In this issue:

- NAPTS Annual Meeting, 20–21 November 2015: Program and Information
- Paul Tillich (1886-1965), “Philosophy, Mystery, Love”: Theology and Religious Studies, University of Glasgow
- „To be on your own“: Paul Tillich im Exil. Internationaler Kongress der DPTG e.V. anlässlich des 50. Todestages von Paul Tillich
- Celebration of Tillich’s Interment, New Harmony, Indiana
- New Publications on Tillich
- Correlatio (Portuegese)
- Owen C. Thomas, R. I. P
- Duane Olson, “Tillich and John Muir’s Wildness Mysticism”
- Frederick J. Parrella, “Does Life Imitate Art or Art Life?: The Ambiguities in Paul Tillich’s Theology and in His Personal Life”

**NAPTS Annual Meeting**

**20–21 November 2015**

**Program and Information**

**Friday, November 20**

9:00-11:30 a.m.

**Theme: Pedagogy and Paulus**

**Hyatt Regency, Hanover Hall, Room G [P20-101]**

**Presiding:** Adam Pryor, Bethany College

Sven Ensminger, University of Oxford
The Courage to Accept that ‘You are Accepted’ – Preaching ‘The Courage to Be’ in the Context of Faith, Hope and Charity

Ronald MacLennan, Bethany College
A Half Century with Paul Tillich

William Ressl, Aurora University
On Giant Shoulders: Teaching through a Minority Strain Interpretation of Paul Tillich’s Thought and Work as a Theologian Doing Social Work

David Nikkel, University of North Carolina, Pembroke
Embodying Ultimate Concern

1:00-3:30 p.m.
Theme: Feminist Engagements with Tillich
Hyatt Regency, Hanover Hall, Room G [P20-210]

Presiding: Bryan Wagoner, Davis & Elkins College

Mary Ann Stenger, University of Louisville
Tillich’s ‘Religion of the Concrete Spirit’ as a Base for Feminist Theology

Hannah Hofheinz, Theologian and Writer
Desirous Transformations: Writing Theologically/Theological Writing with Paul Tillich

Jawanza Clark, Manhattan College
Blackness, the Verb, and the Earth: Paul Tillich’s Influence in the Development of Black Theology, Feminist Philosophy, and Ecofeminist Theology

Verna Ehret, Mercyhurst University
Courage and the Dignity of Love

4:00-5:30 p.m.
Theme: The Legacy of Paul Tillich
Marriott Marquis, M102 [P20-313]

Presiding: Charles Fox, SUNY/Empire State College, Professor Emeritus

Harvey Cox, Harvard University
Tillich in the Shopping Mall: Ultimate Concern and Distorted Desire

6:30 - 9:00 Annual Banquet of the North American Paul Tillich Society

Distinguished Speaker: Robison B. James, Professor Emeritus, University of Richmond

Title: “Did Tillich Give Us a Theology of the Historical Jesus When He Made ‘Essentialization’ Explicit in Volume Three?”

Location: Pitty Pat’s Porch
25 Andrew Young International Boulevard
Atlanta, GA 30303 • 404-525-8228

Our president, Charles Fox, has arranged a delicious buffet dinner including:
— a slab of prime rib
— crab cakes
— Southern Pecan Pie for dessert.
• N.B. Wine and alcoholic beverages are not included.
• Price: 50 USD per person

Reservations: fparrella@scu.edu
Or U.S. mail: Frederick J. Parrella
3565 Ivalynn Circle, San Jose, CA 95132

Saturday, November 21

7:30-8:45
NAPTS Board Meeting
Place to be named

11:30-12:30
NAPTS Business Meeting
Marriott Marquis, L404 [P21-117]

Please make every effort to attend this meeting. New Officers will be elected, and topics for the 2016 meeting will be considered.

1:00-3:30 p.m.

Theme: Tillich and Lutheranism

Presiding: Duane Olson, Mc Kendree College

Thomas Bandy, Independent Scholar
The Future of The Protestant Era

Derek Nelson, Wabash College
Writing as a Reader of Martin Luther: What kind of Lutheran Theologian is Tillich not?

Anne Marie Reijnen, Institut Catholique de Paris
Tillich as a Lutheran Theologian: the Paradox of Reason and Revelation

Curtis Thompson, Thiel College
Tracing a Lutheran Trajectory: Tillich as 'the Twentieth-Century Martensen'

Fifty years ago, on October 22, 1965, Paul Tillich died, just days after having given his final public lecture. Consideration of the theological endeavor between then and now highlights how seminal his thought has been within the field of religion. In contemporary parlance, it could be said that in many ways today’s Academy is Tillich gone viral. On this panel, leading scholars address how Tillich’s ideas have contributed to their work in religion and science, theology and culture, theology and psychology, black liberation theology, feminist theology, ground of being theologies, and theology and world religions. The vibrancy of Tillich’s contribution to the constructive work of these scholars indicates the lasting nature of his influence on the field.

Panelists and Topics

—Harvey Cox on Theology and Culture
—Robert Russell on Theology and Science
—Pamela Cooper-White on Theology and Psychology
—Willie Jennings on Theology and Black Liberation Thought

Respondents

—Mary Ann Stenger on Theology and Feminist Perspectives

—John Thatamanil on Theology and World Religions

Presider
—Sharon P. Burch

Body and Religion Group

A21-217

Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture Group

A22-236

Theme: Tillich’s Theological Legacies

Sunday - 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm
Marriott - L405-406 (Lobby Level)

This roundtable session engages the theme of this CfPs directly, bringing together three panelists and a respondent to consider the question of 'body as ultimate concern', with particular reference to Paul Tillich. All three panelists bring their unique different perspectives to bear on the question; yet are united by the conviction that Tillich's thought offers a provocative—and underexplored—resource for thinking through the central problematic framed by the question of body as ultimate concern, viz., how to think (and act) theologically in such a way so as to take bodies (and embodiment) with utmost seriousness yet without elevating body to a false ultimate. For Tillich, bodies themselves are not of ultimate concern; but can (ought?) be sites of our being grasped by ultimate concern. By examining the sexual, disabled, and imprisoned situations of bodies, this panel aims to bring a new perspective on the question of 'body as ultimate concern'.

Shawn Arthur, Wake Forest University
Presiding

Panelists:
Russell Re Manning, Bath Spa University
Mark Lewis Taylor, Princeton Theological Seminary
Courtney Wilder, Midland University

If you have not paid your 2015 dues, please do so at the annual meeting.
Tillich insisted that the task of the theologian was to interpret for her or his time the way that Being Itself was being perceived in contemporary culture. These three very different papers, one on architecture, one on the intersection of Process Thought with Tillich’s ideas, and one on theories of justice, present contemporary appropriations of Tillich’s constructs, illustrating the continuing significance of his insights 50 years after his death.

Presiding: Frederick J. Parrella, Santa Clara University

Mike Grimshaw, University of Canterbury
*God Is in the Details: Reading’ Mies van der Rohe’s Modern Architecture through Tillich’s Theology of Culture and Technology*

Jari Ristiniemi, University of Gavle
*Clashes of Justice in Finding Life, Justice in General, and Expressive/Creative Justice in Modern Cinema*

Jon Gill, Claremont Graduate University
*Grounds of Being Becoming: The Possibility of a Tilllich-Inspired Process Theology as Displayed by Underground Rap*

Business Meeting:

Sharon Peebles Burch, Interfaith Counseling Center, San Anselmo, CA

Stephen G. Ray, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

Please make every effort to attend this meeting. New Officers will be elected, and topics for the 2016 meeting will be considered.

If you have not paid your 2015 dues, please do so at the annual meeting.

If you would like your paper published in the Bulletin, please send it to the Secretary Treasurer.
A symposium on Paul Tillich took place on Saturday 26th September 2015 at 4, The Square, University of Glasgow G12 8QQ. The following is a summary of the program and its participants.

