



# BULLETIN

*The North American Paul Tillich Society*

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### THE FINANCIAL SITUATION OF THE NAPTS

For some time, the financial situation of the North American Paul Tillich Society has been tenuous. As a result of expenses incurred at the 2011 meeting in San Francisco, the Society is now running at a large deficit. The secretary-treasurer will make every effort to maintain the records of the so-

ciety and to continue to publish this Bulletin in a timely manner.

I urge every member of the society, if he or she has not paid dues in 2011 or 2010, to do so as soon as possible. Tax-deductible contributions to the society will be gratefully accepted. Please consider making a small contribution to the Society if your means will allow. Send your contribution to the Secretary Treasurer at the above address. *Thank you.*

## ANNUAL MEETING AND NEW OFFICERS

The annual meeting of the North American Paul Tillich Society took place on 18–19 October 2011, in San Francisco, California. New officers of the Society were elected:

**President**

Courtney Wilder, Midland Lutheran College

**President Elect**

Echol Nix, Furman University

**Vice President**

Duane Olsen, McKendree University

**Secretary Treasurer**

Frederick J. Parrella, Santa Clara University

**Past President**

Russell Manning, University of Cambridge

**New Members of the Board (Term expires 2014)**

Marc Dumas, Université de Sherbrooke

Janet Giddings, Santa Clara University and San Jose State University

Marcia MacLennan, Kansas Wesleyan University

The Society wishes to extend its most sincere thanks to Echol Nix, Furman University, Anne Marie Reijnen, Faculteit voor Protestantse Godegeleerdheid (Brussel), Institut Protestant de Théologie (Paris), Institut Supérieur d'Études oecuméniques, and Courtney Wilder, Midland Lutheran College for their three years of service on the Board of Directors of the Society. Congratulations to the new officers and their willingness to lead and direct the Society.

The annual banquet was held this year at Le Central Restaurant, a French bistro on Bush Street in San Francisco. The speaker was Owen Thomas, Professor of Theology Emeritus at the Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, Massachusetts. The title of Professor Thomas's outstanding address was "Tillich's Alternate Interpretation of Western Cultural History." The address is printed in this Bulletin. Russell Manning, President of the Society, presided at the banquet.

The Society was honored to have Dr. Mutie C. Farris present at the meeting and the banquet. Dr. Farris was a faithful attendee at all the papers. We are grateful to her for her ongoing commitment to Tillich scholarship.

**Please Mark Your Calendars**

The 2012 Annual Meeting of the North American Paul Tillich Society takes place on Friday, No-

vember 16, and Saturday, November 17, 2012 in Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A. The American Academy of Religion and the "Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture Group" will meet November 17 to November 19. (See Call for Papers below.)

## NAPTS: CALL FOR PAPERS

The North American Paul Tillich Society (NAPTS) welcomes proposals for its annual meeting that will take place Friday and Saturday, 16–17 November 2012 in connection with the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) in Chicago, Illinois, 17-20 November 2012. We welcome proposals for individual papers and panels on the following issues:

1. Tillich and pedagogy, particularly teaching any of Tillich's primary writings
2. Tillich at the University of Chicago, including but not limited to interactions with Joseph Kitagawa, Mircea Eliade, and/or other conversation partners and how they contributed to his legacy
3. Tillich and the Harvard Years: On the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his final lecture
4. Tillich, religion, and politics
5. Tillich and popular culture, including faith and spirituality
6. Barth and Tillich: Revisited

Proposals should be sent to the Vice President and Program Chair of this year's meeting (electronically preferred):

Dr. Echol Nix

[Echol.nix@furman.edu](mailto:Echol.nix@furman.edu) (please put NAPTS Call in the subject line)

Furman University

Department of Religion

3300 Poinsett Highway

Greenville, SC 29613

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## AAR GROUP: CALL FOR PAPERS

The American Academy of Religion Group "Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture" welcomes proposals for its sessions at the Annual Meeting of the AAR in Chicago, 17-20 November 2012.

We welcome proposals for individual papers and panels on the following issues in theology, religion, and culture that engage with Tillich or post-Tillichian thought:

• **Tillich in Chicago**

From 1962 until his death in 1965 Tillich was Professor of Theology in the University of Chicago; notable events included the classes he co-taught with Mircea Eliade and the publication of *Systematic Theology*, Volume III. Who were Tillich's conversation partners in Chicago and how did they contribute to his legacy there? How was Tillich's mature thought developed during his time in Chicago, in particular through his engagement with non-Christian religions?

• **Music and Ultimate Concern (co-sponsored with Music and Religion Group)**

Music has been called the "unwritten theology of those who lack a formal creed" (G. Steiner), but how might music's relation to ultimate concern be thought of outside of a religious setting? Can secular music be said to invoke the Holy? Tillich wrote surprisingly little about music; but what resources does his approach offer to thinking about music and transcendence?

• **Theologies of American Cultures**

Tillich developed the most important framework for theology of culture in the twentieth century forged in the cultural revolutions of post-World War I Europe. In what ways do Tillich's analyses of the religious meaning of culture intersect with current interpretations of American cultures?

• **The Radical Tillich and Contemporary American Continental Thought**

Tillich is sometimes seen as a precursor to radical theological thinking in the latter half of the twentieth century. From "Death of God" theologies to postmodern a/theology, Tillich's is an ambiguous presence, often unacknowledged but clearly formative. If Tillich is one of the original "American continental" thinkers, what is his significance for contemporary American continental thought?

• **Religious Socialism: Then and Now**

Religious socialism was central to Tillich's political theology in response to a situation dominated by capitalist hegemony, a financial crisis, and the resurgence of forms of religious and political Romanticism, and yet surprisingly under-studied. How does Tillich's account of religious socialism relate to other contemporaneous theories? What relevance does Tillich's religious socialism have for our current situation? What are the prospects for a religious socialist political theology today?

Other Tillich-related proposals will be seriously considered. Unless otherwise requested, proposals not scheduled are automatically passed onto the

North American Paul Tillich Society for possible inclusion in their Annual Meeting. A winning student paper receives the Annual Tillich Prize.

The group fosters scholarship and scholarly exchanges that analyze, criticize, and interpret the thought or impact of Paul Tillich (1886-1965), and that use his thought—or use revisions of, or reactions against his thought—to deal with contemporary issues in theology, religion, ethics, or the political, social, psychotherapeutic, scientific, or artistic spheres of human culture. The group cooperates with the North American Paul Tillich Society (a Related Scholarly Organization of the AAR), which is linked with the German, French-speaking, and other Tillich societies. Papers at Group sessions are published in the Society's quarterly Bulletin without prejudice to their also appearing elsewhere.

Proposals should be submitted online at the AAR website or sent by email (preferably as attachments) to the group's co-chairs, Dr Russell Re Manning, University of Cambridge ([rrm24@cam.ac.uk](mailto:rrm24@cam.ac.uk)) and Dr Sharon Peebles Burch, Interfaith Counseling Centre ([spburch@att.net](mailto:spburch@att.net)). Proposals should be of no more than 1000 words and be accompanied by a 150 word abstract. Please indicate if eligible for the student prize.

**Proposals should be received by 1 March 2012.**  
*Please feel free to circulate this Call for Papers.*

**NEW PUBLICATIONS**

Bryan L. Wagoner (Harvard University): "The Subject of Emancipation: Critique, Reason and Religion in the Thought of Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Paul Tillich." Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 2011.

