragedy* (and not just the consequences of human sin) that accompanies a universe *in via*. Especially in view of Darwin's ragged portrait of the life story, one through which we can now survey previously unknown epochs of life's suffering and struggle preceding our own emergence, it would be callous indeed on the part of theologians to perpetuate the one-sidedly anthropocentric and retributive notions of pain and redemption that used to fit so comfortably into pre-evolutionary pictures of the world.

Imagine, once again, that the created universe *in illo tempore* had possessed the birthmarks of an

original perfection. Then the evil that we experience here and now would have to be attributed to a contingent occurrence or perhaps a “culprit” that somehow spoiled the primordial creation, causing it to lose its original integrity. This, of course, is how evil and suffering have often been accounted for by religions, including by Christianity. Accordingly, any “history of salvation” will then consist *essentially* of a drama of “restoring” the original state of affairs. And although the *re*-restoration may be garnished at its margins with epicycles of novelty, it will be essentially a *re*-establishment of the assumed fullness that once was and now has dissolved.

The central biblical intuition, of course, is that salvation is actually much more than the restoration of a primordial fullness of being. But the influence on soteriology by Western philosophy has caused theologians to subordinate the expectation of novelty and surprise in the fulfillment of God’s promises to that of the recovery of a primal perfection of being. This is why evolution is potentially such good news for theology. Paying close attention to evolution no longer allows us even to imagine that the universe was at one time—in a remote historical or mythic past—an integrally constituted state of being. As we look back into the universe’s distant evolutionary past with Teilhard we see only multiplicity fading into nothingness, accompanied at its birth by an almost imperceptible straining toward a future unity that still remains to be fully accomplished. For this reason, a scientifically informed soteriology may no longer plausibly make themes of restoration or recovery dominant. The remote cosmic past, after all, consists of the multiple, that is, fragmentary monads not yet brought into relationship or unity. The notion of an unfinished universe still coming into being, on the other hand, opens up the horizon of a new or unprecedented future and promises an end to expiation. After the emergence of evolutionary biology and cosmology, the whole notion of the future begs as never before to be brought more integrally into our ontologies as well as our cosmologies. Any notion of *esse* as the consummation of the vast cosmos must be qualified by the theme of being’s essential futurity. Being must in some way mean the still-to-come. *Esse est advenire*.

### Is Tillich’s Theology Adequate to Evolution?

How well then does Tillich’s theology function as a context for understanding and appreciating the

reality of evolution broadly speaking? Unfortunately, even Tillich, in spite of his awareness of the biblical theme of new creation, embeds his cosmic soteriology and eschatology in a conceptuality and terminology of “*re*-restoration” that benumbs the power of his notion of New Being with suggestions of repetition. Certainly Tillich goes far beyond classical theology in taking us toward the metaphysics of the future that the logic of evolution requires. His interpretation of redemption as the coming of the New Being is philosophically rich, and it takes us in the direction of a theology that can at last take evolution seriously. But does it take us far enough? Open to New Being though his system of theology is, has it fully absorbed the impact of Darwin and others who have introduced us to evolution?<sup>1</sup> Tillich, as I mentioned earlier, was suspicious of Teilhard’s apparently progressivist optimism. But beneath of this complaint lies a much deeper disagreement, one that places in question whether Tillich’s thought can, after all, give us our “God for evolution,” and whether his thought can move us forcefully beyond romantic nostalgia to the fullness of a hope proportionate to evolution.

Tillich distinguishes the actual state of estranged existence from what he refers to as “essential” being. Essential being is an idealized unity of all beings with God, the “Ground” of their being. But the Tillichian location of the essential in terms of a metaphysics of *esse* is in tension with Teilhard’s sense of the inadequacy to evolution of any theological system that thinks of the divine in terms only of a philosophical notion of “being.” Both Tillich and Teilhard interpret our ambiguous existence in terms of an existential estrangement from the “essential.” But where the comparison between them becomes most important—at least as far as the question of God and evolution is concerned—is in their respective ways of understanding just how and where the “essential” is to be located with respect to the actual or existential state of finite beings. It is on this point that I believe we can begin to notice some divergence of one religious thinker from the other.

For Tillich, existence erupts as the *separation* from a primordial wholeness of being, from an undifferentiated “dreaming innocence” (*Systematic Theology*, vol. II, 33-36). Implied here are images of *loss* that can only be redressed by the idea of *re*-union with the primordial Ground of being. Tillich’s ontological way of putting things is likely, in spite of his attempts to highlight the newness of being in redemption, to subordinate the novelty of creation and



evolution in the actual world to the motif of restoration. For even though his thought tries to introduce us to New Being, it is still in terms of the notion of “being” that he articulates the idea of newness. The New Being, after all, is defined as “essential being under the conditions of existence” (*Systematic Theology*, vol. II, 118). This way of putting things is unable to prevent us from thinking and imagining essential being in pre-evolutionary terms as an eternal sameness that resides somewhere other than in the dimension of the unprecedented, still-not-yet future toward which a sense of cosmic process now turns our expectations. In Tillich’s thought, as in the classical metaphysics of pre-evolutionary theology, the futurity of being is still subordinated to the idea of an eternal presence of being. For Teilhard, on the other hand, such a Platonic view of things implies that nothing truly new can ever get accomplished in the world’s own historical unfolding, since the fullness of being is portrayed as already realized in an eternal present. Such a picture of things, as Teilhard might put it, would only “clip the wings of hope.”

For Teilhard, the fullness of being is what awaits at the end of a *cosmic* journey, not something that lurks either in an eternal present or in some misty *Urzeit*. In a sense, we can say that the universe is not yet, or that it not yet *is*. Its being awaits it. The foundation of things is not so much a “Ground” of being sustaining from beneath—although this idea is partially illuminating—as it is a power of attraction toward what lies up ahead. “The universe,” Teilhard says, “is organically resting on...the future as its sole support...” (1970, 239). This suggestive way of locating ultimate reality arouses a religious imagery quite different from Tillich’s notion of God as *Ground* of being or as the *Eternal Now*. The gravitational undertow of Tillich’s powerful metaphor of “ground”—together with his other earthy images of “depth” and “abyss”—tends to pull our theological reflections toward a soteriology of return to what already is. Tillich’s metaphors of God as ground, depth, and abyss do respond to Teilhard’s concern that theology no longer locate the divine exclusively in the arena of the “up above,” but the same images may also fail sufficiently to open up for religious thought the horizon of the future as the appropriate domain of redemption and the fullness of being.

In a world not yet fully completed, it is important for theology still to acknowledge with Tillich that the actual condition of finite existents is indeed that of estrangement from their true being. But the being from which they are “estranged” must be, at

least in the light of evolution, in some sense not-yet-being, being which arrives *ab ante*, and not only a ground to which estranged beings eventually return. Perhaps Tillich would agree with much of what Teilhard is haltingly attempting to say about the future as the world’s foundation, but his ontology places excessively rigid constraints on what we can affirm and hope for the world’s future. There remains in Tillich’s thought a spirit of tragic resignation that is hard to locate in terms either of evolution or biblical eschatology. The New Being, an otherwise felicitous idea, is still portrayed as a futureless plenitude of being, one that graciously enters *vertically* into the context of our estrangement and reconciles us to itself. But consoling as such a conception may be, it still bears the weight of metaphysical traditions innocent of evolution and at least to some extent resistant to the biblical motif of promise.

Tillich’s presentation of Christ as the New Being does indeed give an enormous breadth to redemption, and in this respect his theology goes a long way toward meeting the requirements of a theology of evolution. However, although Teilhard would be appreciative of Tillich’s broadening of the scheme of redemption, he would still wonder whether the philosophical notion of “being,” even when qualified by the adjective “new” is itself adequate to the reality of evolution. To Teilhard, it is less the concept of *esse* than those of *fieri* (becoming) and *uniri* (being brought into unity in the future) that a theology attuned to a post-Darwinian world require (1969, 51). Even his earliest reflections on God and evolution adumbrated Teilhard’s life-long disillusionment with the Thomistic metaphysics of being, beginning at a time when it was extremely audacious for a Catholic thinker to express such disenchantment. But the young Teilhard already realized that evolution requires nothing less than a revolution in metaphysics. It seems that evolution still awaits such a metaphysics, and it is doubtful that Tillich’s theological system is revolutionary enough to accommodate this requirement.

For Teilhard, as I have noted, the “essential” from which the universe, including humans as part of it, is separated is the Future, the Up Ahead, the God-Omega who creates the world *ab ante* rather than *a retro*, the God who saves the world not so much by returning it to an Eternal Now, but by being the world’s Future. The *essential*, therefore, is not for Teilhard an original fullness of being from which the universe has become estranged, but instead a yet

unrealized ideal (God's vision or God's dream, perhaps?) toward which the multiple is forever being summoned. In this eschatological setting—one that renders Teilhard's thought more biblical than Tillich's—the universe can be thought of as essentially more of a promise than a sacrament. Correspondingly, nature may be seen as anticipative rather than simply revelatory of the ultimate Future on which it leans. If we still view the cosmos as participative being, then what it participates in is not a past or present plenitude, but a future pleroma. And its present ambiguity is of the sort that we might associate with a promise still unfulfilled, rather than the seductive traces of a primordial wholeness that has now vanished into the past. Evolutionary cosmology, in other words, invites us to complete the biblical vision of a life based on hope for surprise rather than allowing us to wax nostalgic for what we imagine once was, or for what we have taken to be an eternal presence hovering either above or in the depths.