• 9.30-11 a.m. John D. Caputo Radicalizing Tillich: From the Ground of Being to the Event. After locating the radicality of Tillich in his critique of God as a Supreme Being or highest existent as half-blasphemous and mythological, I go on to criticize the alliance of his notion of the “ground of being” with classical metaphysical theology. I propose the need to push past the ground of being to what Derrida call the event by way of a comparison of Tillich’s concept of the unconditional with Derrida’s notion of the unconditional without sovereignty and of Tillich’s generalized Protestant Principle with what I will call Derrida’s Jewish Deconstructive Principle.

• 11.15 a.m.-12.45 p.m. Daniel Whistler The Speculative Tillich. One of the more surprising convergences between Tillich and recent continental philosophy is the concept of the correlation. While there is little sense in attempting to pit Tillich’s staunch defence of correlationism against the Meillassouxian critique, this paper will consider the ways in which Tillich attempts to speculate through the correlation. In particular, I examine the Schellingian basis of Tillichean speculation, and its commitment to metabasis. Not only, I will argue, does such metabatic thinking connect Tillich’s work to early modern metaphysics, it can also provide a Tillichian means of passing ‘the extensity test’, a key metaphilosophical virtue in the wake of the speculative turn.

• 2-3.15 p.m. George Pattison Beyond Words: The God above God and the God after God. In the 1950s and 1960s Tillich’s discussion of God’s transcendence over all symbolic expressions, including the key terms of classical Christian theology drew much attention. However, in the wake of theology’s linguistic turn in the 1970s and 1980s this discussion came to seem obsolete. This is in part because Tillich’s thought was pressed into the presuppositions of an epistemological debate that excluded the possibility of a radically eschatological approach to divine mystery that, I shall argue, is central, if inconsistently so, in Tillich’s thought as a whole.

• 3.30-4.45 p.m. Russell Re Manning Dark Reflections: Tillich, Sex, and Ambiguity. In his highly influential essay ‘Tillich, Frege, Kittel: Some Reflections on a Dark Theme’ (1975), the Scottish theologian Donald MacKinnon passed judgement on Paul Tillich’s sex life, finding in Tillich a ‘calculated, elaborately defended, yet always elaborately hidden perpetuation of a lifestyle involving an unacknowledged contempt...for the elementary, demanding sanctities of human existence’ (pp.134-5). Glossing MacKinnon’s concern with Tillich’s ‘shameless and heartless sexual promiscuity’, the widely respected Oxford historian of theology Diarmaid MacCulloch has more recently wondered ‘how far any of Tillich’s theological work can be taken seriously’. This paper will take up MacKinnon and MacCulloch’s dismissal of the value of Tillich’s theological work on the basis of his sexual lifestyle. I will argue against their ad hominem critiques of Tillich and suggest instead the contours of a theological assessment of the theologian as a sexual person. In so doing, I aim to advance the analysis beyond the binary polarity of condemnation vs. apologia to consider Tillich’s sexual life and his reception as an informative case study in the still underexplored theme of theological sexual embodiment.
1. Exilanten-Netzwerke 17. 30-18. 30 Uhr

Moderation: Christian Danz (Wien)
— 8. 30-9. 30 Uhr Primus-Heinz Kacher (Klagenfurt), Kulturelle Netzwerke deutschsprachiger Exilanten im US-amerikanischen Exil
— 9. 30-10. 30 Uhr Eva-Maria Zieg (Bayreuth), Die Frankfurter Schule im Exil
— 11. 00-12. 00 Uhr Peter-Erwin Jansen (Koblenz), Tillich und Leo Löwenthal
— 14. 00-15. 00 Uhr Christian Roy (Montreal), Deutungen der Geschichte aus Revolution und Exil: Der Briefwechsel zwischen Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy und Paul Tillich (1935-1944)

2. Council for a Democratic Germany

Moderation: Werner Schüßler (Trier)
— 15. 00-16. 00 Uhr Claus-Dieter Krohn (Hamburg), Kairos und Dritte Kraft. Paul Tillichs Diskurs- und Kampfgemeinschaft mit Adolf Löwe für eine freie und gerechte Gesellschaft
— 16. 30-17. 30 Uhr Alf Christophersen (München), Tillich und der Council for a Democratic Germany
— 17. 30-18. 30 Uhr Winfried Halder (Düsseldorf), Thomas Manns und Paul Tillichs Deutschlandbild in ihren Rundfunkreden

Samstag, 24. Oktober 2015

3. Paul Tillich und die amerikanische Theologie

Moderation: Christian Danz (Wien)
— 9. 00-10. 00 Uhr Mary Ann Stenger (Louisville), Tillichs American Theology on the Boundary between Native and Alien Land
— 10. 00-11. 00 Uhr Russell Re Manning (Bath), Not Alone in Exile. Paul Tillich and his American Interpreters
— 11. 30-12. 30 Uhr Frederick J. Parrella (Santa Clara), Paul Tillich and American Theology

4. Tillichs frühe Vorlesungen im Exil

Moderation: Christian Danz (Wien)
— 14. 00-15. 00 Uhr uheand Religionsphilosophie 15. 00-16. 00 Uhr—Michael Moxter (Hamburg), Tillichs are Religionsphilosophie im Übergang von Deutschland in die USA
16. 30-17. 30 Übergang von Deutschland in die USA
—Werner Schüßler (Tri and Very), Tillichs Existenz- und Lebensphilosophie im Übergang von Deutschland in die USA

Sonntag, 25. Oktober 2015

5. Theologie im Exil

Moderation: Erdmann Sturm (Münster)
— 9. 00-10. 00 Uhr Nettger Sennzka (Berlin), Exil als Thema der Systematische Theologie
— 10. 00-11. 00 Uhr Wilhelm Gräb (Berlin), Religion im Exil
— Georg Neugebauer (Leipzig), Die Tillich-Rezeption in Deutschland von 1933-1965

Veranstaltungsort:
Theologische Fakultät der Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, Burgstraße 26, 10178 Berlin, Hörsaal 008

Celebration of Tillich’s Interment

The Robert Lee Blaffer Foundation is officially planning a celebration event in honor of Paul Tillichs interment in Tillich Park on May 14th, 2016 (Saturday night) at 7:30 PM at the Atheneum in New Harmony Indiana on May 14th, 2016. The speaker for the rededication will be the Reverend Dr. Stephen Butler Murray. The program will also involve a concert violinist from New York city named Mazz Swift who is going to be in New Harmony two weeks prior to the rededication working with an amazing local seven women chanting choir (Dana Taylor, director of “Angelus”) from Mount Vernon, Indiana on original scores for the event. The program will be in the auditorium at the Atheneum, and if weather permits, we will adjourn to the roof of the Atheneum for a candle balloon release at the closing. There may be a brief, private family gathering in Tillich Park with any descendants of Tillich and invited guests on Sunday morning, which would be officiated by Dr. Murray. The New Harmony Inn is holding a block of rooms at a special rate for out of town guests. ($115 or $145 per night).

Kent Schuette

If you would like your paper published in the Bulletin, please send it to the Secretary Treasurer.
New Publications

[Editor’s Note: New Publications by members of the Society are always welcome, whether they be scholarly works on Tillich, or scholarship on another subject.]


In the Beginning highlights the history of the world’s largest religious memorial to the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. Inspired essays on education, social justice, nonviolence, peace, ecumenism, and civil and human rights are offered in honor of Lawrence Edward Carter, Sr., founding dean of the Martin Luther King, Jr. International Chapel. This book is a lasting tribute and valuable contribution to the history and educational mission of Morehouse College.


Originally named the “Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Chapel,” Dean Carter later asked the Board of Trustees to change “Memorial” to “International.” The change in name captures the broad and far-reaching dimensions of Dr. King’s message of peace, nonviolence, and civil and human rights and reflects Dean Carter’s own approach to ministry. The chapel services are mostly in the Protestant tradition but the vision of the chapel is much more diverse and ecumenical, embracing people of other faith traditions.

—Hugh M. Gloster, Jr., excerpt from the Foreword of In the Beginning

Echol Nix, Jr., is an alumnus of Morehouse College (BA) with degrees from Vanderbilt University (MDiv) and Boston University (PhD, STM). He writes and teaches in the areas of religion and theology and is a past president of the North American Paul Tillich Society, an affiliate of the American Academy of Religion.