**PAUL TILlich LECTURE AT HARVARD**

**Tuesday, May 1, 2012, 5:30 p.m.**

**The Memorial Church**

**Harvard University**

**50th Anniversary Symposium**

**"Paul Tillich at Harvard: First and Future Generations"**

**Speakers:**

—Richard M. Hunt, University Marshall and Senior Lecturer on Social Studies (Ret.)  
Former Chair, Faculty Committee on Religion,  
Harvard University

- Harvey Cox, Hollis Research Professor of Divinity, Harvard Divinity School
- Ann Belford Ulanov, Christine Brooks Johnson Professor of Psychiatry and Religion, Union Theological Seminary, New York
- Gerald Holton, Mallinckrodt Professor of Physics and History of Science, Emeritus, Harvard University

Paul Tillich is universally recognized as one of the preeminent theologians of our time. Tillich was appointed University Professor at Harvard in 1954 and taught for seven years, 1955-1962, a period in which he spoke and lectured to great acclaim in this country and abroad, including Japan. Retiring at the mandatory age of 75, he accepted appointment as the John Nuveen Professor at the University of Chicago Divinity School, a newly created chair, and remained there until his death in 1965. This Symposium, commemorating Tillich's seven-year tenure at Harvard and the 50th anniversary of his retirement in 1962, presents a discussion by "first generation" undergraduate and graduate students of Tillich's, Professors Ann Belford Ulanov (Radcliffe B.A., 1959) and Harvey Cox (Ph.D., 1963), a "first generation" faculty colleague, Professor Gerald Holton (Ph.D., 1948), and Richard M. Hunt, a "first generation" graduate student and faculty colleague. The participants will offer reflections on the significance of Tillich during his Harvard years and for present and future generations.

William R. Crout, S.T.B. '58, A.M. '69, is Founder and Curator of Harvard's Paul Tillich Lectures, of which this is the 39<sup>th</sup> in the series. They are free and open to the public.

**TILlich's ALTERNATE INTERPRETATION  
OF WESTERN CULTURAL HISTORY**

OWEN C. THOMAS

**Editor's Note:** *This is the address delivered by Prof. Owen C. Thomas at the Annual Banquet of the NAPTS in San Francisco, California on Friday, 18 November 2012.*

**T**hank you for this honor. I should explain right away since I am now two months into my ninetyeth year, that this will be my valedictory, my swan song for the North American Paul Tillich society. If I survive until next year when you will be meeting in

the East, I will very likely not be able to make the trip. So it has been a great pleasure to attend these meetings over the years, seeing old friends, learning more about Tillich, and receiving generous reception and criticism of the many papers I have presented here.

I have been advised that my opening comments should be witty, that is, funny or odd stories about Tillich. I was going to beg off on this since I thought that Durwood last year covered all of such stories about Tillich. My favorite was his question to Tillich as to how we could tell the theological difference between wine and grape juice. Tillich thought for a minute and then replied, "Trink Zem." But then I thought of a few stories that Durwood had forgotten or didn't know of.

I recall walking down the hall at Union Seminary one day and I heard Tillich and Niebuhr walking behind me and conversing in German as usual. Niebuhr was saying "Ja, Ja Paulus, Ja vohl, Oh Hell yes, Paulus."

Then my senior colleague at the Episcopal Divinity School, Bill Wolf, told a story about a class Tillich was teaching in the history of Christian thought. Tillich made a reference to Theodore of Mopsuestia, a fifth century theologian. Wolf was getting tired of the class. So he put his hand and asked, "Professor Tillich could you explain the relation of the theology of Theodore of Mopsuestia to that of Thomas of Pepsicola." There were snickers and then Tillich said, "I do not know of this theologian Thomas of Pepsi..." And everyone laughed, and someone explained to Tillich that it was a joke. He said "Oh, Joke. Ha Ha."

I also recall one warm summer day in 1946 when Tillich was lecturing on the history of theology in the large lecture hall on the first floor at Union. There was a fan in one of the windows in the back making a lot of noise. Tillich began, "Today we discuss zee from zee fourth century,"—paused and pointed to the fan and said, "Vould someone please turn off zat, zat machine...Sank you.—Down to the twentieth century doctrine of the trinity."

Then in 1951 when Volume One of his *Systematic Theology* was published, there was a party in the Union bookstore, with the books being sold and Tillich present. At some point in the party I sat down beside Tillich and asked, "What about volume two?" He replied, "I would like to finish zhat as soon as possible, but I have a problem. I have to give Ze Gifford Lectures at the University of Aberdeen next fall

and they are supposed to treat natural theology. Now as you know I don't believe in natural theology."

I said, "Well that will give you an opportunity to explain why a natural theology about human existence is impossible and even more so for Christology. That explanation would be different from the one give for natural theology being impossible for Reason and Revelation and Being and God. You would have to explain your interpretation of the structure of human existence and the question arising in human existence and its resolution in Christology and thus complete volume two." He looked at me and then looked away, then he said, "Zat sounds like a very good idea." Now I think he was just being polite, but this is exactly what he does—which he explains on pages thirteen and fourteen of Volume Two.

Finally, back in 1973 I was invited to offer a course at the Gregorian University in Rome, the world center of Jesuit graduate theological education. I asked what course they wanted me to teach, and they responded that they wanted me to teach a course on Tillich's Systematic Theology. I was pleased to accept since I had been doing exactly that for twenty years.

One day a woman student from Germany came up and showed me the story in Time Magazine about Hannah's book *From Time to Time* recounting Tillich's infidelities. The student asked me, "Would this affect your assessment of Tillich's theology?" I responded that that was a very important and complex question and that I would have to think about it. I discovered that no one had treated and resolved this question. So I produced my own version in an essay entitled, "Life and Thought: The Cases of Heidegger and Tillich," which was the presidential address at a meeting of the American Theological Society, and a paper I presented here many years ago. My answer was in the negative, but it is debatable.

I was not a personal friend of Tillich. I would reserve that for Reinhold and Ursula Niebuhr, who functioned for me as *in loco parentis academicis*, especially about career decisions. But I often spoke with Tillich, usually asking him questions about his lectures and books. In any case, he was my main theological mentor. I began study with Tillich in the summer of 1946 with his lectures on Part Five of the System on History and the Kingdom of God. When I returned as a graduate student in 1949, I took several courses with him including his joint seminars with

Professor John Randall of Columbia about whom I will speak shortly.

I should note that it was just a year ago that Jonathan Z. Smith, the distinguished professor of religious studies at the University of Chicago, in an essay entitled "Tillich [']s Remains" stated that, "Tillich remains the unacknowledged theoretician of our entire enterprise." By "our enterprise," he was referring to the American Academy of Religion or more generally to the study of religion in North America.

Smith goes on to name "three crucial roles that Tillich's thought and practice played in the development of North American religious studies." These are religion as ultimate concern, the religious symbol as that which points, and the relation of religion and culture.<sup>1</sup> Smith's essay is followed by a fine essay by our colleague John Thatamanil comparing Smith and Tillich.