In keeping with Teilhard's futurist location of the foundation of the world's being, our own existence and action can now also be thought of as possessing an intrinsic meaning and an effectuality that alternative metaphysical conceptions of the universe, including Tillich's, do not permit. Now, much more clearly than we ever realized before we learned that the cosmos is a genesis, we may envisage human action as contributing to the creation of something that never was. Teilhard was especially concerned to develop a vision of the world in which young and old alike could feel genuinely that their lives and actions truly matter, that their existence is not just "killing time" but potentially contributing to the creation of a cosmos. Evolutionary science, therefore, is both a disturbance and a stimulus to theology because it logically requires that we think of paradise (or the "essential") as something more than a condition to be restored or returned to after our having been exiled from it. Instead of nostalgia for a lost innocence, evolution allows a posture of genuine hope that justifies action in the world. Our existence here is more than a waiting for an alleged reunion with Being-Itself. The true "courage to be" is not therefore simply a Tillichian taking nonbeing into ourselves, but an orienting of our lives toward the Future Unity which is the world's true foundation. Concretely this would mean "building the earth" in a responsible manner as our small part of the ongoing creation of the cosmos. After Darwin, the power of being is the power of the future, and we affirm our-

selves courageously by orienting ourselves toward this future in spite of the pull of the multiple that defines the past.

From the perspective of a theology of evolution, once the universe arrives at conscious self-awareness it hopefully anticipates *arriving at* the being from which it is deprived, rather than merely longing for a reunion with it. In this setting, what Tillich refers to as our "existential anxiety" is not simply the awareness of our possible nonbeing, an awareness that turns us toward courageous participation in the "Power of Being" (Tillich, 1952, 32-57). Even more, it is the disequilibrium that inevitably accompanies our being part of a universe still-in-the-making, and whose inevitable ambiguity turns us toward what we might call the Power of the Future (see Peters). Pathological forms of anxiety, which Tillich distinguishes from normal or existential anxiety, could then be understood as unrealistically premature flights from the hopeful and enlivening disequilibrium of living in an unfinished universe into nostalgic illusions of paradisaical perfection cleansed of temporal process.

Sin and evil, moreover, would be understood here as the consequence of our free submission to the pull of the multiple, to the fragmentary past of a universe whose perfected state of ultimate unity in God-Omega has yet to be realized. In an unfinished universe, we humans remain accomplices of evil, of course, even horrendous forms of evil. But our complicity in evil may now be interpreted less in terms of a hypothesized break from primordial innocence than as our systematic refusal to participate in the ongoing creation of the world. The creative process is one in which the multiple, the originally dispersed elements of an emerging cosmos, are now being drawn toward unity. Our own sin, then, is at least in some measure that of spurning the invitation to participate in the holy adventure of the God-Omega upon which it leans as its foundation. Here sin means our acquiescence in and fascination with the lure of the multiple. It is our resistance to the call toward "being more," our deliberate turning away from participation in what is still coming into being.

Thus, there is ample room in this scheme for us to respect the traditional emphasis on our own personal responsibility for evil. But we can affirm our guilt in a way that no longer requires expiation or retribution so much as renewed hope to energize our ethical aspirations. Moreover, in an evolutionary context we might wish go beyond Teilhard and suggest that "original" sin is not simply the reverse side

of an unfinished universe in process of being created. It is also the aggregation in human history and culture of all of the effects of our habitual refusal to assume an appropriate place in the ongoing creation of the universe. It is this kind of corruption—and not the defilement of an allegedly original cosmic perfection—by which each of us is “stained.” The lure of the “multiple” is inevitable in an unfinished universe, but there is also the cumulative history of our own species’ “Fall” backward toward disunity. And yet past evolutionary achievement also provides a reason for trusting that the forces of unity can emerge victorious in the future. Even if the universe eventually succumbs to entropy, as Teilhard predicted it would, there is something of great significance—he called it the realm of spirit—that is now coming to birth in evolution and that can escape absolute loss by being taken permanently into the life of God.

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<sup>1</sup> In some of his sermons the sense of the future seems sometimes more alive than in the *Systematic Theology*. Tillich talks about being religiously grasped by the “coming order”: “The coming order is always coming, shaking this order, fighting with it, conquering it and conquered by it. The coming order is always at hand. But one can never say: ‘It is here! It is there!’ One can never grasp it. But one can be grasped by it.” *Shaking of the Foundations* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1948), 27.

**RELIGION, SCIENCE, AND EVOLUTION:  
TILlich'S FOURTH WAY**

**Richard Grigg**

Those who embrace the Christian faith have ever wanted to speak about their God as a God who acts. The Christian God acts, primordially, in the creation of the universe. And rather than subsequently abandoning creation, as the Deist's God was wont to do, the Christian God continues to act within and upon creation. God's continuous action includes preservation, providential guidance, and perhaps also discrete and spectacular acts of intervention. It is the second of these, God's providential guidance of God's creation, that shall concern us here, since it is that dimension of divine action that connects most readily with our focus, the evolution of living things on the earth. In the pages that follow, John Haught's *God After Darwin: A Theology of Evolution* is my starting point (Haught, 2000). But while Haught's provocative reflections serve as something of a center of gravity for my own reflections in this essay, I ultimately suggest that a particular reading of Paul Tillich's theology—an admittedly rather radical one—will serve us better in confronting some of the difficult, technical problems that face us in talking about divine action vis-a-vis biological evolution.

The moment that we begin to consider claims of divine action in the world, including divine guidance of evolution, we face a particularly stern scientific challenge: all talk of God acting within the physical universe appears to run afoul of the law of the conservation of mass-energy (the "law of the conservation of energy," for short). That law tells us that, in a closed system, energy can change form, but it can never be created or destroyed; if one inventories the energy in such a system on Monday, one must come up with the very same amount of energy when one checks the system again on Friday.

If so, then how can God ever act within God's creation? Any such action should register as an illicit addition of energy from outside the closed system of the universe. The Christian thinker will no doubt be tempted here to fall back upon the venerable Thomistic notion of primary and secondary causality. God acts through the natural causal channels of the world that he has created. But, unfortunately, this won't do as a response to the challenge of the conservation law. If the assertion that God acts through secondary causes is to be more than merely a poetic

flourish, if it is meant to suggest that there really is a God and that that God makes things happen in the physical universe that would not have happened without divine action, then God must add something to or change the direction of the natural or "secondary" causal processes of the world. But this takes us right back to our problem: any such addition or tampering will violate the law of the conservation of energy.

What, then, should the Christian thinker do when confronted with the Darwinian evolution of all living things upon the earth and with his or her desire to see some role for God in that process? John Haught's categories are certainly helpful here.<sup>1</sup> Some theologians will choose the way of opposition—creationist thinkers fit here, for example—but simple opposition to the scientific notion of evolution is hopelessly benighted. As Pope John Paul II has reminded his flock, evolution is more than just a hypothesis; the evidence to support it is overwhelming. Those who have not bothered to follow the very latest efforts of anti-Darwinian Christians to make their case are to be congratulated for their good judgment. Just to put everything on the table, however, let it be stated that those efforts are summed up in what is being called "Intelligent Design" theory, which has been with us only since around 1990. Its proponents do attempt some new maneuvers, such as attacking evolutionary theory on the molecular level and drawing on information theory. But careful thinkers who have taken the time to reply have had no difficulty in showing the tangle of confusions that characterizes so-called "ID" thinking (e.g., Edis 2001; Pennock 2001; Roche 2001). It remains the case, then, that to take up residence in the oppositionist camp is simply to remove oneself from all serious discussion of the nature of our world.

What of the separatist camp? That is surely a more respectable option. After all, both scientist Stephen Jay Gould and the Tillich of *Dynamics of Faith* appear to fit there (Gould 1999). Tillich tells us in his book that "scientific truth and the truth of faith do not belong to the same dimension of meaning. Science has no right and no power to interfere with faith and faith has no power to interfere with science. One dimension of meaning is not able to interfere with another dimension" (Tillich 1957, 81).

But the separatist position rests upon a confusion. Suppose that, when I am in a state of despair, I pray to God and then find my mindset transformed. Desperation is replaced by optimism and torpor by renewed vigor. The separatist will most likely describe

what happens in this case by saying that God has acted to give me strength, but that only the eyes of faith can see that it was in fact the work of God. Science will find nothing unusual in this transformation, because science by its very nature is confined to a dimension of reality wholly separate from the transcendent reality of God and God's action. Here is the confusion, however: while one may claim that only faith is privy to the fact that it was God who acted, the result of that action is publicly observable, at least in principle, even when we are talking about something as apparently private as a change in my mental state. For my mood to change, my brain chemistry must change: dopamine will flow, or serotonin levels will rise, or electrical activity will increase—whatever the details, the change will be more than evident to scientific scrutiny. And any such change will entail expenditure of energy. If this energy is introduced by God (however far back in some perhaps exceedingly long causal chain), if it is not simply part of a series of events that was going to occur in any case, with or without a God, then the conservation law is violated. In short, the separatist stance does not succeed in removing all elements of a theological claim from scientific investigation, and the crucial fact of the matter is that the elements of the claim left in plain view are sufficient for the scientist to detect a violation of the conservation of energy.