Introduction: “The Real Tillich Is the Radical Tillich” by Russell Re Manning
Part I: Tillich’s Radical Legacy
1. “A Homage to Paulus” by Thomas J. J. Altizer
2. “Paul Tillich and the Death of God: Breaking the Confines of Heaven and Rethinking the Courage to Be” by Daniel J. Peterson
3. “God Is a Symbol for God: Paul Tillich and the Contours of Any Possible Radical Theology” by Richard Grigg
4. “The Nemesis Hex: Mary Daly and the Pirated Proto-Patriarchal Paulus” by Christopher D. Rodkey
5. “Parataxis and Theonomy: Tillich and Adorno in Dialogue” by Christopher Craig Brittain
6. “Peacemaking on the Boundary” by Matthew Lon Weaver

Part II: Tillich and Contemporary Radical Theologies
7. “The Irrelevance and Relevance of the Radical, Impure Tillich” by Mike Grimshaw
8. “Socialism’s Multitude: Tillich’s The Socialist Decision and Resisting the U.S. Imperial” by Mark Lewis Taylor
10. “Can There Be a Theology of Disenchantment? Speculative Realism, Correlationism, and Unbinding the nihil in Tillich” by Thomas A. James
11. “Depth and the Void: Tillich and Žižek via Schelling” by Clayton Crockett
13. “Radical Apologetics: Paul Tillich and Radical Philosophical Atheism” by Russell Re Manning

Correlatio (Portuguese)

Etienne Higuet would like to inform you also the Brazilian published in 2012 an article from Guy Hammond and the translation in Portuguese, taken from the Bulletin of the NAPTS, in the online journal of the Brazilian Paul Tillich Association.
In 1963, when Paul Tillich published the final volume of his Systematic Theology, there were approximately 3.2 billion people on the earth. The US population was around 190 million. Today, the world population has more than doubled to 7.2 billion and the US has added 130 million people to reach its current population of 320 million. In 1963, there was no Federal list of endangered species, and, of course, neither funding nor regulations to protect endangered species. The first list was created in 1967. In 1963, DDT was widely used as a pesticide to control insects. It was only banned in 1972. Prior to 1963, there were some limited federal initiatives focused on controlling air and water pollution, which included the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1948 and the Air Pollution Control Act of 1955. There was, however, no Federal Agency whose task it was to oversee the totality of environmental concerns and establish environmental regulations for the nation. The EPA was created in 1970.

In 1963, environmental issues were understood to be mostly local concerns and focused mainly on pollution. The animating question was how to keep these rivers and lakes, or the air in these cities clean. In keeping with his time, pollution is the single explicit environmental problem mentioned by Tillich in his Systematic Theology. Today, environmental concerns have become universalized and intensified. It is widely understood that the 3.8 billion tons of coal burned by China in 2011 not only caused air pollution in Beijing, but have an impact on the weather of the biosphere and will do so for the foreseeable future. Today, we are able to estimate global species extinction rates owing to human activity and compare them to the global background rate found in the fossil record. A 2014 estimate published in the journal Science argues that species are currently being extinguished at a rate that is 1,000 times higher than the rate seen in geological history, opening our era to the threat of what would be the sixth global mass extinction of life.

There are certainly many people today who deny the seriousness of environmental problems, and the political situation is frustratingly and damagingly stalled on environmental initiatives. Despite these things, the consciousness of environmental threats has shifted enough so that intergovernmental agencies are routinely called upon to study environmental problems and make policy recommendations. We have a President who says he agrees with climate science and promotes the goal articulated by the International Energy Agency of limiting the earth to a 2 degree Celsius average rise in global temperatures in order to avoid what is otherwise presented as cataclysmic environmental catastrophe. We are even living in a time where a major academic conference in religion can name a significant environmental problem as its theme.

The universalization and intensification of environmental threats since 1963 is an important factor to bring to bear on Tillich’s thought. This is especially the case since Tillich claimed to follow a method that provides theological answers to the...
most demanding questions of the time. judgments about the relevance of Tillich’s thought given the increase in environmental threats vary widely from rejection (Kaufmann) to different levels of piecemeal appropriation (Santmire, Lai, Hill, Drummy). There has been no comprehensive analysis of the whole of Tillich’s thought and what it might mean to transform it to meet current environmental challenges and I will not attempt that kind of analysis in this brief paper. I do, however, want to make suggestions in that direction and show how Tillich’s thought provides hopeful possibilities but also displays important limitations in the quest to develop an environmentally sound worldview.

My approach in this project is to turn to the work of John Muir (1838-1914) and place his spiritual vision in relationship to Tillich’s thought. At the outset, this may seem like an odd procedure for asking whether Tillich’s thought can be updated to meet contemporary environmental concerns, since Muir lived before Tillich. Muir died in 1914, the year Tillich enlisted as a chaplain in WWI. I choose Muir, however, because he represents an important strain of environmental thinking, one that I think is becoming more significant in our increasingly post-Christian context, and because Muir’s spiritual vision poses a unique challenge to Tillich’s thought.

Muir was born in Scotland and his family immigrated to the Wisconsin prairie when he was 11. His father was an ardent follower of the Stone-Campbell or Restoration movement. This evangelical Protestant movement sought to transcend denominationalism and bring back the original Christianity of the early church through a literal reading of and adherence to the Bible, especially the New Testament. In his autobiography, Muir recounts how in his youth his father outlawed the reading of all books but the Bible and a limited number of others deemed sufficiently Christian. According to Muir, his father once exclaimed, “the Bible is the only book human beings can possibly require throughout all the journey from earth to heaven.” Well into his 20’s, Muir continued to follow Restorationist thought and only broke free from it and the broad Christian worldview in which he was inculcated in his late 20’s and 30’s. In the background of this intellectual development were his wilderness wanderings: first his thousand mile walk from Wisconsin to Florida and then his journey to the High Sierras of California.

Muir was never a scholar or research scientist, though he had some training in botany and geology, and he made some limited contributions in those fields. Primarily, he was an explorer and lover of the wilderness. He was able to write about his experiences with such lucidity that he almost singlehandedly popularized the new literary genre of experiential nature writing.

For those of us familiar with Tillich’s thought, part of the interest in Muir is that as he breaks free from his Christian orientation, he does not lose his religious passion or his ultimate concern. Instead, that passion is transferred to wildness. Wildness is a term Muir himself commonly used and it refers to the quality of things in their natural condition apart from human influence, whether animals, plants, landscapes or the elemental conditions of life.

Wildness grasped Muir with a kind of ecstasy, driving him beyond himself. He had no language but the Christian with which to express his religious enthusiasm. Mountain landscapes were God’s temples or tabernacles. Wild plants preached sermons to him, and, he says, “told me grander things than I ever got from human priest.” Muir equated being sprayed by a mountain waterfall with a baptism and drinking sap from a Sequoia as partaking in the Eucharist. Often, he referred to himself as John the Baptist, calling others to come and experience God in the wild as he did.

Muir’s religious ecstasy vis-à-vis wildness certainly involved being moved by the immediacy of the beauty he saw. Mountain landscapes, trees, and wildflowers were some of his main passions. At the same time, what he expressed and experienced was not simply serene happiness over immediate beauty. Often, he expressed exultation at the overflowing creative and destructive pattern in nature that ultimately yielded both beauty and harmony. He says, “How lavish is nature building, pulling down, creating, destroying, chasing every material particle from form to form, ever changing, ever beautiful.” He valued being out in storms to experience their destructive ferocity as much or even more than he loved serene sunny days. Through it all, he expressed astonishment at how, in his words, “the features of the wildest landscape seem to be as harmoniously related as the features of a human face. Indeed, they look
human and radiate spiritual beauty, divine thought, however covered and concealed by rock and snow.”

Wildness was the arena where Muir experienced God and, in principle, it was a sphere that was out of his control and would always remain that way. This is one reason why I think mysticism is a better term to describe Muir’s religious passion than sacramentalism. He had to leave human habitation to enter it and be surrounded by it. The wild could never function as a sacramental object or part of an institutionalized cult that would come under human control.