In the fall of 1961, I attended his lectures at Harvard on the Renaissance that formed the third part of his famous two-year course on "The Self Interpretation of Man in Archaic Greek, Late Ancient, Renaissance, and Modern Periods." Listening to these lectures on the Renaissance was the beginning of my interest in his alternate interpretation of Western Cultural History. I believe that this is one of Tillich's main contributions to modern theology and a philosophy of religion and culture, one that has often been often overlooked. And this is why I want to speak of it this evening.

Now the first point is "Alternate" to what? I mean alternate to the standard and majority view of the history of Western culture in the Western secular academy. This has been described by David Gress in his massive 610-page and weirdly entitled book "From Plato to NATO" as "The Grand Narrative." He states that it was founded by John Randall, my professor of philosophy at Columbia. It was elaborated in Randall's books, *The Making of the Modern Mind* and *The Career of Philosophy*. Then it was employed at Chicago in the Great Books Program instituted by Robert Hutchins and Mortimer Adler, who had been a student of Randall's. And this was completed by Will Durant in his book *The Story of Civilization*, which Gress describes as "the apotheosis of the Grand Narrative." Gress goes on to criticize the Grand Narrative view for its omission of the contributions of Christianity, Rome, the North German tribes, and for not including the importance of practices and institutions rather than simply ideas in the history of Western culture.

The majority or Grand Narrative view begins in what it holds to be the Golden Age of Western cultural history, namely, the Athens of the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE in which, it is affirmed, all of the great achievements of the modern world had their foundation: the birth of philosophy in the pre-Socratics, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle; the birth of the discipline of history in Herodotus and Thucydides; the birth of literature in the poetry of Pindar, the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides; the birth of science in the pre-Socratic thinkers of Miletus and Elea and Aristotle; finally the birth of democracy in the practice of the Athenian city-states and discussed by the pre-Socratics, Plato, and Aristotle.

Randall is lyrical about the legacy of Greece. He states, "Perhaps most important of all was the Greek faith in intelligence and science...It was from Greek science that the modern world took its birth. Aristotle invented the sciences, and the Greeks at Alexandria carried them to the point where the Renaissance took them up again. Greeks invented the philosophical interpretations of the universe by which all thoughtful men of antiquity ordered their lives."<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, however, according to the majority view, this Golden Age came to a sad but temporary end in what Gilbert Murray famously called "A Failure of Nerve" which was due to the evil and destructive influence of Christianity. As Murray states,

Anyone who turns from the great writers of classical Athens, say Sophocles or Aristotle, to those of the Christian era must be conscious of a great difference in tone. There is a change in the whole relation of the writer to the world about him...It is hard to describe. It is a rise of asceticism, of mysticism, in a sense of pessimism; a loss of self-confidence, of hope in this life and of faith in normal effort; a despair of patient inquiry, a cry for infallible revelation, an indifference to the welfare of the state, a conversion of the soul to God. It is an atmosphere in which the aim of the good man is no so much to live justly, to help the society to which he belongs and enjoy the esteem of his fellow creatures; but rather, by means of a burning faith, by contempt for the world and its standard, by ecstasy, suffering, and martyrdom, to be granted pardon for his unspeakable unworthiness, his immeasurable sins. There is an intensifying of certain spiritual emotions; an increase in sensitiveness, a failure of nerve.<sup>3</sup>

This led to what was called the Dark Ages of the Hellenistic and Medieval period, which was so named by the Italian scholar Petrarch. He marked the beginning of the Renaissance that, according to the Grand Narrative, was the rebirth of classical culture in all areas of human endeavor and marked the time at which the West took up where the Greeks had left off as the Grand Narrative has it.

Randall is also lyrical about the Renaissance. He states,

This new spirit of the Renaissance consisted at bottom in an increasing interest in human life as it can be lived on earth...and without any necessary reference to any other destiny in the beyond or the hereafter. It meant the decay of that Oriental dualism in which the flesh for so many years had lusted against the spirit, and the growth in its stead of the conviction that the life of the flesh and spirit merged into one living man is not evil, but good. It meant that when society offered more than a rude mining-camp existence of blood and toil, the monastic temper declined, and gave way to a new and vital perception of the dignity of man, of the sweetness and glory of being a rational animal...But most of all he humanist scholars brought from the Greeks the happy, natural, and wholesome enjoyment of life in a refined civilization, and the wisdom and sanity of balance, temperance, the golden mean...All this meant, of course, a revolt from the Christian ethic: in place of love, joy in the exercise of man's God-given powers; in place of faith, it became more and more clear, the fearless quest of the intellect.<sup>4</sup>

According to the Grand Narrative the renaissance came to its fulfillment in the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century exemplified in Newton's *Principia Mathematica*, and Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Randall states "From their inspiration flow the great achievements of the Age of Enlightenment; in their light men went on to transform their beliefs and their society into what we know today."<sup>5</sup> This led to the faith of the Enlightenment in the inevitable progress of humanity toward a millennium on earth inspired by the spread of reason, science, and technology.

Now what is Tillich's alternate interpretation of Western cultural history? I should explain that I will be laying out Tillich's alternate interpretation with the help of some of his colleagues and former students. It begins not in ancient Athens but in Palestine with what he calls "biblical" beginning with the

8<sup>th</sup> century BCE Hebrew Prophets, Amos and Isaiah, who preached that the one true God is the creator of the world which God has called very good. This includes the physical world, the body, sexuality, individuality, human community, human history, and the calling of Israel to be a light to the nations. This is fulfilled in the incarnation of God in Jesus who is seen as the fulfillment of prophecy as interpreted by the four evangelists and Paul.

However, when biblical religion moved out into the Hellenistic world, it came to be interpreted in terms of the prevalent philosophy, namely Middle Platonism and later Neo-Platonism. In his book, *The Courage to Be*, Tillich refers to what he calls “the negativity of the late ancient feeling toward life.”<sup>6</sup> In his lectures at Harvard in 1961 on the Renaissance, he stated, “This negative attitude toward the world was spelled out in Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus who saw the world as constituted by the warring principles of form and matter, the struggle between spirit and flesh. This led to a desire to escape the world and flee to the divine by means of the contemplative life. This is seen in Greek Tragedy in which there is no salvation but only heroism.”<sup>7</sup> Tillich’s colleague at Chicago, Paul Ricoeur, echoes Tillich when he refers to biblical religion and Platonism as “[radically heterogeneous]” and states that the Platonism has “contaminated” biblical religion. Ricoeur continues: “In its ascetic form as well as in its mystical form, Platonizing Christianity adopts the opposition between contemplation and concupiscence, which in its turn, introduces the opposition between the spiritual soul and the moral and raving body; the old fear of defilement and the old fear of the body and sexuality are taken over by the new wisdom.”<sup>8</sup> It is clear that this is quite different from biblical religion but this is what many have believed that Christianity really is, as exemplified in Friedrich Nietzsche who stated that “Christianity is Platonism for the people,” that is, just a simplified version of Platonism. The Platonists agreed about the difference of Platonism and biblical religion exemplified in the powerful attacks on Christianity by the Middle Platonist Celsus and the Neoplatonist Porphyry.