This takes us to Professor Haught's third way, a way that appears much more promising, not to mention more interesting, than either the way of opposition or the way of separation. His third way is the way of engagement: theology is not wholly separate from science, but neither does it connect with science simply by rejecting scientific claims. Rather, theological claims can constructively mesh with, and thus do real work with, scientific facts and theories.

But let us not forget the specific problem in view, viz., how to speak meaningfully of divine action in the world without violating the law of the conservation of energy. How does the way of engagement make claims of divine action without needing to smuggle extra energy into a physical system? Professor Haught, along with a number of the other most eminent commentators on science and theology, turns to the notion of non-energetic information. Let us think of pool balls to see how this might work. Suppose that I wrack up the fifteen pool balls at one end of the table, thus arranging them in the familiar triangular pattern. Taking aim with my cue from the other end of the table, I fire the cue ball

into that triangular grouping, sending the fifteen balls careening off on many different paths. The cue ball and the fifteen other balls are interacting with one another via mechanical causality, via what, from the time of Aristotle, has been called efficient causality. The kinetic energy that I have imparted to the cue ball expends itself in such a way as to move the other balls (as well as to generate a negligible amount of heat). All of the energy that is used here can be fully accounted for, and is thoroughly explicable, by looking back to the motion of the cue ball, and from there back to the motion of my cue, and so on.

But we ought to notice something else about this scenario. The original triangular pattern of the pool balls must surely have had an effect upon the interaction of those balls. That initial pattern helped determine the trajectories that the fifteen balls followed after having been set in motion by the cue ball. Yet—and this is a crucial fact—the causal efficacy of this initial pattern surely cannot be reduced to the kinetic activity of the cue ball, nor to the individual characteristics of the fifteen balls that constitute the pattern, nor to the causal interactions among those balls, nor to any combination of these factors. The pattern appears to have a causal efficacy of its own; it cannot be reduced to the efficient causality operating among the individual pool balls. It thus appears that this causal efficacy is not a function of expending energy. It is instead, simply a function of the information represented by the arrangement of the pool balls. It certainly seems, then, as if we have come upon causal efficacy without expenditure of energy, and this is important news for the theologian. For this opens the possibility that God can exercise causal efficacy in the world, that God can act within the world, by imparting information rather than energy to the world. Divine action can thus be squared with the law of the conservation of energy, and we can find a meaningful way to talk about God guiding the evolutionary process. John Haught's particular way of tapping in here is to claim that God can act by luring events into the future. God is ever a God of the novel, of what can be, and God acts within the evolutionary process by introducing genuinely new possibilities that make evolution in the fullest sense possible.

But, alas, there is a serious problem here that I have glossed over hitherto, and it is, I am afraid, a show-stopper. The problem becomes evident when we return to our pool ball example: while the initial pattern of the pool balls on the table exercises causal



efficacy without expending energy, there is a very definite expenditure of energy in the act of patterning the balls. I expended energy in wracking up the balls in that particular pattern. In other words, while no energy-use is detectable when we look at the pattern as a static, atemporal entity, that approach is an abstractive, artificial view of the phenomenon. By contrast, when we rewind the tape and then “push play,” as it were, and view the phenomenon in its actual, temporal reality, it is quite evident that the causal efficacy of the initial, triangular pattern of the balls necessarily draws upon my expenditure of energy in the act of patterning. In the end, the manner in which pattern-as-information exercises causal power does not provide a way for God to act in the world without violating the law of the conservation of energy.

Even Arthur Peacocke, probably the best known advocate of the non-energetic, information-as-causality approach, a form of “top down causality,” seems to admit to this problem: “...in the world we observe through the sciences, we know of no transfer of information without some exchange of matter and/or energy, however minimal. So to speak of God as ‘informing’ the world-as-a-whole without such inputs of matter/energy...is but to accept the ultimate, ontological gap between the nature of God’s own being and that of the created world...” (Peacocke 1995, 286) Translation: transfer of information does, in fact, always involve expenditure of energy. Hence, the information-as-causality model of God’s action in the world does not really help us to escape violation of the conservation law at all.

Hence the need for a fourth way to think about the relationship between science and theology, a way distinguishable from the way of opposition, the way of separation, as well as the way of engagement. It is, I suggest, to Paul Tillich that we can turn in order to find this fourth way. For Tillich’s mature system suggests the possibility of meshing science and theology not, as in Professor Haught’s way of engagement, by linking the tenets of technical or scientific reason with metaphysics (or with Tillich’s own “ontological reason,” which has cognitive and aesthetic, theoretical and practical dimensions) but rather by linking scientific reason with ecstatic reason. “Ecstatic reason” is, explains Tillich, “reason grasped by an ultimate concern.” (Tillich 1951-63, vol. 1:53) With Tillich’s theology, Darwinian evolution can be taken up into our ultimate concern, but not in the form of a theory about how the God who is the object of Christian ultimate concern causally

influences the evolutionary process. Indeed, Tillich cannot talk at all about God having a causal relation to evolution, however subtle, for Tillich, good Kantian that he is (at least at some points in his thought) designates causality as one of the categories of finite being and thinking (Tillich 1951-63, vol. 1:192-8). And as a category of finite being and thinking, causality cannot apply to God as being-itself or to God’s relation to the world.

How exactly, then, does Tillich’s theological system, or at least a constructive rereading of it, connect God and biological evolution? In its briefest form, my thesis is this: God is not relevant at all to biological evolution taken just in and of itself. But evolution and God come into substantive contact via our own human quest for redemption. Now Michael Drummy, in his insightful study on Tillich and ecology, *Being and Earth*, continually reminds us of the dangers of the old Protestant anthropocentrism of grace, which so focuses upon the individual soul’s direct relation to God, its absolute relation to the absolute, that it thoroughly disregards the world of nature (Drummy 2001). I want to be clear at the outset that my proposal here does involve a form of anthropocentrism, but given Drummy’s well-placed warning, I must begin with a brief apologetic for anthropocentrism, the upshot of which will be that there are better and worse anthropocentrisms. Any theological position operates from some perspective. Furthermore, perspective is necessarily a function of consciousness. Pre-sentient nature, by definition, does not possess consciousness. Thus, there is no such thing as the perspective of the larger world of nature. We are stuck simply with choices among different anthropocentric perspectives on nature. Granted, there may be a divine perspective on non-human nature and its value. But we have no direct access to any divine perspective. Even an alleged revelation must be both received and interpreted from a particular human perspective. And it should be added here that, if the God we have in mind is Tillich’s “transpersonal” God, then it is not clear that even God has a perspective. It is an anthropocentric perspective on nature, then, or none at all.

But there is nonetheless an important distinction to be made: there are fecund and magnanimous anthropocentric perspectives, on the one hand, and petty and destructive ones, on the other hand. I take Drummy’s warnings about traditional anthropocentrisms of grace to be about the latter kind, the kind, specifically, that devalue and cut us off from the world of nature. Needless to say, when I assert that

God is to be connected to evolution only through our own quest for redemption, I am aiming for a unanimous anthropocentrism.

I must prepare the ground for my casby very briefly reviewing some of the most basic elements of Tillich's theology. Human being, as finite being, is constantly threatened by nonbeing—finite being is simply being that is limited by nonbeing—a threat given to consciousness in the form of anxiety. Thus, the religious quest is the quest for an ultimate concern that can enable the self-affirmation of being in spite of the threat of nonbeing. The only legitimate object of such a quest is God as being-itself, the depth of the structure of finite being. Readers of the three volumes of Tillich's *Systematic Theology* will recall that the religious quest and the dynamics of ultimate concern are complicated by distinguishing among "essential," "existential," and "ambiguous" being. For the sake of brevity, I shall not spell out these technical distinctions here. It is sufficient for our purposes to know that all three forms of being require the self-affirmation of being in spite of the threat of nonbeing. The one particular form of being that we shall in fact have occasion to consider in a bit more detail later on is the one that Tillich equates with "fallenness," namely, "existential" being.<sup>2</sup>

Because Tillich, clearly influenced by Heidegger, proceeds phenomenologically when describing the whole structure of finite being, not just the structure of human being, it is unsurprising that he finds the basic polarity of self and world in all instances of finite being, even if only analogically. Says Tillich, even "selfhood or self-centeredness must be attributed in some measure to all living beings and, in terms of analogy, to all individual Gestalten even in the inorganic realm." (Tillich 1951-63, vol. 1:169) The whole natural world participates, then, in the being of man-woman. This is a formal deliverance of Tillich's phenomenological derivation of the structure of being. But the reverse is also true: human beings participate in the world of nature. And here we look not to formal considerations derived from Tillich's chosen ontological method, but from material considerations. Specifically, we should look to Darwinian evolution. For nothing shows us so powerfully that we are part of the larger physical world of nature than the facts of the evolution of the species and the dynamics of natural selection. These facts of Darwinian evolution tell us who we are: we are one permutation of the laws and energetic interactions that make up the universe. Thus, we can speak of a reciprocal participa-

tion of nature in man and woman and of man and woman in nature: nature participates formally and analogically in man-woman insofar as our point of entry into the being of nature can only be through human being as that being for whom its own being is an issue; human beings participate materially in nature, insofar as we are the product of thoroughly natural forces. To be precise, then, we can speak here of asymmetric reciprocal participation.