Mysticism also implies a direct individual experience of unity and this was an integral part of Muir’s religious experience in the wild. The rocks, he says, in what is a typical sentiment, “are dear friends and seem to have warm blood flowing through their granite flesh.” Describing the Sierra landscape, he says “One fancies a heart like ours must be beating in every crystal and cell, and we feel like stopping to speak to the plants and animals as friendly, fellow mountaineers.” He gives numerous descriptions of ecstatic moments where the subject-object split falls away. Being in the mountains, he says “the boundary walls of our heavy flesh tabernacle seem taken down and we flow and diffuse into the very air and trees and streams and rocks…” In a canyon, he describes bathing in the spirit-beams around him until, “Presently you lose consciousness of your own separate existence: you blend with the landscape and become part and parcel of nature.”

Muir’s experiences were also mystical in the sense that they suspended ordinary time. While he was continually concerned with the question of natural origins and the impact of deep time on geological features and biological life, Muir continued to come back to the infinity of the here and now to describe his experience in the wild. This experience broke through chronological time, filling the moment with timelessness and eternity. Days in the wild, he says, were “without measured beginning or ending” and a month in the mountains was “divinely free, boundless like eternity, immortal.”

There is no supranaturalism in Muir. He does not pray for miracles when in danger or look for signs about his life from the heavens. He does not speak of God as a discrete cause in the causal sequence, either directly creating the natural features or distributing the plants and animals he sees. There is nothing “New Agey” in Muir. He does not speak of mysterious powers or force fields created by natural landscapes. He never displays a reversion into pre-critical animism, seeking to commune with living things that have magical powers or avoid other things as frightening taboos. Always, Muir presents himself as a clear-eyed scientist and his writings are filled with reflections on geological formation and botanical species identification. Surely this is part of what has made him endure and what makes him still relevant. Scientific analysis and enthusiastic religious passion exist in his work without conflict. God is the name for the ultimate power and meaning experienced in and through wild places and wild things. Muir provides an explicit way into this experience of ultimate meaning without scientific conflict at a time when the belief system of organized religion has become, for many, unbelievable or irrelevant.

Muir’s exuberance for wildness came at a time when the nation was rapidly industrializing under the predominant approach to reality that understood the world as an object for seemingly endless human control and use. Muir challenged this approach by centering the human and the human place in the created order for a more egalitarian vision. While Muir never denied a place for humans he articulated a vision in which meaning is not primarily control over the natural world but in limiting human impact on the wild so that the whole can flourish. At one time, he succinctly claims, the purpose of creation is the “happiness of all [plants and animals], not the creation of all for the happiness of one.”

At the same time, for Muir, it was only immersion in the wild that could heal the emptiness of industrialized life. The wild was where one was rejuvenated and refreshed. It was where one met God. The correlation that emerges from Muir’s thought is between human culture and wild nature. Wild nature is the answer to the ultimate shallowness and destructiveness of human culture. This is why he fought so vigorously to preserve it.

Tillich provides vital categories for understanding Muir. Famously, Tillich never limited his analysis of religion to organized religions but understood ultimate concern as a structural category that applied to the so-called secular as well as the religious. Moreover, for Tillich, God is not a being that may or may not exist, but being-itself or
the ground and power of being. Manifestations of God appear as the breakthrough of an unconditioned quality into the human temporal, spatial, and causal sequence. These breakthroughs have specially determined constellations that are based on a host of historical factors that condition them, but, in principle, anything whatsoever can serve as an object for the breakthrough of ultimate. The object, then, becomes a symbol that participates in the unconditioned that breaks through it. It has the character of the holy, even while it remains an ordinary object in time and space and part of the causal sequence. All of this analysis is valuable for understanding Muir's spiritual relation to wildness. In fact, Muir makes it easy to use these categories to understand him because he so often uses explicitly religious and Christian terms to describe his experience. At the same time, placing Muir's robust environmental worldview and nature mysticism in relation to Tillich's thought is instructive for the way in which it raises questions about the environmental possibilities and limitations of Tillich's thought.

I think one of the most important places in Tillich's work to see philosophically both the hopefulness and limitedness for a robust environmental worldview is in Tillich's phenomenology of life in the third volume of the Systematic Theology. In this section, famously, Tillich describes life in terms of its "multi-dimensional unity." He says he uses the term "dimension" rather than hierarchical terms to describe life because it best expresses his goal of presenting "an encounter with reality in which the unity of life is seen above its conflicts." This is tremendously hopeful for an environmental worldview that would give ample space and value to the inorganic and the organic realms, all placed in positive relation to human culture. It is, however, in articulating this vision that certain shortcomings come into view.

First, Tillich's articulation of the multi-dimensional unity of life never reaches a robust sense of what environmentalists would call the interdependence of the dimensions, though one has to say on this point that the potential exists for development in this direction. In Tillich's presentation, spirit is dependent in the sense that it is made of material and chemical elements embodied in an organic gestalt. However, his predominant concern in articulating the dimensions is to show the emergence of new dimensions with greater being and value from previous ones. He does not see the need to develop the idea that spirit's existence and vitality depends on the ongoing health and vitality of the other dimensions. While there is discussion about the anxiety of finitude and estrangement that must be faced by spirit, there is no serious development of the possible limitations for spirit in relation to the other dimensions because of its dependence upon them. The latter is what contemporary environmentalists interpret as central to the meaning of interdependence.

Correspondingly, when Tillich develops the ambiguities of life he mentions only in passing the ambiguity in which spirit would do harm or violence to other realms. This lack of articulation of spiritual destructiveness is perhaps even more striking in volume II of Systematic Theology, where Tillich develops the marks of estrangement. There is enormous potential for developing the character of unbelief, hubris, and concupiscence in an environmental direction. All of the elements are present to make this analysis, but it is something that, given his own context, Tillich does not see the need to do.

Another example of an environmental limitation is that Tillich's phenomenology of life lacks a developed sense of the meaningfulness of the interrelation between spirit and the organic and inorganic realms. This is the space where one would expect to find some constructive use of the philosophical category of wildness. While Muir was no metaphysician, he appeared to think that humans had an inherent eros for the wild. Some deep human fulfillment (for Muir, the deepest form of such fulfillment) could only be found in a correlation between human culture, which tends to become shallow and empty, and the ever-renewing power of the wild. Much current environmental thinking, including, for example, major themes in the work of Thomas Berry, would agree with Muir on this point.

In contrast, Tillich articulates human fulfillment and human moral obligation in anthropocentric terms. As an important example, Tillich shows that the self is created in the moral act when it encounters an unconditional limit in another self, or in an I-Thou relation. This is the only meaningful categorical limit to spirit that Tillich articulates. There is no meaningful creation or development of the self in relation to the other realms, something that, for example, Paul Sant-
mire has attempted to articulate with his idea of an I-en relation between humans and other creatures. While a major theme of Tillich's involves a deep critique of the modern worldview that reduces the world to a mechanism for control and use, Tillich's discussion of ethics lacks the question of the place of the biotic community in ethical decision making, as one sees articulated, for example, in Aldo Leopold's land ethic.

Beyond this philosophical analysis of Tillich's phenomenology of life, it is my contention that Muir's spirituality exposes a deeper question about Tillich's religious thought. To open up this question, I need to give a brief large-scale interpretation of Tillich's religious thought as a whole.

Tillich was a great systematizer who brought seeming oppositions into creative interplay. We see him do this in his development of the relationship between nature and religion. On the one hand, to Tillich, this relationship involves what I call, for lack of a better word, a romantic side. This is the aspect of Tillich's thought where he affirms everything in the universe can be a vehicle of the divine presence. It is expressed throughout Tillich's work, and in Systematic Theology, volume III is described as the self-transcending aspect of all things and labeled as their greatness. On the other hand, in relating nature and religion, Tillich has what I call a critical side. The unconditioned is a depth that transcends every form and can be exhausted by none. It is and remains infinitely other in relationship to all things in the universe.