Now according to Tillich what happened at the Renaissance was that “the negativity of the late-ancient feeling toward life was transformed into the positiveness of the Christian ideas of creation and incarnation and the resurrection of the body...So the spiritual substance of the Renaissance humanism was Christian.”<sup>9</sup>

Stanley Romaine Hopper of Syracuse puts it this way:

Curiously, the genius of the Renaissance lay in its recovery of biblical Christianity. That is, it appealed to the dignity of man, to the rights of the individual, to freedom, to man’s creative responsibility in history, to brotherhood, and to the world as a tangible reality in space and time. They were all parts of the Hebrew-Christian bequest.<sup>10</sup>

Ronald Gregor Smith of Edinburgh states,

The break through of the human spirit at the Renaissance cannot be simply ascribed to the liberating influence of Greek thought. I think it is truer to say that at the Renaissance we see, among other things, an efflorescence of the Christian spirit beyond the bounds prescribed by medieval philosophy. All this activity was possible because man understood his situation in history in a new way. He saw himself as free, and as responsible for making his own life, and as open to a future which was not an arbitrary or threatening disposition of fate, but was awaiting him as his own destiny...This primary emphasis at the Renaissance, this recovery of Hebrew this-worldliness...has been the dominant element in the history since that time...History was no longer seen as the necessary but tiresome ante-chamber of super-history, but as an existent power whose meaning could be sought in itself. This was the fundamental insight which broke through the bonds of medieval metaphysics, and with it the very structure of medieval civilization. Out of this has flowed the work of many in every sphere over which human activity has ranged and flowered in the last five hundred years.<sup>11</sup>

I have consulted experts in the thought of these two theologians and have concluded that they both got their ideas of the Renaissance from Tillich. This means that when the representatives of the majority view spoke so negatively about the Dark Ages and Christianity, they were referring to the amalgam of biblical religion with later Platonism. And when they spoke so positively of the Renaissance, they were seeing it through the eyes of Renaissance biblical Christians.

Implied and often explicit in Tillich’s alternate view is the concept of the possibility of something radically new in human history. This was based on the hope of Israel for a Davidic Messiah who would bring in new era justice and peace. This was ob-

scured in the Greek view in which the idea of eternal recurrence dominated. It was rediscovered by the late medieval prophet Joachim de Fiore who foresaw a new age in history, the age of the Holy Spirit that would begin in the year 1260. Tillich states that “this formed the background to most of the revolutionary movements down into modern times,”<sup>12</sup> and his view is confirmed by Karl Löwith in his book *Meaning in History*. It is interesting to note that none of the founders of the majority view even mention Joachim and they attribute the idea of progress entirely to the Enlightenment’s faith in reason, science, and education.

It should be noted that from the point of view of Tillich’s alternate interpretation of Western cultural history, many of the key ideas of the modern world, such as atheism, secularism, science, technology, democracy, capitalism, and naturalistic humanism, the default worldview of the Western secular academy, have their origin in biblical religion. I will refer to five of these, and first atheism. Atheism was invented by the prophets of Israel when they denied the reality of the gods of the nations. This resulted in the fact that the first group in Western cultural history to be known as atheists was the Christians, according to the testimony of Justin Martyr in his First Apology written in the middle of the second century CE.

Second secularism: The prophets of Israel also founded secularism when they announced that only God is divine and holy, everything else is creature, of this age, this *saeculum*. The result was the creation of a secular culture in which we live. Early evidence of this is found in the writings of Ignatius, bishop of Antioch at the end of the first century CE. He was condemned to death in the Roman persecution and sent to Rome to die fighting wild beasts in the Coliseum. On his way, he wrote letters to each of his churches in Asia Minor. In his letter to the church in Ephesus, he explained how the birth of Jesus was revealed: “a star shone in heaven and brighter than all the stars....As a result (of this star) all magic (magi, astrology) lost its power and all witchcraft ceased.”<sup>13</sup>

This was illustrated in a story on the front page of the Boston Globe on February 5, 1962 on the occasion of an eclipse of the sun and the alignment of five planets. The story ran as follows:

For the Asians the eclipse presented a period of great danger, coming as part of an alignment in the Zodiac sign of Capricorn of five other planets as well—Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter,

and Saturn. Hindu, Moslem, and Buddhist communities throughout the Far East held non-stop prayer sessions and sacrifices as the eight heavenly bodies began moving into line yesterday. Miners refused to enter the shafts at Dhanbad in Northeast India. An Indian Airlines plane traveled empty to Bombay when passengers failed to show up at New Delhi. Market places closed down and merchants gave free food to beggars to placate the planets.

But the eclipse was a welcome event for Americans and other western scientists who gathered at Lae in Australian New Guinea to watch the moon blot out the sun. They were able to carry out planned experiments on the solar corona as the moon moved into position between the earth and the sun at 8:51 a.m. local time (5:51 p.m. EST yesterday).

This is the difference between a religious culture and a secular culture created by biblical religion. And the same can be said about science, technology, democracy, and capitalism, all, of course spoiled by human sin.

Here is a third example: science. There is a growing consensus among historians of science that Christianity was a major contributor to the rise of modern science. Ian Barbour, former chair of the physics department at Carleton College and founder of the discipline of religion and science has summarized these contributions under the headings of the biblical attitudes toward nature, and the idea of creation, the medieval conviction about the intelligibility of nature, and the Puritan support of scientific research.

Oxford philosopher M. B. Foster and others have argued at length that the doctrine of creation implies that the details of nature can be known only by observing them and not by the deduction from the divine nature, as Greek thought held. Sociologist Robert Merton has argued that Puritanism gave strong support to scientific work and his thesis has been supported by historians of science such as I. Bernard Cohen among others.

Fourth example: technology. Nicholas Berdyaev puts it this way: “However paradoxical it may seem, I am convinced that Christianity alone made possible both positive science and technology...It is impossible to build railways, invent the telegraph or telephone, while living in fear of the demons. Thus, for man to be able to treat nature like a mechanism, it is necessary for the demonic inspiration of nature and

man's communion with it to have died out in human consciousness."<sup>14</sup>

Fifth, naturalistic humanism—the default worldview of the Western secular academy. It affirms that nature is the highest and broadest category, comprehending all reality. Humanism is the moral commitment to the values of human dignity, freedom, justice, and equality. Furthermore, it is claimed that this worldview can be proven by natural science, which, of course, is nonsense since science proves no worldview and no worldview can be proven to anyone who does not already hold it. Therefore, all worldviews are held by faith. That is, we all “walk by faith and not by sight” (2Cor 5:7). It is clear that this worldview stands in the tradition of the Renaissance and thus is the fruit of biblical religion according to Tillich's alternate interpretation. Its modern version was introduced in the nineteenth century by Ludwig Feuerbach who had a Christian upbringing and graduate study in theology. He was a critic of Hegel and inspired both Marx and Freud, both of whom stood in the prophetic tradition of the criticism of bad religion. Karl Barth stated of Feuerbach that he understood Christianity better than any other philosopher or theologian in the nineteenth century, and his thought amounted to a Christian realism in its anti-spiritualism, its attention the whole person in his earthiness, its this-worldliness, and its assertion of the interpersonal and communal nature of humanity.<sup>15</sup> Tillich refers to Feuerbach's critique of Hegel as an important source of existentialism, which, in turn became a “providential ally of Christianity in the twentieth century.”<sup>16</sup>

The American version of naturalistic humanism had its home at Columbia University in the work of George Santayana, F. J. E. Woodbridge, John Dewey, and John Randall. Full disclosure: Dewey was the mentor of my parents. I was raised in this worldview and it informed my life for over twenty years. I should add that for me the transition from naturalistic humanism to Christian faith was quite smooth, which can be understood by seeing its origin in biblical religion. Later I concluded, however, that it is not possible to base a humanism on naturalism unless it is the tame Christian naturalism of John Dewey rather than the pagan naturalism of Nietzsche, for example.