Now the fashion in which Darwin—along with later physics, biology, chemistry, and cosmology—powerfully spells out for us the fact that we are inextricably bound up to the whole of the natural world, ought to affect our sense of the religious quest, ought to shape that quest more directly than Tillich explicitly allowed in his own writings. We look, says Tillich, to God as the depth of being, as that which allows us to affirm our being in spite of the threat of nonbeing. As already mentioned, the threat of nonbeing, in turn, is given to human consciousness in the form of anxiety, and a bold confrontation with the facts of Darwinian evolution will have an impact, for example, on our experience of what Tillich names the relative form of ontic anxiety, that is, the anxiety of fate (see Tillich, 1952). Evolution is a wholly contingent, absolutely non-teleological process. To think through the facts of evolution leads one to grasp what we might well designate, not the "thrownness" of the individual, but rather the "thrownness" of the human species. And to face head-on the fact that we ourselves are thus a mere accident of nature—albeit a "glorious accident" in Stephen Jay Gould's felicitous phrase—is to encounter a most powerful form of the anxiety of fate.

The religious quest as informed by a grasp of the science of evolution, then, is the quest for a source of courage that allows me meaningfully to affirm my being in spite of the pure non-teleological contingency of my origin (one might note here, by the way, how ontic anxiety, i.e., the anxiety of fate, fuses with what Tillich calls spiritual anxiety, the anxiety of emptiness and meaninglessness). Tillich's God, however, is up to the task at hand; his God can provide the courage that I require. For while I can find no meaningful linear telos that will rescue my evolutionary origin from pure contingency and apparent meaninglessness, I can find instead what I would call a vertical or depth teleology. For it is by thinking my groundedness in God as the eternal depth of being, the "negation of the negation of being," that I can affirm my being in spite of the radi-

cal contingency of my evolutionary origin. What is more, to the extent that nature participates analogically in human being, this courageous self-affirmation of being, this redemption from the threat of nonbeing, is a redemption in which the process of biological evolution participates.

What, more exactly, might be involved in my thinking my groundedness in God as the eternal depth of being?<sup>3</sup> Two brief examples will need to suffice here. To recognize that my existence is given, that it is “let be,” by being-itself, despite the constant threat of nonbeing, is to be struck by religious wonder at the fact that, in the famous Leibnizian formula, there is anything at all, rather than simply nothing.<sup>4</sup> This self-conscious wonder and religious gratefulness for the sheer fact of beingness is, of course, firmly tied up with the wonder and gratefulness at my own particular chance to participate in being, and I am now fully cognizant of how all-the-more gratuitous is the fact of my existence given the incredible contingency and tenuousness of the process of evolution that has produced me. By gratefully recognizing my being as supported or grounded in God as the depth of being, as the negation of the negation of being, I am able powerfully to affirm my being in spite of the threat of nonbeing, to live in a way that Tillich would identify with courage and with faith (see Tillich, 1952). And given the tie between my own being and the evolutionary process, this faith, is, on an analogical level, a courageous affirmation too of the process of evolution, a faith in its redemption, as it were.

Consider a second example. Tillich’s phenomenological derivation of the structure of human being uncovers the basic polar structure of freedom and destiny, individuation and participation, and dynamics and form. He intends this polar structure to be understood in such a way that, for example, the more fully realized is the destiny pole, so is the pole of freedom more fully realized. The poles, in other words, are in the most creative, the healthiest, of tensions. In our fallen condition, however, the poles tend to come apart, so that freedom degenerates into mere arbitrariness, for example, and destiny into mechanical necessity. But the particularly Christian form of thinking myself in relation to God, of “orienting” my sense of self by God, if you will, opens up the possibility of New Being in the Christ, that particular Christ given to us in what Tillich calls the biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ. The biblical picture of Jesus as the Christ offers the possibility of reestablishing the proper polar tension between the

elements of our being. Consider how the idea of Darwinian evolution might actually provide concrete resources in this redemptive process effected through faith in the Christ. Rather than finding my freedom degenerating into mere arbitrariness, I can understand it as situated within the larger boundary-setting destiny of evolutionary history; my individuation finds its proper context in my solidarity with the whole history of evolution and its many species, of which I am a part; and the danger of being stuck in unchanging, ultimately lifeless form is overcome by the fact of evolutionary change, to which I am inextricably bound via the history of my species. Both my own being and the Darwinian notion of evolution are “redeemed” here, once again, not by engaging in some metaphysical argument about how evolution can be understood in relation to divine causality and teleology within history, but rather with how evolution is taken up into my own redemptive quest, in how I understand myself in relation to God as Being-itself, in this case Being-itself as manifested in the New Being in Jesus as the Christ.

The argument that it is depth-teleology rather than any sort of linear teleology that ought to be at issue when thinking about evolution can be reinforced, not only by recalling that biologists refuse even the vaguest hint of teleology in the evolutionary process, but also by recalling what Tillich has to say about history. For the temporal unfolding that is history and the temporal unfolding that is evolution are surely related, even though, in the technical sense given it by Tillich, “history,” properly speaking, arises only in those dimensions of being where “spirit” is present. But those who have read the third volume of Tillich’s *Systematic Theology* will recall that, according to Tillich, the end of history, in the sense of the meaning that both fulfills and judges it, is not some Omega Point, not some temporal end, but rather what Tillich terms “eternal life.” That is, we again must look to a depth teleology, an eternal now.

The distinction between approaching Darwinian evolution via a Tillichian depth teleology and via any variety of historical, linear teleology is significant, I think. Professor Haught’s desire to find some form of linear teleology, however highly modified, means that, unfortunately, his theology cannot pass muster with genuine Darwinian theory. And this is so whether or not one reads Darwin through the lens of a thoroughly materialistic metaphysic: whatever metaphysic one attempts to link to Darwinian sci-

ence, Darwin refuses all teleology. Frederick Crews, whose critical intelligence has done so much to oppose Freudian theory, turns his considerable abilities to a defense of Darwin. Crews calls Professor Haught's position into question with this observation: Haught, he says,

relocates God in the future and depicts him not as a planner but as 'a transcendent force of attraction.' But it doesn't occur to Haught that such teleology is just what Darwin managed to subtract from science. Whether pushing us or pulling us toward his desired end, the Christian God is utterly extraneous to evolution as Darwin and his modern successors have understood it. Evolution is an undirected, reactive process—the exact opposite of Haught's construal—or nothing at all." (Crews 2001, 52)

The Tillichian approach that I have suggested here does in fact embrace the truth that the Christian God is utterly extraneous to evolution, that is, to evolution in and of itself, evolution as a physical process. It is the meaning and value of evolution and its connection to our religious projects that gets connected with the Tillichian God. Depth teleology means that the larger reality of nature and its struggles, whatever the accidental ends of those struggles within history, become meaningful by being juxtaposed to Tillich's version of the Christian vision of the meaning and purpose of human existence, human existence as it essentially ought to be, that is, as it is grounded in God. All of physical nature participates, as we have seen, analogically in this depth goal of human being. And, in turn, the human quest for redemption is enriched and much more adequately understood when located within its physical, including evolutionary, environment.

By way of conclusion, it is perhaps my duty to make sure that the theological books are balanced. Just as there is a law of conservation of energy that dictates that, in the physical universe, one cannot get something for nothing, so there is a kind of law of conservation of theological value that applies to any theological proposal. While the Tillichian approach that I am proposing here does offer, at least in my opinion, a genuinely workable combination of science and religion, one that avoids any violation of scientific principles and yet meaningfully enriches our notion of ultimate concern, we of course lose something when it comes to our notion of the divine. Tillich's God can provide a depth teleology that creates no interference with the law of conservation of energy or with biology's total rejection of linear

teleology just insofar as his God is essentially irrelevant to the actual physical workings of that universe, however much that God may have significant implications for how we think the value of the universe and its relation to our own religious quest. By contrast, Professor Haught's proposal, while it has what I have argued are some not insignificant technical difficulties, has the laudable characteristic of proposing—and proposing in elegant fashion—a God who, through how he introduces novelty into the universe and lures the universe, still has a vital relation to that universe and actually affects its physical unfolding. At the end of the day, then, in both my Tillichian proposal about science and religion and in Professor Haught's approach, there is always a tradeoff; something is gained and something is lost. In theologizing, as in much of life, one must pay one's money and take one's choice.

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<sup>1</sup> Some readers are already familiar with Ian Barbour's four categories, *conflict, independence, dialogue, and integration* (Barbour 1990). When Haught analyzes theological responses to evolution in particular, he finds it convenient to group the responses into three categories: *opposition, separatism, and engagement*.