These two sides are expressed in various ways in Tillich's thought. One important way is Tillich's articulation of a fundamental tension in the phenomenology of the holy. In a variety of places, Tillich speaks of the holy experienced as present, the romantic side, and as demand, the critical side. It is, in fact, the critical side that provides the dynamics of Tillich's religious theory because this side criticizes the identification of the unconditioned with form. This criticism involves what Tillich calls at times the prophetic or Protestant Principle, as well as the possibility of autonomous culture.

It is the critical side that finally makes possible the monotheistic idea of God characteristic of Western religious thought, a development that is indispensable for Tillich's own normative theological constructions. In monotheism, God's absoluteness stands over-against all concreteness. The romantic side virtually disappears. Its danger, Tillich says in volume I of the Systematic Theology, is the loss of the concrete God in a worldview wherein God becomes abstract and disconnected.

The ultimate resolution of the tension of the romantic and critical elements in Tillich's thought lies in his Christology. Here, he articulates the paradox of Jesus as the Christ, an individual being who appears in time and space but who is not estranged from the ground of being and is thereby the breakthrough of the New Being. The romantic side is fulfilled in Jesus the Christ because in Jesus' transparency to God there is a concrete presence in which the unconditioned appears. The critical side is fulfilled because a life that is not estranged (and that negates its finitude in a way that Tillich articulates) embodies the requirement of the demanded holy.

For Tillich the theologian, the appearance of the New Being in Jesus as the Christ is the culmination of salvation in the historical process. It functions as the center of history and its goal. As a concrete reality, the New Being overcomes estrangement on all levels. Estranged nature is even interpreted as sharing in the reality of the New Being as its longed-for goal (Romans 8). Correspondingly, nature itself is now understood as something washed and purified only insofar as it is placed in relation to the historical emergence of the New Being. Tillich makes this claims, perhaps most strongly in his article “Nature and Sacrament,” reprinted in The Protestant Era. Here, he says, “…we must remember that for a Christian the idea of a purely natural sacrament is unacceptable. Where nature is not related to the events of the history of salvation its status remains ambiguous. It is only through a relation to the history of salvation that it is liberated from its demonic elements and thus made eligible for a sacrament.”

As Tillich goes on to say, “the bread of the sacrament stands for all bread and ultimately for all nature.”

This pattern of thinking can and has given rise to a mode of contemporary Christian environmental thought whose focus is soteriology. I think Lai and Santmire are two examples of theologians influenced by Tillich who develop and follow this direction. Estranged nature is somehow involved in the salvation brought by the New Being in the Christ. Because God intends to save nature, nature receives a renewed standing in the Christian worldview and activity.
I do not want to undermine the potential meaningfulness of this direction of thought for contemporary Christian environmentalism because I do not want to cut off any possibilities for meaningful environmental thinking from any religious tradition. However, I think it remains ambiguous in terms of its capacity to transcend anthropocentrism and relate humans meaningfully to the natural world. Experienced nature outside of its limited baptism in salvation history is in significant measure interpreted as demonic or estranged. And, the salvation of nature, whatever that means, comes only through some breakthrough in the human sphere.

Both of these directions betray limits for what I regard as a robust creation spirituality. This is something for which I think Muir’s work can provide fertile material. Again, I say this despite the fact that Tillich has a romantic side and provides important theoretical categories by which Muir can be interpreted and understood. Let me add that I think this may not be a narrow Tillichian problem but in fact it may be an inherent Christian problem. Muir himself had to leave Christianity to be able to find and experience the mystical presence of God in wildness. For Muir, nature is not estranged, though this is a term he never would have used: he used the term “fallen.” Muir claims humans only think nature is fallen because they perceive everything in the biosphere from their own point of view or from the point of view of that which is beneficial to them. In my interpretation, Muir’s mystical experiences turned him around on this question. The unitive experiences he had involved a sense that everything in creation was unremittingly good. How far those kinds of experiences can be assimilated into Christian theology remains a question.

---

2http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/timeline/earthdays/
3 As part of the “profanization” of the inorganic realm, Tillich speaks of the possibility of humans “unbalancing the structure of smaller or larger parts of the universe (as when wastelands are produced or the atmosphere is poisoned).” ST, vol. 3, 90-91.
4http://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.cfm?id=9751. This is not meant to pick on China unduly. The US burned just over 1 billion tons of the total worldwide consumption of 8.1 billion tons of coal in 2011, and the per capita energy consumption in the US in 2011 was three and a half times that of China. The industrialized West became what it is and sustains itself thus far on cheap and dirty energy, and it is not surprising that developing countries follow the same pattern.
5http://www.sciencemag.org/content/344/6187/1246752.abstract?sid=14fcee3-7159-4b23-bbbe3-f17819f719dd
6http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/08/opinion/sunday/friedman-obama-on-obama-on-climate.html?r=0
7 I think it is a serious question whether Tillich’s method of correlation, at least in its most commonly articulated formulation, is workable for a thoroughly environmentally conscious theology. Famously, Tillich’s method correlates existential questions with responses from Christian symbols. The existential questions explicitly articulated in his theology were questions of meaning that arose from human anxiety, estrangement, and the ambiguities of cultural and religious life. It is understandable that those concerns would be central in the early and mid-twentieth century for people who lived through two devastating world wars, just as it is understandable that the answer to those concerns would consist of powerful symbols to enable courage, healing, and meaningful self-affirmation in this devastated cultural context. Environmental concerns, however, are not simply concerns regarding human meaning. In some fundamental sense, articulating them as such limits them in a reductionist way. Without exaggeration, from an environmental point of view one could say that the fundamental question today is whether the diversity of life in the biosphere can survive given the devastating history of human use and abuse. This question certainly involves human anxiety but articulating it exclusively as a matter of human anxiety misses the force of the question on some important level.
Sierras. comes. then state Muir's w... the notes that follow, I refer to this book as... edition for many of the references in this paper. In... John Muir: Spiritual Writings has recently been... excellent edited collection of his explicitly spiritual... journals, many of which were published in the collection... United States, 1997), 117-120.


11 Ibid, 118.


13 The book-length work in which Muir makes probably his most significant and notable religious comments is My First Summer in the Sierras (in John Muir: Nature Writings (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1997), 147-309). He sometimes comments explicitly on religious themes in his unpublished journals, many of which were published in the collection John of the Mountains, editor Linnie Marsh Wolfe (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979). An excellent edited collection of his explicitly spiritual writings has recently been published under the title John Muir: Spiritual Writings, editor Tim Flinders (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 2013). I rely on this edition for many of the references in this paper. In the notes that follow, I refer to this book as SW, and then state Muir's work from which the reference comes.

14 SW 43, A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf.
15 SW 83, Kindred and Related Spirits: The Letters of John Muir and Jeanne C Carr.
16 SW, 75, My First Summer in the Sierras.
17 SW, 79, My First Summer in the Sierras.
18 SW, 93, Steep Trails.
19 SW, 69, My First Summer in the Sierras.
20 SW, 54, My First Summer in the Sierras (unrevised version).
21 SW, 52, A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf.
22 SW, 66, 56, both from My First Summer in the Sierras.
23 SW, 46, A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf.

26 ST, III, 38-41.

28 While it is anecdotal, it is striking to read Tillich's comments late in his life regarding the spiritual meaning of space exploration. In particular, he states the following about humans' new-found ability to escape gravity and look at the earth from space: “One of the results of flight into space and the possibility of looking down at the earth is a kind of estrangement between man and earth, an ‘objectification’ of the earth for man, the depriving ‘her’ of her ‘motherly’ character, her power of giving birth, of nourishing, of embracing, of keeping for herself, of calling back to herself. She becomes a large material body to be looked at and considered as totally calculable. The process of demythologizing the earth which started with the early philosophers and was continued ever since in the Western world has been radicalized as never before” (The Future of Religions [New York: Harper and Row, 1966], 45). It is hard to know what kind of grainy black and white photographs of earth were available to Tillich in the early 1960’s and formed the basis of this analysis. It was not until 1972 that the iconic color picture of the earth known as “the blue marble” was taken by the Apollo 17 spacecraft on its way to the moon. See: http://photography.nationalgeographic.com/wallpaper/photography/photos/milestones-space-photography/earth-full-view/. One must say, however, that the 1972 photo and the successive (now endless) series of pictures of the earth have been interpreted in precisely the opposite direction of Tillich’s interpretation. These pictures are icons of the environmental moment. They show the astonishing interconnected structure, overwhelming beauty, and frightening fragility of our island home. They have helped remythologize the earth as a living whole and the mother of all life. For some reason, Tillich could not imagine this in the 1960’s, even as he could not imagine these pictures opening the possibility for thinking of a new kind of unity of life on the planet beyond a narrow anthropocentrism and beyond hardened political boundaries.