Tillich also sees the negative side of the Renaissance. He saw that the Renaissance, in the powerful revolt it launched against the ecclesiastical heteronomy of the late Middle Ages, marked the first step in the direction of an autonomous culture. Then the

Enlightenment tended ever more insistently to sponsor an essentially secular witness in behalf of the scientific worldview. Tillich states in *The Religious Situation* that the spirit of capitalist bourgeois society was subjected to mathematical natural science, technology, and capitalist economy. Everything was made serviceable to this trinity. All the bonds of original, organic community must be sacrificed in favor of a free capitalist economy. The state with all its agencies for the exercise of its powers and its steadily increasing armaments serves the expansive, imperialist will of the leading economic class.<sup>17</sup> So Tillich concluded, “It is not an exaggeration to say that today man experiences his present situation in terms of disruption, conflict, self-destruction in all realms of life.”

This is based on the fact that the leaders of the Enlightenment thought that what they were doing was rejecting biblical Christianity and reaffirmed the classical Greek view of life. What they were *really* attempting was the creation of a Christian culture, but they did not know it. So modern culture is a Christian phenomenon and believes it is an anti-Christian. It is an attempt to live the Christian life without affirming the Christian faith, an experiment that is bound to fail. So Tillich's followers refer to the modern experiment as “a veritable second fall of man” and “a vain repetition of the gentiles.”

Tillich's point is that the last five centuries have involved a steady decline from the Christian humanism of Renaissance down to the horrors of the twentieth century symbolized in the Holocaust and Hiroshima. This is echoed in W. H. Auden's poem “For the Time Being: A Christmas Oratorio,” which Tillich knew and appreciated

If on account of the political situation, there are quite a number of homes without roofs, and men lying about in the countryside neither drunk nor asleep. That is not unusual for this time of year. Till lately we seemed to have what it took. To practice one's peculiar civic virtues was not so impossible after all. But then we were children: That was a moment ago, before an outrageous novelty had been introduced into our lives. Why were we never warned? Perhaps we were. Perhaps that mysterious noise at the back of the brain that we noticed on certain occasions—sitting alone in the waiting room of the country junction, Looking up at the toilet window—was not indigestion but this Horror starting already to scratch its way in. That is why we despair; that is why we would welcome the

nursery bogey or the wine cellar ghost, why even the violent howling of winter and war has become like a jukebox tune that we dare not stop. We are afraid of pain but more afraid of silence; for no nightmare of hostile objects could be as terrible as this Void. This is the abomination. This is the wrath of God.

So in his alternate interpretation of Western cultural history Tillich was attempting to demonstrate that the horrors of the twentieth century were the judgment of God on human arrogance and depravity and a call to repentance and faith in the God of history.

<sup>1</sup> See the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78/4 (December 2010): 1139-70.

<sup>2</sup> John Herman Randall, Jr. *The Making of the Modern Mind: Revised Edition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1940), 44-45.

<sup>3</sup> Gilbert Murray, *Five Stages of Greek Religion* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1925), 119

<sup>4</sup> Randall, *The Making of the Modern Mind*, 122-23.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 254.

<sup>6</sup> See Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), 18

<sup>7</sup> This is taken from my notes of Tillich's lectures in 1961.

<sup>8</sup> See Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), 335.

<sup>9</sup> See *The Courage To Be*, 18.

<sup>10</sup> Stanley Romaine Hopper, *The Crisis of Faith* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1947), 130.

<sup>11</sup> Ronald Gregor Smith, *The New Man: Christianity and Man's Coming of Age* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), 41-44.

<sup>12</sup> See Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, ed. Carl Braaten (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 175.

<sup>13</sup> See *Early Christian Fathers*, ed. Cyril C. Richardson (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 93.

<sup>14</sup> See Nicholas Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1968), 117.

<sup>15</sup> See Karl Barth, "An Introductory Essay," in *The Essence of Christianity* by Ludwig Feuerbach, trans. George Eliot (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), x, xiii, xiv, xxv.

<sup>16</sup> See Tillich, *Perspectives on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Protestant Theology*, ed. Carl Braaten (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 243, 25.

<sup>17</sup> See Paul Tillich, *The Religious Situation* (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), 41-43.

**THEOLOGIES OF CULTURE AS A BASE FOR  
INTERRELIGIOUS EFFORTS TO ADDRESS  
FUNDAMENTALISMS**

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Interreligious encounters today occur in cultural contexts that include active, vocal fundamentalist movements. Although the specific cultural contexts and religious contexts vary greatly, many serious religious people face the challenge of trying to address fundamentalism both *intra*-religiously and *inter*-religiously. Public confrontations with fundamentalists can occur over public art, sexual issues, and scientific understandings, i.e., aspects of culture that often do not have explicit or traditional religious content. Theologies of culture through their religious analyses of culture can be resources for addressing fundamentalisms. Their interreligious value will come from extracting principles from the western Christian base of the theologies and from seeking

shared religious understandings that might be used in response to fundamentalisms.

The *first* part of the paper discusses elements of Paul Tillich's, Mark C. Taylor's, and Peter Berger's "theologies" of culture, with focus on the issue of absolutism or fundamentalism versus relativism. The *second* part of the paper applies their approaches to specific examples of fundamentalist responses to public art, sexual issues, and scientific understandings in several religious traditions and cultures. The *third* section argues that the dualisms implicit in the fundamentalist responses cross cultures and religious traditions and therefore can be a basis for interreligious dialogue and action. The *final* part of the paper evaluates Tillich's, Taylor's, and Berger's proposals for overcoming dualisms, especially the dualism of absolutism versus relativism, with consideration of how well those can apply to diverse cultures and religious traditions.

**A. Theologies of Culture in Relation to Relativism and Absolutism/Fundamentalism**

1. *Basic Approaches of Tillich, Taylor, and Berger*

Growing awareness of cultural and religious plurality, not just in the world but in one's own "home culture context," can foster a religious relativism that seems to have no base or an absolutist fundamentalism that devalues all "others." With neither alternative workable for many, the goal here is to consider the possibility of a different approach that moves beyond the dualist opposition. We will consider a few basic ideas and principles from the theologies of culture developed by Tillich, Taylor, and Berger, as well as their explicit critiques of fundamentalism.

Paul Tillich was not responding to religious plurality in his arguments for a theology of culture but rather to the plurality of meanings and values set forth in various areas of "secular" culture. Rejecting more traditional approaches that set church against culture, Tillich argued for a more unified understanding of culture, with religious meaning penetrating all areas of culture.<sup>1</sup> In his 1919 lecture, "On the Idea of a Theology of Culture," he envisions the theologian of culture as "a free agent in the living cultural movement, open to accept not only any other form but also any other spirit."<sup>2</sup> The theologian of culture is not tied to church dogma or concerns and "has no interest in ecclesiastical continuity."<sup>3</sup> Rather, Tillich outlines three tasks for a theology of culture: "1. General religious analysis of culture; 2. Religious typology and philosophy of cultural history; 3. Concrete religious systematization of culture."<sup>4</sup> The focus here is on Tillich's engagement in the first task.