<sup>2</sup> Even though the notion of "redemption" applies, most technically, only to this fallen or "existential" state of being, I take the liberty of using the term redemption at various points in this essay in a more general sense as any process in which being is rescued from the threat of non-being.

<sup>3</sup> One item that must surely be noted here is that my thinking my existence as grounded in being-itself has the singular advantage of avoiding any violation of the law of conservation of energy. That is, this is not a matter of God acting from without the closed system of nature. Rather, as long as it is simply my own thinking that is at issue—even if that thinking is about God and perhaps even entails my being grasped by an ultimate concern and is therefore "ecstatic" thinking or reason—that thinking is still purely natural and can be explained in terms of the energy that is already part of the biological system of which my thinking is a part (assuming, as I am, that thinking is simply a particular dynamic of electrical and chemical processes in brain tissue).

<sup>4</sup> See Tillich's discussion of the "ontological shock" in *Systematic Theology* 1: 113 and 163.

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**THE NEW BEING IN CHRIST:  
TILlich'S UNIVERSAL CONCEPT OF  
REVELATION AS A CONTRIBUTION TO INTER-  
RELIGIOUS ENCOUNTER IN THE PLURALISTIC  
SITUATION OF POST-MODERNITY**

**Jörg Eickhoff**

### 1. The Pluralistic Situation of Post-modernity

The situation of life, especially in Western Europe and North America, is that of a pluralist society. Crucial signs for this pluralism are that values, norms, life-concepts, and beliefs are deprived of a framework that was once binding. Religion, especially Christian faith, no longer has a normative and exclusive function of integrating life in a social way. The foregone matter of introducing people to the Christian faith and to the social reality of this faith, the church, has been lost. And moreover, religion seems to be seen as generally declining, according to

the overall assumption concerning the conception of reality in respect to secularity.

This depiction, however, is not undisputed and alternative views concerning the relatedness of religion and post-modern pluralist society have been

developed. Hence, their relationship is no longer defined as something that is negative, but rather as ambivalent; that is, it creates dangers, as well as chances. The plurality is not just viewed as a motor for increasing religious indifference, but also as a mean in respect of forcing the own personal decision.

### 2. From Paradigm of Secularization to Pluralism

The concept of secularization has manifold manifestations. The most common one is the diagnosis that the relationship of religion and modernity has to be understood as a denigration of religion. It is evident that the religious substance of the individual and society as a whole seems to decrease and the possibility of passing on inherited religious tradi-



tions to following generations is less and less successful. Termination of religion seems to belong to the idea of a culminating modernity.

As much as, on the one hand, some authors or groups in society wish for this end to come, there are, on the other hand, groups, especially the churches, which try to be skeptical with respect to modernity and want to keep a religious sense of understanding. Through theory as well as through experience, an understanding is hatched that tries to make the relationship of religion and modernity plausible through employing terms such as discontinuity and antagonism. It is evident that in this specific context of thought, theology of religion cannot move any further. It has to save what there is to save—in the context of a threatening situation. At this point, I would like to refer to Paul Tillich's understanding of *Kulturprotestantismus* although I will not be able to develop this any further way.

At the end of the 20th century a stronger self-enlightenment amongst the social sciences developed in respect to the way in which their theories were constructed. It is now questioned whether the discussion concerning the so-called end of religion did not actually prove to be a myth, which has become a victim of the reflection on modernity, and also post-modernity.<sup>1</sup>

One cannot fail to recognize to that it is more difficult today to mediate Christian traditions. Breaks in tradition, and even erosions of Christian consciousness are discussed beginning with the decrease of participation in anything which is Christian, to the public plausibility of Christian convictions. Decrease, however, cannot be simply equated with disintegration, which is a more linear process. It has to be recognized that within Christendom, potentials for innovation are effective. Religion, Christian religion, is present in a pluralist society in manifold ways. The need for religion, it seems, does not come to an end.

### **3. The Way Theology of Religion is Challenged by Pluralism**

Christianity is an example that for a very long period a religion could build upon socialization and development theories that believed the introduction to the religious-cultural heritage to be a transportation into the growing up society. This transportation should change those who are growing up, while the form of this heritage was accepted to remain as the same. The features of Christian identity are defined

in its large extent and should be at the same time implanted into the human beings, so that they might be bearers of this good. The equating concept of culture was very much determined by this thought of uniformity, although uniformity was at this stage already long gone.

It becomes more and more problematic, in respect to culture or religion, to establish a certain condition, a certain way of thinking or a certain consciousness as an outlasting manifestation, since the way in which a culture or a religion is differentiated is completely lost. Moreover, the basic role of recipient subjects is not recognized, namely that they not only adapt and reproduce, but also interact and construct reality. Thinking in concepts of uniformity, unity, and so on seems to be incompatible with our reality. It is more and more in conflict with the heterogeneity, difference, and pluriformity with respect to daily life.

This means that in Western society, one experiences a diminishing of quasi-normative religious monopoly; religions are increasingly a fellow rival in the market where world-views are also offered. Although individual religious convictions are still determined by aspects of tradition which are affected by institutions, this does not mean that they coincide with them. We have to acknowledge that post-modernity is polymorphic and ambivalent.

To become a Christian, so it seems nowadays, is not something which human beings become because of a tradition or because of convictions and attitudes influenced by the church or religion which are received in an unquestioned way. It seems to be more and more the individual subject who decides on the plausibility of a particular religious conviction. To become a Christian is more frequently to be the result of a choice. This is no unique process, but an ongoing act of balancing one's own identity. Religious identity occurs when proving and evaluating of different positions, and not in the process of accepting unquestioned established creeds.

Hence, a theology of religion has to search for ways how, in midst of this plurality, religious identity can be found and cultivated. For it is hardly possible to desire the cultural pluralism of society, on the one hand, but, on the other, to reject the religious and ethical one. Of current religious convictions, it is known that they tend more and more to adopt the form of a self-invented pattern. One is talking about religious bricolage or religious syncretism. Analytically speaking, this can be seen as an adaptation to the demands the rest of existence has. Society, being

functionally differentiated, demands the individual to be in all areas and in nearly respects to erect independently connections between diverging areas of life. The dimension of world-concept is included in this process. Thus, modern biographies present themselves as a movement through various worlds, social, cultural, and religious. They seem not only to allow a gradual realization of different identities, but moreover, to be a parallel composition of manifold identities.<sup>2</sup>

Religious identity implies, as identity in general does, a drawing of boundaries between elements belonging to it and elements that do not. Although it has to be stated that neither the boundaries are determined, nor is the definition of the content of identity established. What it means to be Christian requires an ongoing hermeneutical process of understanding and relativising of tradition and situation.

#### 4. On the Function of Theological Normativity

The aim is not to deprive Christian dogmatics of its normativity. However, it is to show under which conditions Christian traditions can re-establish their plausibility in postmodernity.

This is not only true with respect to the relationship analyzed above between a pluralist theology of religion and the cultural plurality of the post-modern in general, but also with regards to the specific relationship between the religions in particular. The following account shall consider this particular aspect.

Dialogue is the normative value of a pluralist theology of religion. It is concerned with an authentic, productive exchange, and with change and improvement of the dialogical competence of the engaged dialogue partner. It is by no means true that all religions are equal or confess the same thing in respect to the nature of their being a religion and in their present condition. However, as participants in this dialogue they all have to have the same rights in order to be in true dialogue. At the end it might very well happen and will happen that one religion will be able to give a better answer to a specific question than the rest. This is nothing but a quasi-eschatological result of this dialogue and not a kind of knowledge that is already established before dialogue happens. Truth and reality are created in a discursive way through a dialogical speech-act. Both traditional apologetic models of religious discourse have lost their significance. This is of importance for the horizontal model of exclusivism which is dis-

carding anything that is outside the realm of Christianity, being determined by an exclusively dualistic distinction according to this schema: true and untrue, right and wrong, light and dark; as well as the model of positive inclusivism with respect to a basic, universal level according to the schema: plan and completion, preparation and development, promise and fulfillment.<sup>3</sup>

#### 5. Paul Tillich's Universal Concept of Revelation

What should follow this detailed account of our starting-point is Paul Tillich himself. My aim is to try to explain what his ontological principle of the New Being in Christ can contribute to the dialogue theology of religion has in post-modernity. Paul Tillich refers to this specific mode of dialogue with the term of correlation. He understands this correlation to be rooted in questions concerning human experience and the answer the Gospel gives to these questions. In his religious-theological point of departure, he is unmistakably following the line religious science and philosophy are taking, which are brought into connection with names like Schleiermacher, Troeltsch, and Otto. In doing so, he also gives room to concerns which are of a Christocentric dimension and are critical of religion such as dialectical theology—and integrates these concepts in his depiction of the relation existing between Christianity and the religions.