29 It also involves mysticism, but this is a narrow category in Tillich, always understood as purely inter-
nal and not dynamic or critical of form, simply going internally beyond form.


31 Ibid, 111.

32 In her newest work, Ask the Beasts, Elizabeth Johnson develops a sacramental understanding of all created reality based on Aquinas’ idea of the participation of all things in the continuous creative activity of God. She says this understanding must be “critical”

---

**“DOES LIFE IMITATE ART OR ART LIFE?: THE AMBIGUITIES IN PAUL TILLICH’S THEOLOGY AND IN HIS PERSONAL LIFE”**

FREDERICK J. PARRELLA

[This paper was presented at the meeting of the APTEF, Sherbrooke, Q.C., 10–13 August 2015.]

I. Introduction

The Irish author, Oscar Wilde, in his 1889 essay, The Decay of Lying, uttered the oft quoted words that, “Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life.”1 These words have inspired many wise and witty remarks from pundits and populae alike. In similar fashion, Rollo May, more than a half-century later, stated that art serves a predictive function in the culture; because of its sensitivity to the inner spirit of the culture, art can articulate the shape and mood of the broad cultural fabric before common people grasp their situation. May cites the 1947 work of poet W. H. Auden, Age of Anxiety, and Leonard Bernstein’s Second Symphony of 1949, named after Auden’s book-length poem.2 By the 1950s, anxiety had become all the rage on psychiatrists’ couches, and the decade ushered in the first generation of anti-anxiety drugs such as Miltown in the 1950s, Librium and Valium in the 1960s and early 1970s, and SSRIs such as Prozac today.

The life and work of Paul Tillich follows a similar pattern of ambiguity and anxiety. To consider the ambiguities in his life and in his theological lectures and publications, one must ask candidly whether Tillich’s life imitated his creative work in theology and philosophy or his work imitated his life? His theology, particularly in his third volume of his Systematic Theology, is filled with the theme of the ambiguities of life. Is the source of the universal ambiguity in his writings to be found in his own lived experience, with its own moral struggles? Or were his moral struggles a product of his intellectual work? Did Tillich’s system produce Tillich, or Tillich his system? He himself understood, as Alexander Irwin continues, “the intimacy of this connection between lived experience and intellectual production.”3 As Irwin writes, “Tillich’s creative achievements [cannot] be disentangled from the weave of erotic relationships out of which they emerged. Life and work form an inextricable unity whose questions remain unresolved.”4 Thus, life and art are inseparable.

After the publication of Hannah Tillich’s two volumes,5 Rollo May’s Reminiscences,6 and René Tillich’s Harvard Lecture,7 Tillich’s personal moral struggles clashed publicly with his theological accomplishments.8 Because he developed the reputation as a philanderer, some critics rejected his theology because they condemned what they saw as his immoral life. Others believed that, while he had many relationships—and not necessarily sexual—with women, he was somewhat naïve with no serious predatory intentions; furthermore, they affirmed that his personal life and his intellectual contributions to theology and philosophy should be kept distinct. Of course, the facts are never all black or white, and in Tillich’s case, one is tempted to say, there are at least “Fifty Shades of Grey.”9,10 My comments are in three sections: first, the theme of ambiguity in his thought; second, his ambiguous moral life; and third, some conclusions on what Alexander Irwin has aptly described as “life in its divine–demonic ambiguity.”11
II. Ambiguity in Tillich’s Thought^{12}

While the theme of estrangement or the separation of essence and existence, is pervasive in Tillich’s writings—indeed he claims it is the backbone of his entire system^{13}—the theme of ambiguity is more restricted to the third volume of his Systematic Theology. While estrangement is the condition of being in existence, ambiguity describes being in life. Being and existence are abstractions; they appear in reality in an ambiguous mixture called life.^{14} Life is the actualization of being and subject to the distortions of estranged existence. This mixture of essential and existential being creates an all-pervasive ambiguity in life.^{15}

For Tillich, life has three basic movements: self-integration, self-creation, and self-transcendence. As I have written earlier:

Self-integration is a circular quest for centeredness; it actualizes the polarity in all beings… between individualization and participation; in the realm of the spirit, it is morality. Self-creation is a horizontal quest for growth; it actualizes the polarity of dynamics and form; in the realm of the spirit, it is culture. Finally, self-transcendence is a vertical quest for the sublime; it actualizes the polarity of freedom and destiny; in the realm of the spirit, it is religion. The basic movements of life… share in the distortions of existence: disintegration in the moral order, destruction in the cultural order, and profanization and demonization in the sphere of religion.^{16}

While the emphasis in my earlier work was the transforming power of the Spirit, here I want to concentrate on the nature of living estrangement or the ambiguity of life itself; put differently, according to Tillich’s method of correlation, we are more concerned with the question, the ambiguity, than the answer, the Spiritual Presence.

(1) The ambiguities in self-integration or the polarity of individualization and participation are visible in both the individual and collective moral order. The scourge of cancer, so widespread among many today, gives ample evidence of the disintegration of the self at the physical level. Psychologically, too many people in our culture are driven by “daemonic, chthonic [p]owers,”^{17} unable to return to their whole and integrated self. Addictions of all kinds—to substances like alcohol and both legal and illegal drugs, to power, to sexual pleasure, even to religion itself—leave individuals morally crippled. As Terry Cooper points out, in Tillich’s later works the concept of concupiscence “is very close to our contemporary understanding of addiction.” Individuals become immobile in their “inordinate desire for finite things,” where they “are convinced that [they] cannot simply live without [them]”; sadly, “something becomes everything.”^{18} As Tillich makes clear, law is no solution to ambiguities in the moral sphere; rather, law is a sign of human estrangement and the very ambiguities in life it seeks to overcome.^{19} For example, my experience of teaching undergraduates in the Millennial generation has revealed to me their profound confusion about sexual morality, their compulsive need to have the right answers to life, and a whole range of addictions, to alcohol, to work, to success, and to the comfortable life. Collectively, in spite of some social advances, today we witness profound moral ambiguities in racism, sexism, and nationalism.

(2) The ambiguities in self-creation or the polarity of dynamics and form are visible in the cultural sphere. If “religion is the depth of culture and culture the form of religion,”^{20} then both religion and culture distort one another and reveal ambiguities in life. In culture, the ambiguity always results from the separation or split of subject from object, occurring in both cognitive and aesthetic acts as well as in personal and communal acts.^{21} The separation that makes truth and beauty, humanity and justice possible, is simultaneously the condition that makes their unambiguous attainment existentially impossible.^{22} If anyone looks at culture today filled as it is with smart phones and an array of social media sites, who would be surprised that the cultural form distorts the religious depth in many cases more than it expresses it? (Why do people have to update their profile or change their photos all the time?) Likewise, so much of what is culturally religious remains on the surface without the courage to go into the depth of things that Tillich’s understanding of religion requires. No wonder they are so many SBNRs today especially among the 20 and 30-somethings. They fail to see, as Tillich did, that spirituality, religion, and faith all involve ultimate concern.^{23} Many educated young people today are strangely attracted to the superficial and shallow culture in which they live, yet are repulsed by it at the same time. Unfortunately, few cultural substitutes are readily available. If Tillich were with us today, I am certain he would be quite disturbed by
what passes for music, entertainment, and art in 2015.