The root of Tillich's theology of culture is his understanding of the participation of the Unconditional or later, being-itself or the ground of being, in everything that is. The Unconditional is not a being, alongside other realities, nor the total unity of all beings, but rather it is "above all beings" as unconditional meaning without any specific content, and is simultaneously "the absolute Nothing and the absolute Something" and "the No and the Yes to every thing."<sup>5</sup> One never experiences the Unconditional directly but rather it is always "thrust upon us" through the mediation of conditioned realities, values, and personal experiences. The human response to the Unconditional pervades life as religion, defined by Tillich in the 1919 lecture, as "directedness toward the Unconditional."<sup>6</sup>

People express their directedness toward the Unconditional in all spheres of culture and in all that they create. For any cultural creation, the depth or

import (*Gehalt*) rooted in the Unconditional is "grasped by means of a form and given expression in a content."<sup>7</sup> The import carries both the Yes and the No to all things,<sup>8</sup> manifesting the absolute paradox<sup>9</sup> that stands at the center of Tillich's thought. The specific form and particular content remain conditioned, but the Unconditional meaning can break through. Tillich encourages the theologian of culture to incorporate this understanding of the Unconditional in the religious analysis of cultural phenomena, a task exemplified especially in Tillich's analysis of art, ethics, politics, science, and the churches in the 1919 lecture, in *The Religious Situation*,<sup>10</sup> and in many later discussions of art and architecture, politics, psychology, and science.

Mark C. Taylor's theology of culture in *After God* also presents the interconnection of religion and culture, with attention to Protestant theological developments, philosophical systems, technological and economic changes, psychology, art, and the interaction of subjectivity with historical, cultural changes. With more focus than Tillich on religion as a system, Taylor defines religion as "an emergent, complex, adaptive network of symbols, myths, and rituals that, on the one hand, figure schemata of feeling, thinking, and acting in ways that lend life meaning and purpose and, on the other, disrupt, dislocate, and disfigure every stabilizing structure."<sup>11</sup> While both recognize religious dimensions in secular culture, Taylor's analysis focuses more on the historical roots of modern secular culture in the Protestant Reformation and the codependence of various networks of culture, nature, society, and technology, all of which continuously adapt and change in relation to each other.<sup>12</sup>

Taylor concludes his historical-religious analysis of cultural change with his own theological proposal that he images as "religion without God." He posits a dynamic, immanent understanding of the Infinite, with "two codependent rhythms: finitizing the infinite and infinitizing the finite."<sup>13</sup> He connects these to two "moments of religion," recognizing the importance of religious schema that offer meaning and purpose to life but also the need for disrupting, dislocating, and disfiguring fixed structures.<sup>14</sup> Religion, then, would always be emerging, offering temporary and shifting "pockets of stability" in the midst of flux and always interconnecting with other schemata and networks. The "end" of such dynamic movement is not something static but rather ongoing flux and flow. The Infinite is "the creative interplay" of codependent, coevolving interrelationships of the

many dimensions of life.<sup>15</sup> Alternatively, to put it in words reminiscent of aspects of Teilhard de Chardin, the Infinite is “the divine milieu in which everything is relative because all is related.”<sup>16</sup>

In his application to religion and culture, Taylor recognizes that people will continually create gods that usually end up in dualist opposition to each other. But, he argues, all such gods are finite, even if declared infinite. His theology attempts to figure and disfigure the creative process that moves between identity and difference, with networks interdependently changing and emerging.<sup>17</sup> In his application to art, Taylor interconnects God, art, and life as a trinity: “After God—art; after art—life. Three-in-one—One-in-three.”<sup>18</sup> Life, art, God, culture, nature, technology, and more, all interconnect in an ongoing complex process, constantly changing relationships and always in need of disfiguring and new figuring. The Infinite not only moves in the process but also is the active rhythms of the process.

While Peter Berger has written primarily as a sociologist, not as a theologian, he has offered analysis of religion and culture that he hopes will contribute to Protestant theology’s response to modern cultural situations, with special focus on secularization, pluralism, relativism, and fundamentalism. In *The Heretical Imperative*, which focuses on religious plurality and in a more recent book focused on relativism and fundamentalism, Berger offers a middle position that recognizes that there is a “fundamental religious experience” but multiple forms of it throughout the world, both past and present.<sup>19</sup> He encourages openness to others of diverse faiths, taking seriously their religious experiences, and concludes that the Christian thinker “must remain open to all the possibilities of a future that lies in God’s hands.”<sup>20</sup>

All three thinkers propose theologies that can be open to plural ways of being religious. While Tillich roots his approach in his affirmation of the participation of the Unconditional in everything that is and on his broad definition of religion, Taylor and Berger look more to religions as systems within culture, affected by numerous historical and cultural forces. Taylor does share with Tillich a more immanent understanding of ultimacy living and moving within the world than does Berger. But, all ground their theologies, at least in part, in religious experience that is both personal and connected to society and culture. Because they share a goal of more positive interconnections of diverse religions, they also share criticisms of fundamentalist approaches.

## 2. Cultural-Theological Critiques of Fundamentalism

Tillich’s critique of fundamentalism stems from his emphasis on the Protestant Principle that critiques all absolutizations of the finite that do not simultaneously deny their absoluteness. In the first few paragraphs of the 1951 *Systematic Theology*, Tillich focuses on fundamentalism as a key element of the religious-cultural situation of that time, referring to both American fundamentalists and European orthodox theologians.<sup>21</sup> He describes these movements as “demonic” because they attach “infinite and eternal validity” to “something finite and transitory” and as “fanatical” because they “suppress elements of truth.”<sup>22</sup>

But, Tillich’s broad understanding of faith enables him to understand fundamentalists as responding to their experience of the Unconditional, albeit with a misplaced absoluteness and limited faith. As he states in *Dynamics of Faith*: “Where there is faith there is an awareness of holiness....What concerns one ultimately becomes holy.”<sup>23</sup> Tillich affirms fundamentalist experience of ultimacy as real but critiques their faith as partial, idolatrous, and potentially destructive.<sup>24</sup> Yet he recognizes the power that it holds for many people, still noting that success does not entail truth.<sup>25</sup> For individuals, Tillich argues that “[t]he inescapable consequence of idolatrous faith is ‘existential disappointment,’” that penetrates the whole personality.<sup>26</sup> For society, idolatrous faith can lead to injustice, privileging insiders over those outside.<sup>27</sup>

Taylor also recognizes the power of fundamentalism as he analyzes the recent growth in fundamentalist and evangelical movements as a “Fourth Great Awakening” and the Religious Right as “a counter-counterculture.”<sup>28</sup> He delineates a shared agenda for conservatives in their opposition to particular ideologies and groups and in some common theological themes, but he also recognizes important differences among fundamentalists, evangelicals, Pentecostals, and neo-orthodox Christians.<sup>29</sup> Still, they share an absolutism in their “religious foundationalism and exclusive moralism” that Taylor finds dangerous. “In a world where everyone is increasingly interconnected, religious foundationalism and moral absolutism threaten to bring about the very disaster their adherents claim to be trying to avoid.”<sup>30</sup> Taylor analyzes interconnections between these conservative religious movements and numerous social, economic, scientific, technological, and moral developments, with special focus on “the unholy alliance of

neofoundational religion, neoconservative politics, and neoliberal economics.”<sup>31</sup> An underlying question and purpose in Taylor’s analysis is how to challenge that unholy alliance.