The absolute nature of Christianity is a less happy expression for the binding validity of the Christian message. Tillich rather prefers to use the term universality and tries to show in what respect “die christliche Botschaft universal und für alle Kulturen bindend gültig ist, so dass der Christus das werden muss, was er potentiell von Anfang an ist: die Mitte der Geschichte für alle geschichtlichen Entwicklungen”<sup>4</sup>. Reinhold Bernhardt elucidates a double foundation to the Tillichian concept of universality when employing Rudolf Otto; it rests on “der Voraussetzung eines universalen Heiligen und seiner universalen Offenbarung einerseits, auf der Annahme einer universalen, in allen Menschen angelegten Ausrichtung auf diese Sinnerschließung andererseits”<sup>5</sup>.

When Tillich writes that “the divine being embodies itself in different forms”<sup>6</sup> in the various religions, it becomes evident that incarnation does not represent a specific or genuine Christian concept. This means that a concept of incarnation that is limited in plurality is highlighting the universality of the

understanding of what revelation is. The correlating side of this understanding Tillich describes in his *Systematic Theology*: “Revelation is the manifestation of what concerns us ultimately.”<sup>7</sup> This means that there is an ontological depth of dimension which discloses the incarnation of the New Being, and which is encountered as a general human phenomenon of all religions: “The quest for the New Being is universal...the quest for the New Being appears in all religions.”<sup>8</sup> This universal structure is opposed to the unique character the incarnation of Christ in Jesus of Nazareth inherently has. Jesus does not demand absolutism, neither for Himself, nor for His person. He does not identify Himself with the unconditional. He refers to God’s kingdom. His cross is the point where the particular is blended into the universal, from Jesus to Christ. Highest particularity and highest universality are united in this event. Thus, Jesus is turned into “an absolute figure of world-encompassing importance.”<sup>9</sup> If Christianity is now making a universal claim, then it demands likewise that in all the various manifestations in which this longing for the New Being has appeared—meaning, the manifold forms of religion that exist—it has been fulfilled in Jesus as Christ. It is in this unique way that the New Being has been revealed. This message bears a meaning for all nations, cultures and religions.

This final revelation of God in Jesus as the one bringing the salvific New Being becomes the norm for all revelation which happens in nature and history, among groups and individuals—and from now on is only appreciated as a preparatory revelation. Hence, Jesus’ revelation lifts the story of revelation out of the period of preparation into acceptance. The Christ-event becomes the centre of history. These specific phases of preparation and acceptance are, however, not just temporally separated from each other; preparation also happens apart from or in Christianity itself. Moreover, this acceptance does not happen in a supernatural way but is communicated through history and through human awareness. The break-through to faith occurs on an individual level, and hence, does not happen in all places at the same time. In other terminology, Tillich speaks of the great and central *kairos* as the break-through of the event of revelation in the Christ-Event in history and the small *kairoi* that is correlated to it. In these particular *kairoi*, there is no new revelation or special revelation that make the Christ-event unnecessary, however it leads up to a more and more novel, more and more existential recapitulation of Christ’s

revelation. This particular revelation restitutes the original character of the final meaning of the ontological relationship between God and the human.<sup>10</sup>

The concept of religion in Tillich is not opposed to his concept of revelation, as it is in dialectic theology. Revelation needs religion if revelation wants to penetrate space where human life exists. Religion is humanity’s answer to God’s revelation. Hence, Tillich does not refer to any empirical religion in its historical manifestation with respect to his concept of religion. He is dealing with a theological category: “Religion is the experience of ultimate concern. It is the state of being grasped by something absolute, holy, total.”<sup>11</sup> Tillich refers to empirical religions as a phenomenon of culture. As such Christianity is a religion amongst religions, an expression of the New Being. All these expressions are confronted—and therefore, Christianity as well—with the message of Jesus as the Christ. He is an answer to their questions, as well as judgement. For religion can be, on the one hand, the honest human search for meaning and for God, as well as a mongrel self-creation with the purpose of erecting meaning which lets the conditional be unconditional, the temporal eternal, and thus, denies God’s infinity. True religion is “in welcher Gott sich gibt und falsche die, in welcher er vergeblich gesucht wird.”<sup>12</sup> The message of Jesus as the Christ, hence, becomes for Tillich the uniting centre “in dem alle Religionen geeint werden könnten, wenn sie das Kriterium des Neuen Seins, das im Christus erschienen ist, anerkannt haben.”<sup>13</sup>

Should Tillich’s religious-theological construct be categorized, then the term of conditional exclusiveness seems to be appropriate.<sup>14</sup> The eternal alone can be in the position of exclusive absolutism. Everything finite—and, thus, every religion, including Christianity—cannot claim absolutism. The universally absolute is confronted with that which conditions all that is particular only as being conditioned. The relationship Christianity as an empirical phenomenon has with other religions cannot and should not be a simple rejection, since the universally absolute can be manifest and is manifest in all other religions. Therefore, Christianity is not the fulfillment of all religions, but rather is enriched through this encounter with revelation of the New Being in the various religions.

Hence, dialogue becomes a model for inter-religious treatment. This dialogue, however, derives its norms from the criteria of the New Being. Thus, it becomes possible to accept each other’s truths, as

well as to criticize and to be able to endure criticism in dialogue. The aim of this dialogue is to overcome particular and provincial self-glorification and to be open for the universal reality of God.

### **6. The Post-modern End of the Meta-narrative as an Inquiry into Tillich**

Much has been discussed so far: plurality, for instance—and consequently a pluralist theology of religion. This is the signature and the call for battle in post-modernity. Unfortunately, “post-modern” has become a term with which one can do almost anything. The retrograde intersection against the post-modern is always the much quoted inclination and obligation to be arbitrary. The famous slogan for this is “anything goes,” which of course, when Paul Feyerabend employ it, means something completely different.<sup>15</sup> Plurality is obviously misinterpreted when referring to this arbitrary propaganda: one is only analyzing one side of the manifold expression existing, and does not take in to account the other which is the precision of the multiple possibilities. Let me explain what I mean by this.

Our concept of reality and our expectations in respect of recognition and act are determined by specificity, difference, and multi-dimensionality. Plurality is our present paradigm. Overall, the post-modern pluralization is not affected only by the superstructure or the surface of society, as some critics might claim. It has moreover permeated the basis and elementary definitions of society. Jean-Francois Lyotard's<sup>16</sup> determination of Post-modernity by the professing the end of the meta-narrative endows this rejection unity. To phrase it differently: it brings the unconditional acceptance of plurality—and its radicalization—to the point. This shall serve as a background for evaluating Tillich's construction of theology of religion.

In my opinion, often the post-modern intercession for difference and plurality is confused with the conventional and rather flat pluralism. I am referring to the understanding that primary values should always agree and on this unquestionable basis colorful superficialities can be tolerated. Typical for this concept, for which modernity has to be held accountable, is the assumption of a great design having a method and an aim. This concept promises salvation available for all and on the whole.

Post-modern thinkers, however, share the assumption that plurality permeates the basis, so that even the roots will be affected. Thus, plurality is un-

derstood to be incisive and radical. The post-modern break-down, that is, the loss of any total vision, is not mourned or regretted, but rather interpreted and considered a gain. The right question is not whether the motif of plurality is new as such. It is more important that it is now at the centre of attention and is, therefore, grasped in a radical way. Therefore, anyone defining plurality in the classic style of modernity, that is, seeing it in respect of unity will have extreme difficulties in recognizing this description. He or she has to discard it and to shut themselves off from a sober awareness of the multiplicity of reality and the realities.

The constructivist notion of the post-modern, which allows truth and reality to emerge in a discursive way from a dialogical speech-act, thus, emphasizes the open correlational process. Furthermore, Tillich's primary correlation concerning the question of the human and the answer given by the Gospel is remembered. This specific understanding of correlation is based on the preconception of a universal New Being.

Are we, however, not being confronted with another meta-narrative? I do not think so. According to my reading, Tillich resists the temptation to absolutize the universal, ontological, and theonomic principles in an empirical category. Tillich himself calls this relationship a theological paradox: “The absolute standpoint must, therefore, notwithstanding its absoluteness, descend to the relative and elevate the relative standpoint to itself. Intuition must go into the sphere of reflection, of singularity, of contradiction, in order to lead reflection through itself beyond itself.”<sup>17</sup>

In the context of postmodernism, one has to continue further questioning through employing his model of religious theology. What do we want to achieve with this dialogue? What is the telos? To conclude and to close, I will offer you four points:

1. Religious pluralism begins where all religions recognize each other as equal discussion partners. Everything else belongs to the prolegomena of the dialogue. A religion, which is not willing to communicate with other religions on the same level, is still in its pre-pluralist stage.

2. No religion has the fullness of truth at its disposal. Religions are characterized by their belief in promise and not in their claim to a possession. There is no religion, not a single one, whose cultural tradition as such is untouchable in a holy way, reaching from general and super-temporal obligation. Such a limitation is a demonization of religious forms, as

Paul Tillich has clearly shown. Only when one acknowledges this, that is, when one acknowledges that all religious forms are grown from culture and hence de-demonizes culture is the path open to honor cultural traditions in a relaxed manner.