(3) The ambiguities in self-transcendence or the polarity of freedom and destiny are abundant in the religious sphere. In fact, nowhere are the ambiguities of life more visible and more tragic than in religion itself. Religion, which purports to rescue us from estrangement and ambiguity, must itself participate in estrangement and ambiguity and succumb to these powers. For Tillich, religion ideally provides morality with its ultimate seriousness and culture with its ultimate depth. In their essential nature, religion, morality, and culture interpenetrate one another, but in ambiguous life, they separate and often do battle with each other for control. The particular tragedy of religion’s ambiguity is visible in two expressions: first, religion seeks the profane instead of the holy; in this stance, it becomes self-satisfied, offering people what they want, not what they need. For many today, the transcendent “is excluded, not usually through hostility or ill will, but simply because it is unimaginable, given their reigning presuppositions about the self and the culture.” Sometimes this is visible by ritualization in Catholicism and secularization in Protestantism. Today, in place of religion that should unlock the transcendent, many are trapped in the imminent and finite order where religion is reduced to social sciences, especially psychology. As Philip Rieff puts it succinctly, “Religious man is born to be saved; psychological man is born to be pleased.” Tillich’s grasp of the ambiguity of the holy and the profane more than a half-century ago made him a prophet. He understood that the safest place to hide from God is in the shadow of the altar itself. As he says, “Religion as the self-transcendence of life needs the religions and needs to deny them” at the same time.

The second form of religious ambiguity can be found in the demonic, the elevation of anything finite to the infinite. It identifies the bearer of the holy with the holy itself; or, worse, it selects something thoroughly profane and transforms it into the holy. Every individual as well as every culture and society has its own golden calf that threatens it with estrangement and self-destruction but sadly, as both individuals and a culture, we can never recognize our own chosen golden calf that entices us with its demonic charm. We see the most destructive form of the demonic in religion itself, with a new wave of fundamentalisms that offer security at the price of the freedom of the self. While the world struggles politically with radical Islam, no religion, even the quasi-religion of secularism, escapes the demonic in some form.

Thus, Tillich proclaimed the New Being or, in life, the Spiritual Presence, to answer the ambiguities of life in every sphere. The Spirit provides the courage to accept life with its tensions and ambiguities, its “fascination and its horror,” without being conquered by it. Tillich not only understood these ambiguities conceptually, he also experienced and lived them in the depths of his own being.

III. Ambiguity in Tillich’s Life

How can one compare and contrast the ambiguities in Tillich’s systematic thought with his own personal private life? Although Tillich’s focus and terminology shifted from his earlier works, from the political and social Tillich to the theological and psychological Tillich, there is a remarkable continuity in his thinking. As one scholar suggests, Tillich’s ontology or understanding of Being in his 1912 dissertation on Schelling “find[s] expression and help[s] illumine Tillich’s definitive work, the three volume Systematic Theology” four decades later. Estrangement and ambiguity were a constant theme in all his writings. His traumatic experience of World War I was a crucial turning point in his life. The demons he witnessed in the war help to unlock the demons within his own soul. As Pauck writes candidly:

At the beginning of the war Tillich was a shy, grown boy, truly a dreaming innocent… When he returned to Berlin four years later he was utterly transformed. The traditional monarchist had become religious socialist, the Christian believer a cultural pessimist, and the repressed puritanical boy a “wild man.” These years represent the turning point in Paul Tillich’s life—the first, last, and only one.

A Faustian “Two souls within me dwell” has always been part of Tillich’s life: the private man and the professional theologian, a man who ec-statically enjoyed the beauty of nature and a man consumed by depression and guilt, a professional academic and a man with childish qualities, a man married to the same woman for 41 years and one who relished the company of many women in his life. Grace Caló once asked Tillich in his Harvard
years, “I’ve often wondered how you have kept from becoming schizophrenic.’ [He replied] ‘But that’s just it—I am!’”31 When she asked him about being a celebrity, he replied: “This Paul Tillich,” he said reflectively, ‘Who is he? He is a stranger to me…This Tillich they write about—it’s not really me. I am two persons. And the one has nothing to do with the other.”32 Likewise, Tillich told her that, “everything that is in my sermons is what I am not.”33

Throughout these years, in Irwin’s words, “Hannah Tillich suffered the anguish of jealousy, Tillich the torment of guilt.”34 According to Pauck, Hannah sought retribution for her anger and suffering by involving herself in a number of affairs through the years but they failed to quiet her jealousy.35 Her son, René, the psychologist, paints a dark picture of his mother: as an adult molested as a child by her father, “she was physically, emotionally and sexually abused.” She suffered from a “borderline personality disorder, paranoia…a pathological jealousy, a tendency to sexualize her experience and distort reality,” severely impairing her capacity to love.36 As Grace Calí says, “Watching them when they spoke to each other I could often sense the undertow of a titanic struggle.”37 When the subject of divorce arose around the 1959 Time magazine article, he told Ms. Calí: “If this comes out…it will be a disaster! Our whole life in Germany was a scandal.”38

And then, some years after Tillich’s death, Hannah published her two very critical volumes. In my 1985 interview with 88 year-old Mrs. Tillich in East Hampton, when I asked her to autograph one of her books, she appeared embarrassed and told me that she regretted having written both books. She said she was bitter at the time and needed the money she thought the books would bring in. So, in spite of everything, their marriage survived—in part because Tillich was concerned about the scandal of divorce—but also because they reached a certain accommodation and interdependence that triumphed over their earlier conflicted times. Tillich dedicated the third volume of his Systematic Theology to her: “For Hannah, the companion of my life.” Here are the personal ambiguities in Tillich’s life writ large. For Tillich, hubris and concupiscence appear as negative elements in volume II of his System, while in volume III, “they appear in their ambiguity—hubris united with greatness and concupiscence with eros.”39

Why this division in Tillich between the public and private man? Rollo May suggests that the death of his mother at 17 was, in some ways, the most formative event of his life. His mother’s death before he “wins” her subsequently forces him to constantly win other women.40 After her death, he was very close to his sister, Johanna, two years younger, with whom he shared a deep, “almost mystical relationship.”41 He and Hannah had agreed at the time they wed of an “open marriage,” though they had very different understandings of what this meant. Throughout their marriage, she was always jealous of Tillich and both his male and female friends.42 With his marriage, he established the basic pattern of what he termed as the “erotic solution,”43 described by Alexander Irwin this way: “The essential traits of the pattern remained unchanged through his lifetime: the form of an outwardly stable marriage, combined with the freedom Tillich demanded to pursue friendships, often sexual friendships with other women when opportunities presented themselves.”44 In contrast, René Tillich strongly takes his father’s side: “Hannah,” he writes, “frequently and angrily accused Paul being sexually involved with women with whom he had no such relations at all; her accusations were groundless.”45

At the core of Tillich’s unity of his thought and his life was both the conceptual presentation of eros and his lived reality of a very erotic life. For Tillich, like art and life, they were inseparable. Interestingly, Tillich had very little to say about sex, and Grace Calí brought this to his attention.46 Pauck speculates that, “he seldom wrote directly about his conception of marriage or sex” because his terrible “fear was that his story might one day be made public and bring ruin upon his work.”47 Eros, on the other hand, was a constant theme in many of his writings, describing it as “the driving force in all cultural creativity and in all mysticism.” In a speech at Union Seminary, Tillich proclaims eros “the source of every movement in the world” insofar as “every finite being has a desire for infinite reality and moves toward it.”48 For Tillich, eros unlocks the door to the eternal, as he writes: “For we experience the presence of the eternal in us and in our world here and now. We experience it in moments of silence and hours of creativity. We experience it in the conflicts of our conscience and in the hours of peace with ourselves…We experience it…in the ecstasy of love.”49
For Tillich, ecstasy meant a standing outside of one’s self, a being rescued from the drudgery of life, from the burdens of daily relationships. While nature certainly afforded Tillich many ecstatic experiences, perhaps his relationships with women provided him with the unique rapture and bliss that nourished his soul. There is a certain irony in Tillich’s remark in the first part of his System that “there is no revelation without ecstasy.” Tillich saw this abstractly, theologically, but he also knew it in the depths of his being. When he speaks of the ecstasy, he means ερασις or “the movement of that which is lower in power and meaning to that which is higher.” Eros “drives towards union with the forms of nature and culture and with the divine sources of both.” Tillich saw the erotic at work in art and literature, complementing the mystical communion with nature. As Irwin writes: “Nowhere was Tillich’s erotic power more evident than in the classroom or the lecture hall…Authentic cognition could not be isolated from Eros…Bringing students to grasp the subject meant teaching them to love it.” As Pauck says, “As a teacher, he did precisely what he did in his friendships with men and women: he made potential spiritual riches a complementing the mystical communion with art and culture and with the divine sources of both.”