In *In Praise of Doubt*, Berger and his co-author Anton Zijderveld share with Tillich and Taylor a view of fundamentalism as threatening and potentially destructive. Berger and Zijderveld grant that fundamentalism, like other worldviews, provides its members with an identity in their social worlds. But they argue that fundamentalist identity counters freedom and that “[f]undamentalism, religious or secular, is always an enemy of freedom.”<sup>32</sup> They connect fundamentalist approaches to totalitarian structures that may be more internalized in a subculture than imposed on all, but they fear efforts to force others to fundamentalist ideas and values and multiplication of fundamentalist subcultures that can undermine social cohesion.<sup>33</sup> Berger and Zijderveld argue that, “the danger of fundamentalism is a deficit of doubt,” when at least some doubt is necessary to “a humanly decent society.”<sup>34</sup>

All four theorists recognize that countering relativism is one reason for people’s attraction to fundamentalism (or foundationalism). Desire for certainty and absolutes makes sense, but the absolutism of fundamentalism carries too many destructive consequences. The challenge for all four thinkers is to develop a middle position that takes doubt seriously without falling into a relativism with no grounding.

## B. Application to Specific Fundamentalist Responses to “Secular” Cultural Phenomena

Because fundamentalist reaction to specific secular cultural phenomena occurs around the world, I see this reaction as a common base for analysis and critique in interreligious dialogue. My examples here will be familiar to most scholars of religion, but the purpose here is to discuss to what extent Tillich’s, Taylor’s, and Berger’s “theologies” or theories of religion and culture can provide insight into these fundamentalist responses.

### *Art and Literature*

Over the last few decades, several examples of visual culture have drawn strong reaction from religious leaders and/or conservative politicians. Well-publicized examples include reactions against displaying Andres Serrano’s *Piss Christ*, Robert Mapplethorpe’s photographs of nude minors, and Chris Ofili’s Virgin Mary depicted with cow dung. While

part of the controversy related to public tax monies that helped fund the exhibitions that included these items, other protests focused on religious and moral dimensions, targeting these objects as blasphemy<sup>35</sup> or obscenity<sup>36</sup> or anti-Christian.<sup>37</sup> Most recently, a woman in Loveland, Colorado used a crowbar to destroy the plexiglass casing and then ripped up Enrique Chagoya’s print of a head, allegedly of Jesus Christ, in a suggestive pose near a mostly clothed woman’s body.<sup>38</sup> The woman stated that she did this because the image “desecrated” her Lord.<sup>39</sup>

Turning to Islam, examples include reactions to Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* in the late 1980s and more recently the publication of the cartoons depicting Muhammad in a Danish newspaper. Rushdie’s novel engendered huge public protests in the streets of Bradford, England as well as Islamabad and Kashmir. Numerous countries including India, South Africa, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Indonesia, and many others banned the book as blasphemous, and Ayatollah Khomeini issued a *fatwa* against Rushdie.<sup>40</sup> The cartoons, published by both a Danish paper and by several Norwegian papers, drew protests from various Muslim organizations as well as from large crowds in the streets of various cities in the Muslim world.<sup>41</sup>

In India, filmmaker Deepa Mehta was forced to move the filming of *Water* from India to Sri Lanka because of protests by Hindu nationalists.<sup>42</sup> Her film focused on the controversial issue of treatment of widows during the British Raj period, but protests related not only to that issue but also earlier films dealing with lesbian relations in one and religion and politics in the other.<sup>43</sup>

### *Science*

The most publicized scientific issue sparking fundamentalist response has been the theory of evolution. While most critics of evolution do not understand the meaning of “theory” in science, their protests have centered on threats to their so-called biblical literalism, their understanding of humans, and their theology of God as creator. In my home state, Australian investors developed the highly successful Creation Museum, with Disney-like displays that mix bits of theology, science, and Christian tradition to present a young earth, creationist understanding of our physical world.

Perhaps second to evolution, the medical issue of stem-cell research has drawn well-publicized protest from religious groups opposed to abortion. While the issue of evolution has not received much

recent response by politicians, many conservative ones weigh in on the stem-cell issue. Most opposition I have seen focuses on religious objections to use of embryonic stem cells.

While I could multiply these examples, my question is the extent to which the theories of Tillich and Taylor can provide insights into these controversies in a way that could foster interreligious dialogue on the subject.

### *Analysis*

If one uses Tillich's understanding of the participation of the Unconditional in all that is, one could understand these controversies as stemming from fundamentalists experiencing something unconditional in these various finite images and theories but interpreting these cultural expressions as destructive or demonic rather than creative and constructive. For fundamentalists, these cultural phenomena attack their faith, religious truth, and moral values. They must respond to protect their absolutes, as there is no room for different views that might make them question their own. The religious-cultural situation is one of their values against all others, their religion fighting falsehood and evil. And, of course, to the extent that we see their critiques as false and dangerous, we join the dualist conflict.

Using Tillich's core tenet of his theology of culture, the participation of the Unconditional, accentuates the *religious* dimension of the cultural conflicts and recognizes the *positive* religious experiences of fundamentalists. They are defending the meaning-giving substance of their lives. Recognition of that should engender some appreciation of fundamentalists as directed toward the Unconditional and some understanding of their tenacity in defending their faith. But, one can argue that it is this same recognition of directedness toward the Unconditional in diverse faith traditions that provides a common core that enables inter-religious dialogue and fosters respect for people of other faith.

However, these dialogues also occur mostly among the "liberal" members of their faith traditions. They are open to views of other people, not necessarily open to changing their own basic commitments but open to learning from others and discovering some shared ideas and values. Many acknowledge the challenge, focused on here, of talking with the fundamentalists in their own traditions. The first part of the dialogue might be discussion of whether participants can acknowledge the *religious*

core in fundamentalist beliefs and actions and then apply the same *religious* respect to fundamentalists that they offer to their mutual participants in inter-religious dialogue. Some acknowledgement of a common religious direction toward ultimacy or the Unconditional suggests a small but important counter to the dualist split between liberal and fundamentalist approaches.

The second part of inter-religious dialogue could focus on the specific dualisms of the conflict between liberals and fundamentalists. Across cultures and religious traditions, even the content of these dualisms is often similar. Whether Christian, Jewish, Muslim, or Hindu, the following dualisms show up in the conflicts between liberals and fundamentalists in those faith traditions:

(1) *Literal vs. symbolic readings of texts.* While we may first associate that dualism with interpretation of scriptures, it also applies to interpretation of art, literature, film, etc. Even if the writer or artist intends a symbolic reading, she or he has no control over people interpreting it literally. While many of the artists and writers whose works have been controversial understood their creations as offering critiques of negative or destructive aspects of religion and culture, their conservative critics "read" their works as destructive of core truths and values in religion and culture.<sup>44</sup>

(2) *Male dominating power over females versus equality and empowerment of all humans.* The prominence of patriarchal values and structures of power in fundamentalisms crosses faith traditions. While dominating power is the main issue, it often manifests in male authority and control of women and in privileging heterosexuality against homosexuality. Connecting with sexual issues, one also often finds a negative view of the body, at times almost a fear of the body. One has to control the body and that usually means controlling women and non-heterosexual sexual activities.