3. One's own religious identity is significant and worth-while persevering, that is, an equalization of religions will be and has to be avoided in dialogue. It is important to be responsible for, acknowledge, and emphasize one's own religious situation. The plurality of the various manifestations—even from a religious situation from within—should not be graded in a pre-mature manner. The own individual profile has to be clear and should remain so. However, it is important that every religious human being is aware that concretizing one's own relation to God in doctrines of faith and custom, with all their ritual forms, are precious as possible forms; however, they are not necessary as the only possible way. This attitude lets the human being be more tolerant, as well as religious, which can foster multi-cultural living together. For individualization in dialogue does not necessarily lead to isolation.

4. Religious experience is striving for communication. It is an encounter—in a symbolic manifestation—with the one who is of unconditional concern. Apart from the pure aspect of content, the aspect of relationship between the dialogue partners is an issue. The attention of this dialogue is directed towards the discharge and the procedure of true communication. Such a procedural pluralism (cf. Jürgen Habermas<sup>18</sup>) acknowledges the impossibility of deceiving post-modern heterogeneity (cf. Jean-Francois Lyotard<sup>19</sup>). Hence, the dialogue itself becomes the telos and encounters an eschatological dynamics—that is, fragment and anticipation, theonomic (cf. Paul Tillich<sup>20</sup>) realization and community.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Thomas Luckmann, *Invisible Religion. The Problem of Religion in Modern Society*. New York: Macmillan, 1967.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Peter L. Berger, *Der Zwang zur Häresie. Religion in der pluralistischen Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt 1980. Cf. John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Robison B. James, "La rencontre interreligieuse d'après Tillich," in LTP 58/1 (2002) 43-64. 42f. Cf. R. B. James, "Tillich on the Absoluteness of Christianity," in *Papers from the Annual Meeting of the NAPTS*, Philadelphia, P.A. November 1995, ed. Robert P. Scharlemann

(Charlottesville, VA, August 1997) 35-50. Cf. Marc Boss, "Religious Diversity: From Tillich to Lindbeck and Back. In *Religion in the New Millennium*, ed. Raymond F. Bulman and Frederick J. Parrella, 177-195. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Tillich, GW VIII, 280-281. Cf. "Missions in World History," in *The Theology of the Christian Mission*.

<sup>5</sup> Reinhold Bernhardt, *Der Absolutheitsanspruch des Christentums—Von der Aufklärung bis zur pluralistischen Religionstheologie*, Gütersloh: 1994, 119.

<sup>6</sup> Paul Tillich, GW V, 220; cf. *Theology of Culture* 63.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951, 57, 63), I: 110.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Tillich, ST II, 86.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Tillich, GW VIII, 280, cf. "Missions in World History," in: *The Theology of the Christian Mission*.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Jörg Eickhoff, Theodizee, Die theologische Antwort Paul Tillichs im Kontext der philosophischen Fragestellung, Frankfurt a.M. 1997, 209-225.

<sup>11</sup> Paul Tillich, GW IX, 86, cf. "Religion and Culture" in *The Protestant Era*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Tillich, GW I, 382, cf. "The Conquest of the Concept of Religion in the Philosophy of Religion," in *What is Religion?*, New York: Harper and Row, 1968.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Tillich, GW VIII, 279, cf. "Missions in World History," in *The Theology of the Christian Mission*.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Paul Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions* (1963), in *Main Works* 5, 302.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Paul Feyerabend, "Anything Goes" in *Erkenntnis für freie Menschen*. Frankfurt, 1979: 83-85.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Wolfgang Welsch "Einleitung," in *Wege aus der Moderne. Schlüsseltexzte der Postmoderne-Diskussion*, ed. Wolfgang Welsch. Berlin, 1994, 1-43.

<sup>17</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematische Theologie*, 1913, paragraph 22, Uwe Scharf transl., slightly revised.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity versus Postmodernity," in *New German Critique* 22 (1981) 3-14. Cf. "The French Path to Postmodernity: Battle between Eroticism and General Economics," in *New German Critique* 33 (1984). 79-102.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Minneapolis, 1984.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Paul Tillich, *Theonomie* (1931), in: *Main Works* 4, 252. Cf. ST III (Deutsche Ausgabe, 282-314, Kapitel: Die Gegenwart des göttlichen Geistes und die Zweideutigkeiten der Kultur).



## SALVATION AS COSMIC HEALING IN TILlich

**Karin Grau**

“A religion without healing or saving power is irrelevant.”<sup>1</sup> This remarkable comment by the 74-year-old Paul Tillich may serve as the starting point for the following reflections. Tillich’s theology can be described as a continuous struggle against the possibility that Christian faith might be irrelevant—as an indefatigable effort to discover and confirm healing and saving powers hidden in the Christian message. We see this concern realized in his earliest sermons, in his “Kirchliche Apologetik,” in the first sketches of a Systematic Theology and in the lectures of the 1925 *Marburger Dogmatik*.<sup>2</sup> And this same concern of Tillich’s is only intensified by a new love that he finds in the New World after emigration, the love for “salvation,” both the word and what it means.

In the mid-1940s, more than a decade after leaving the Old World, and while waiting for the end of World War II and the impending collapse of Germany, Tillich recalls with astonishing enthusiasm the Christian hope for “salvation.” Obviously, he has found his own meaning for this traditional word. Learning English as he did at the age of 47, the term appears to him as a fresh, unused word, free from traditional connotations, and free also from the sharp contrast in German between *Heil* and *Heilung*. Going back to the root of the word, Tillich never tires of recalling the deep longing for being “whole, not yet split, not disrupted, not disintegrated, and therefore healthy and sane”<sup>3</sup> that is connoted in “salvation.” He never tires of opposing the disastrous reduction in meaning that restricted this universal event to the individual soul and its eternal destiny.<sup>4</sup> In colorful images from the history of religions, he depicts “salvation” as a cosmic event that embraces society and nature.

This love for “salvation” as cosmic healing reflects Tillich’s contact even with Whitehead’s cosmological philosophy,<sup>5</sup> as well as his contact with psychoanalysis, with Jung’s doctrine of the archetypes, and with the “faith healing” offered by Pentecostal groups and by Christian Science. Tillich’s love for “salvation” will accompany him for the rest of his life. We come across the term within the three volumes of his *Systematic Theology* as one aspect of revelation,<sup>6</sup> as the work of the Savior,<sup>7</sup> and as the healing power of the Spiritual Presence.<sup>8</sup> We encounter “salvation” also as a central concern in Til-

lich’s reflections on “Pastoral Care”<sup>9</sup> and in the later sermons,<sup>10</sup> especially in the sermons that paint the picture of Jesus as the healing Savior.<sup>11</sup> The word “salvation” appears as the essence of the religious answer given to the cultural analysis of estranged existence,<sup>12</sup> and as the fundamental experiential basis of any religion,<sup>13</sup> especially of Christian faith, the faith that sees universal healing power “embodied in the Christ.”<sup>14</sup> And, finally, we find passages in Tillich—hermeneutically very interesting passages—that reveal “salvation,” with its healing and cosmic connotations, as a key both to Tillich’s idea of the New Being<sup>15</sup> and to his model of the multidimensional unity of life.<sup>16</sup>

Nevertheless, Tillich’s concept of “salvation” gets its most powerful expression in the mid-1940s when he emphasizes in an unexpected way the participation of nature in this cosmic healing event: “salvation,” says Tillich, “presupposes the healing of disintegrated nature generally. Salvation includes the peace in nature and the peace between man and nature.”<sup>17</sup> Or, as the title of his 1945 sermon puts it: “Nature Also Mourns for a Lost Good.”<sup>18</sup> In Tillich’s descriptions, which are much more than historical illustrations, we perceive nature as an autonomous subject. We perceive animals, plants, and landscapes suffering from sicknesses, feeling pain, hoping for healing.<sup>19</sup> We hear the hidden voice of nature, the harmony of the “heavenly bodies,” the “song of transitoriness” in autumn, the sighing and throbbing of the entire creation<sup>20</sup>—voices of nature’s hidden melancholy. Connecting the interpretation of Romans 8: 19-22 with Schelling’s nature philosophy, Tillich describes nature as a living being, rooted in the same Ground as mankind, participating in sin and in separation from that Ground, but also participating in “salvation.” “Bread and wine, water and light, and all the great elements of nature become the bearers of spiritual meaning and saving power.”<sup>21</sup> “Salvation” is represented as a cosmic drama within which nature plays a part of its own. Nature appears as a living, suffering, hoping *Gestalt*. In short, we witness an intensified perception of nature that can be described as a “Gestalt-perception.”