As psychologist Ann Belford Ulanov writes: “From what we know, we can say women felt affirmed by Tillich, so they were taken seriously, sometimes for the first time, too often for the last time.” A woman, who read several of the letters that Tillich wished destroyed, said that, “she was nonetheless struck by the overwhelming gratitude and love these women expressed to him.” Tillich’s women friends were rarely jealous of one another. In the words of one woman, “He had enough Eros for all.”

What deep drive or desire within Tillich served as the source for such eros toward women? One obvious answer is that he was searching for his mother who died when he was 17. Perhaps some of his attitude also stems from his rigid and aloof Prussian father. Certainly, the feminine cultivated him his entire life. As Ulanov points out, the one boundary that Tillich did not discuss in his autobiographical reflections was the boundary between the masculine and the feminine, man and woman. For Tillich, this may have been too close to life in all its lived ambiguity for him to consider. Ulanov’s diagnosis is Tillich’s lack of a sufficient feminine complement within himself: “A man who really has his own feminine motive being presented to him in a real woman has it both in her and in himself. Tillich’s exaggerated need for women showed he did not have enough of this connection, of a secure receiving of being in himself.” Women appealed so much to Tillich because he felt, in what is a remarkable statement, that “women were closer to being itself then men.” Thus, Ulanov can say that, “Tillich struggled to receive the feminine within himself, which accounted in part for his great appeal to women.” Women nourished Tillich because they carried his own feminine side: their receptions of being provided food for his abstract thought. Moving from his life to his thought, this would clarify his concern about the loss of the feminine dimension in the Protestant tradition. As he says: “When the Protestants gave up many of the Catholic symbols at the Reformation, an empty space was left in Protestantism. There was an absence of the female element, for example, which is so important for Catholic piety…[Protestantism] is a very masculine religion.” If the feminine dimension were lacking in Tillich, a remark by his son, René, is also telling: “I believe Paul related better to boys than to girls as he did to men than to women.”
IV. Conclusion

As his definitive biography states, Tillich “never gave himself entirely to his friends any more than he gave himself entirely to his wife.” In this way, there is something similar in Tillich to the Roman Catholic tradition of celibacy. If we eliminate the sexual dimension, the celibate and Tillich have much in common: they share themselves with individuals as fully as they can but always without an unconditional commitment. This would explain why there were so many women in Tillich’s life. An unconditional commitment to one person, to share the depths of oneself with the depths of only one other human being, unlocks one’s mortality because love and death are the same movements of our being. Therefore, Tillich’s defense against this threat was the “sheer multiplication of the number of relationships.”

As some individuals are capable of taking more being into themselves, both in breadth and depth, Tillich’s appetite for being was immense; indeed one might say that he was a glutton at the table of being. He lived with the ambiguity his whole life between this breadth and depth; whether he ever regretted his failure to make an unconditional commitment to one other person, especially to his wife, remains in the shadows as well as in the sadness his son, René, experienced in putting the portrayal of his father together. He struggled all his life to overcome estrangement, to love as fully as he could, to wrestle with the paraphilia that afflicted him at times. His son sums up his portrait of his father, the world-famous theologian, in these humbling words: “Paul did honest self-exploration, only one step removed. He did it in his theology—its there in his work, very clear—where he explained himself with a courage and a rigor that are awesome, refusing to make nice what was not nice in the human soul and, by extension, in himself.”

Grace Calí once asked Tillich in one of his dark moods, “Is there no hope?” Tillich replied: “There is only way. Everywhere, in every way possible, we as individuals must fight against the forces of destruction. First in ourselves, then on a group level. We must work for anything that will bring people together—but only in encounters where love and justice become creatively one.”

For Tillich, there is no imitation between art and life; they are both inseparable yet indeed separate. In his soul, he thought and he lived, he lived and he thought, with this profound ambiguity. We are all in his debt because of this.

1 New York: Brentano, 1905 [1889].
5 Ibid., 46.
8 René Tillich, “My Father, Paul Tillich,” a lecture at Harvard University in 1998, in Nord and Spiegel, eds., 9–22,
9 At my doctoral defense a few months after the appearance of Hannah Tillich’s and Rollo May’s book, the examiners were clearly more interested in the moral life of such a famous theologian than they were in the topic of my dissertation.
10 From the trilogy by E. L. James published in 2011.

14 ST I, 66-67.
15 Tillich is careful to avoid the word “levels,” preferring the metaphor “dimension” or “realm.” In each dimension—the inorganic, the organic, and the spiritual—all dimensions are potentially present, while some are actualized. Each dimension cuts through each other. One could say, for example, that the dimension of the inorganic interpenetrates the dimension of the spiritual and vice versa. Only a human being is actualized in the dimension of the spirit, which is the “unity of life-power and life in meanings.” We will discuss life’s ambiguities only at this level.
18 Terry D. Cooper, Paul Tillich and Psychology. Historic and Contemporary Explorations in Theology, Psychotherapy and Ethics (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2006), 93.
21 See ST I, 76-79.
22 Parrella, The Cambridge Companion to Tillich, 78.

Paul Tillich: A New Catholic Perspective (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 241-267
26 ST III, 97-98.
27 Martin Marty and Scott Appleby massive five-volumes, Fundamentalisms Observed, 1991ff., is the definitive work on the subject.
31 Cali, 20.
32 Ibid., 59.
33 Cali, 19.
34 Irwin, 45.
35 Pauck, 88.
36 René Tillich, 14.
37 Cali, 15.
38 Ibid., 61.
39 ST III, 93.
41 Pauck, 7.
42 Ibid., 87.
43 Ibid., 92.
44 Irwin, 45.
45 René Tillich
46 Cali, 15–16.
47 Pauck, 90.
48 Irwin, 39.
50 ST I, 111.
51 ST I, 112.
52 ST I, 280.
53 Irwin, 48.
54 Pauck, 114.
55 May, 51.
56 May, 51.
Board of Directors

**Term Expiring 2015**
Tom Bandy, [www.ThrivingChurch.com](http://www.ThrivingChurch.com)
Adam Pryor, Bethany College, Lindsborg, Kansas
Devan Stahl, Saint Louis University

**Term Expiring 2016**
Christopher Rodkey, Penn State University, York
Zachary Royal, Garrett Theological Seminary
M. Lon Weaver, Marshall College Preparatory, Duluth

**Term Expiring 2017**
Rachel Sophia Baard, Villanova University
Verna Ehret, Mercyhurst University
Lawrence Whitney, Boston University

---

**The Officers of the North American Paul Tillich Society**

**President**
Charles Fox, SUNY/ Empire State College/ Mentor of Philosophy and Religious Studies Emeritus

**President Elect**
Bryan Wagoner, Davis and Elkins College

**Vice President**
Daniel Peterson, Seattle University

**Secretary Treasurer**
Frederick J. Parrella, Santa Clara University

**Past President**
Duane Olsen, McKendree University

---

57 May, 51.
58 Pauck, 89.
59 May, 51, 53.
60 May, 54.
61 Ulanov, 141–142.
62 May, 51.
63 May, 56.
64 Ulanov, 133.
65 Ulanov, 133.
67 René Tillich, 10.
68 Pauck, 89.
69 Ulanov, 143.
70 René Tillich, 10.
71 René Tillich, 18.
72 Cali, 93.