In places where Tillich is discussing salvation, we find only two small remarks in which he points out his affinity with the theories of “Gestalt.” To him “the theory of Gestalt...has deprived the quantitative-mechanistic definition of nature of its seemingly uncontested victory.”<sup>22</sup> To him, “Gestalt-psychology and Gestalt-medicine have introduced the concept of wholeness as the ultimate therapeutic

principle.”<sup>23</sup> (Both these remarks are from 1946.) But, considering Tillich’s contacts with leading representatives of Gestalt-theory in his Frankfurt time, especially with Kurt Goldstein,<sup>24</sup> and also considering his ideas about the *Mächtigkeit*<sup>25</sup> [power] of nature and “Die Gestalt der Gnade”<sup>26</sup> [the structure of grace] in the 1930s, it becomes obvious that the eschatological and religious-historical discovery of cosmic “salvation” is deeply connected with the discovery of a new way of perception, namely, Gestalt-perception. Tillich’s 1959 laudatio concerning “The Significance of Kurt Goldstein for Philosophy of Religion” and his reflections upon organic and psychic “Gestalten” within the multidimensional unity of life<sup>27</sup> confirm the following thesis: In these texts we learn that *The Courage to Be* and the fourth Part of the *Systematic Theology* are directly influenced by Goldstein. In these texts, it becomes evident that Tillich owes the term “self-actualization,” which is the telos of all life-processes in Tillich’s philosophy of life, to his old friend from Frankfurt. And it also becomes evident that all considerations about the inorganic, the organic, and the psychic realm are inspired by the dialogue with Kurt Goldstein’s “Ganzheitsbiologie” [holistic biology]. In what he says in these places, Tillich is on the way toward establishing an embracing Gestalt-theology, a Gestalt-theology in which the term “Gestalt” is replaced by the term “centeredness.”<sup>28</sup>

Notwithstanding all this—notwithstanding Tillich’s fascinating work with the holistic notion of Gestalt—I see more that is relevant to my concern with salvation in the salvation-papers of the mid-1940s. In those places the inspiration of a newfound way of perceiving things is still fresh, and is not refracted in the intricate details of *Tillich’s Systematic Theology*, Part IV. Further—and perhaps most importantly—in those papers of the mid-1940s Tillich has found a new approach to a subject that had been important to him since his works on the demonic, namely, the subject of forces, energies, and powers.

Declaring it his aim to set free the “original power”<sup>29</sup> of the early Christian eschatological message, and looking at the rich material of religious history, Tillich now deals with “cosmic forces,”<sup>30</sup> with “demonic forces,”<sup>31</sup> and with the “healing power”<sup>32</sup> of the Savior. As the “Son of man,” the Savior is “the concentration of all cosmic powers, the macrocosmos condensed in a microcosmos,”<sup>33</sup> conquering the “cosmic power” of Death, bringing “Eternal Life which is equally an objective power.”<sup>34</sup> In this perspective, “destructive forces” are seen as a

“cosmic reality” that “appears as the negative power in history, man, and nature.”<sup>35</sup>

This small selection of passages mentioning forces and powers in the context of salvation, redemption, and reconciliation may show the following: Nature appears as a tragic Gestalt drawn into a drama of forces and energies that is nothing less than the drama of fall and salvation itself.<sup>36</sup> Nature is involved in cosmic sickness and so, in Tillich’s own words, the “cosmic disease is cosmic guilt.”<sup>37</sup> The Fall, guilt, and disease are overcome by salvation, but in both, “in fall and in salvation, the turning power is in man.”<sup>38</sup>

Today, there is ample knowledge of nature, its diseases, the way it is being destroyed, and the ways in which diseases might be treated and nature rescued. But only a new way of human perception will bring the needed “turning power”—only a new perception of energies, of forces, of powers, and of nature itself as a powerful cosmic Gestalt. Only as we are able through our bodily senses to hear, see, and feel these energies will we be able to arrive at a sacramental communion with nature.<sup>39</sup> Only the fact that we hear, see, and feel nature’s “greatness and power”<sup>40</sup> through our bodily senses can tear us away from the scheme of subject and object, a scheme that has destroyed the awareness of the fundamental interdependence between man and nature—a scheme that started not only with Descartes’ “res cogitans,” but earlier with the Platonic construction of an inner world.<sup>41</sup>

There can be no doubt here about two things. First, there can be no dispute that these new ways of perception, including Gestalt-perception, are not to be confused with revelation. We are still speaking here of perception, even if it is “perception” in an extended sense. It belongs to the realm of the *subjective*, to the side of existential questions. It belongs to the realm of natural theology with its own prerogatives and limits.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, Tillich never tires of emphasizing the side of salvation that is a “divine act”<sup>43</sup> and a “universal event,”<sup>44</sup> the side that is the creation of a New Heaven, a New Earth, a New Being<sup>45</sup>—which is then *followed* by the subjective side of salvation, that is, by the creatures’ participation in and their individual reception of salvation.

But there also can be no doubt about a second fact, namely, that we, as well as nature, need a turnaround. And in order for us to be grasped by the necessary turning power, we have to hear, to see, to feel nature as a living, suffering, hoping Gestalt. I

am sure that *perception* in this extended sense will be followed by *reception* in an extended sense—reception of the familiar theological answers, for example, by a deeper reception of the embodiment of the Spirit, or of the real and powerful “Leib Christi” [body of Christ] that embraces humankind and nature. Spirit has become body; bread and wine, water and light, and all the great elements of nature have become the bearers of spiritual meaning and saving power. The turning power to realize this embodiment on earth and to confirm its fundamental relevance for the world is in the human race.

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### Appendix concerning Kurt Goldstein

In the 1920s Kurt Goldstein had a neurological institute in Frankfurt where he studied soldiers of World War I with brain injuries. He came to the conclusion that even organic brain processes follow Gestalt-regulations. After a short time in Berlin and his arrest by the Nazis, he went to Amsterdam, and later to New York, where he became professor of psychiatry at Columbia University. In his main work (*The Organism* [New York, 1939], 16) he describes one instinct, one driving force in each organism,

namely, the drive for “self-actualization.” This includes a certain “centeredness” of the organism, or the ability of “self-regulation,” which means the drive to keep a homeostatic balance by integrating impacts from outside.

Source: Christiane Ludwig-Körner, *Der Selbst-Begriff in Psychologie und Psychotherapie* (Wiesbaden, 1992), 73; Hans-Jürgen Walter, *Angewandte Gestalttheorie in Psychotherapie und Psychohygiene* (Opladen, 1996), 91.

Lore and Fritz Perls, the originators of “Gestalttherapy,” had chosen this name because of their association with Goldstein, in whose institute they worked in the 1920s.

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<sup>1</sup> 1960a: 315.

<sup>2</sup> Especially those who describe the breaking in of “Heilskräfte” und “Heilkräfte”; 1925: 242-247.

<sup>3</sup> 1946a: 211.

<sup>4</sup> 1946a: 210; 1946b: 277.

<sup>5</sup> Sturm (1994): 184-211. The cosmic element is not really new in Tillich’s thought. It is prepared—as is almost every topic in his work—in earlier writings. It is rooted, of course, in the nature philosophy of Schelling, and is connected with the attempt to interpret Jesus the Christ as an event that is significant for the whole universe, as Tillich works this out in 1930c.

<sup>6</sup> 1951: 144-147

<sup>7</sup> 1957: 164-170

<sup>8</sup> 1963a: 277-282.

<sup>9</sup> 1955b: 88; 1960a: 313-315; 1961: 351.

<sup>10</sup> 1948: 76-86; 1955a: 34-41. 175-179; 1963b: 58-65. 112-121.

<sup>11</sup> 1955a: 42-45; 1963b: 62-65.

<sup>12</sup> 1956: 395.

<sup>13</sup> 1966: 433.

<sup>14</sup> 1960b: 419. The notion of “salvation” in the context of the “Philosophical Background” of his Theology is remarkable. There Tillich declares: “Salvation is in its very nature healing. .. And this power of healing is for Christian thinking embodied in the Christ.”

<sup>15</sup> 1957: 166.

<sup>16</sup> 1960c: 414.

<sup>17</sup> 1946b: 277.

<sup>18</sup> 1948: 76.

<sup>19</sup> 1946a: 210-213; 1946b: 277f.

<sup>20</sup> 1948: 78-81.

<sup>21</sup> 1948: 86.

<sup>22</sup> 1946a: 225f.

<sup>23</sup> 1946b: 276.

<sup>24</sup> Albrecht/Schüßler (1993): 76f. 80.

<sup>25</sup> 1930a: 154-163.

<sup>26</sup> 1930b.

<sup>27</sup> 1963a: 17-21.

<sup>28</sup> 1963a: 32-34. See the Appendix concerning Kurt Goldstein.

<sup>29</sup> 1946a: 210; 1946b: 274.

<sup>30</sup> 1946b: 278.

<sup>31</sup> 1946a: 213; 1946b: 277.

<sup>32</sup> 1946a: 212; 1946b: 276; 1948: 86.

<sup>33</sup> 1946a: 214.

<sup>34</sup> 1946b: 279.

<sup>35</sup> 1946b: 279.

<sup>36</sup> 1948: 77. 176.

<sup>37</sup> 1946a: 212.

<sup>38</sup> 1946b: 278.

<sup>39</sup> Drummy (2000).

<sup>40</sup> 1948: 79f.

<sup>41</sup> In this point I follow the Kiel philosopher Hermann Schmitz (1992; 1998). Continuing Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of perception as well as elements of gestalttheory, Schmitz develops a broad phenomenology of body within which “atmospheres” appear as encountering Gestalten.

<sup>42</sup> 1951: 118-120.

<sup>43</sup> 1946a: 215.

<sup>44</sup> 1946b: 281.

<sup>45</sup> 1946b: 281.

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