(3) *Control vs. freedom.* While several analyses of fundamentalisms note efforts to create and control an enclave of similarly minded and similarly acting people, more public political actions by fundamentalists aim at controlling the behavior of people who do *not* belong to their enclaves. All of the examples I have put forth in this paper are of public political efforts at controlling others. Their political efforts are not directed at all toward self-control or self-critique but at countering what they see as evil and dangerous in the "other." (The challenge for liberals

is how not to be simply the mirror of this behavior of naming the “other” as evil and dangerous.)

(4) *Religious vs. scientific truth.* Some of the conflicts fundamentalists have with science relate to the issue of literalist versus symbolic reading of texts. Certainly, this applies to creationism versus evolution, but increasingly, proponents of creationism spend little time talking about biblical texts. Instead, they put forward images of the origins of humanity that fit people’s sense of their central place in the universe as given by God. Alternatively, some use a few scientific studies that they believe raise questions about the truth of evolutionary theory. Here, they often miss the irony of accepting some scientific truths and not others. But the audience for these scientific studies is not the broad scientific community but their own religious communities.

Although one could probably continue this list of dualisms experienced across religious traditions in the challenge of fundamentalisms, it is important to recognize the underlying dualism of absolutism versus relativism. Symbolic readings of texts allows for plural interpretations of texts in contrast to a more literalist, set interpretation understood as absolute, divinely given truth. Challenges to patriarchal structures of authority, whether in the religious tradition or in the broad society or in the family, also suggest plural options for those in authority, how they uses this authority, and how they treat diverse groups of people. Giving up control and allowing more freedom to people results in variety and diversity of views, moral values, and actions. Allowing scientific discoveries to challenge traditional religious truths relativizes truth, allowing truth from diverse sources that may not necessarily agree. Once again, the option of plural truths looms, and with this the fear of a relativism without absolutes.

If participants in inter-religious dialogue can acknowledge their parallel experiences of these dualisms, they may also recognize the underlying dualism of relativism versus absolutism and want to discuss ways to address that dualism. Are there any alternatives to the dualist impasses?

### **C. Addressing the Dualism of Relativism versus Absolutism**

My purpose in this section is to discuss the extent to which ideas from Tillich’s, Taylor’s, and Berger’s theologies of culture and theories of religion and culture can help us move beyond absolutism and relativism.

#### (1) Understandings of ultimacy and religion.

Both Tillich’s concept of the Unconditioned (or later, the ground or power of being) and Taylor’s idea of the Infinite are sufficiently void of specific content to enable them (or similar concepts) to be used in inter-religious dialogue. That participants will put in their own content from their specific traditions is to be expected. Tillich anticipates that most people will make a move from the Unconditional or later the God above the God of theism to more concrete contents. In the 1919 essay, he describes the theologian of culture as a “free agent” in a cultural movement but notes that the theologian “lives on the basis of a definite concreteness, for *one can live only in concreteness.*” Tillich calls on this theologian to be “prepared at any time to enlarge and change this concreteness.”<sup>45</sup> Likewise, in *The Courage to Be*, Tillich states that within the courage to accept the anxiety of meaninglessness, “all forms of courage are re-established in the power of the God above the God of theism.”<sup>46</sup> People live with concrete forms of courage, even when they have reached meaninglessness as the boundary line of doubt.

In a parallel way, Taylor argues that people need both the temporary stability of meaning and purpose in emerging forms as well as the ongoing disfiguring or critique of such forms.<sup>47</sup> People will experience their god(s) as powerful, but he argues that they are in fact, finite, subject to questioning and potential disfiguring. While I suspect that many participants in inter-religious dialogue would reject Taylor’s description of gods as finite, they might be more open to his understanding of the Infinite as in process and incapable of being adequately figured or symbolized or conceptualized.

In his short essay on using Lutheran resources to address religious plurality, Berger, like Tillich and Taylor, argues for keeping God (or for them, the Unconditional or the Infinite) distinct from the conditioned or the finite. He also shares the view that God or the Unconditional or the Infinite is active and experienced in the midst of the finite.<sup>48</sup> While Berger maintains his commitment to the Word of God in Scripture and to several doctrines of the Lutheran church, he also emphasizes keeping a freedom in one’s attitude toward the institutional church.<sup>49</sup> He seeks a middle position that is both grounded and open.

#### (2) Working with and in the midst of polarities.

All three thinkers want to overcome both absolutisms and the dualisms that result from absolutism.

And while all embrace varying degrees of relativism, all distinguish their proposals from a pure relativism. All posit an absolute although Tillich's Unconditional and Taylor's Infinite resist any concrete content or definition. Berger affirms the Word of God as absolute but resists identification of this Word with Scripture itself. While those approaches could never satisfy fundamentalists of any tradition, their recognition of human finitude and the non-absoluteness of human interpretations are points on which participants in inter-religious dialogue often agree. The varying degrees of relativism accepted by these three thinkers are noticeable but not the primary focus. Rather, their proposals for moving beyond the dualism of absolutism and relativism and beyond the polarities that divide are more pertinent to the argument here.

Tillich's theology of culture proposes a theonomous approach to conflicts between religion and culture, rooted in their underlying ground and aim, namely the Unconditional. Rather than the autonomy of reason and science or the heteronomy of imposed doctrine or structures, a theonomous approach is paradoxical, with the Unconditional breaking through both sides in favor of a dynamic union of opposites. Cultural phenomena, interpreted theonomously, are seen as expressing both Yes and No. In the 1919 essay, Tillich offers Expressionist art as perhaps more strongly expressing No to traditional forms and content and yet aiming toward "a new and absolute Yes."<sup>50</sup> Similarly, he interprets Nietzsche's ethics as affirming an ethics of grace over an ethics of virtue and praises the theonomy of love that he finds in some of the German poets.<sup>51</sup> In these and other examples, Tillich sees a move beyond the split between autonomy and heteronomy—a move made possible by the breaking through of the Unconditional. The experience of theonomy is paradoxical,<sup>52</sup> holding the tension in the unity of the Unconditional No to traditional forms and the Unconditional Yes to new possibilities.

For Tillich, experience of theonomy, overcoming dualist conflicts, always involves "revelation" or the Unconditional breaking through.<sup>53</sup> In experiences of theonomy, people experience a wholeness rather than conflict.<sup>54</sup> In the third volume of his *Systematic Theology*, Tillich speaks of theonomy as fragmentary and temporary experiences of the Spiritual Presence overcoming the ambiguities of life.<sup>55</sup> In each example, he describes a paradoxical holding together of opposites. Theonomous knowledge overcomes the split between subject and object; theonomous

justice both affirms law but fights against injustices contained in it.<sup>56</sup> In actual life, one can experience theonomous moments, but still conflicts and splits are normal. But what Tillich's theology of culture provides, in addition to a vision of theonomy, is a critical principle that challenges absolutisms and encourages living "on the boundary" in the midst of polarities.

Tillich's critical principle shows up throughout his theology and philosophy of religion, both in early and later works. This critical principle has a paradoxical form as we see in his examples of theonomy. In a 1919 essay on "Justification and Doubt" (an earlier and different essay than the 1924 essay with the same title), Tillich develops the idea of the absolute paradox in connection with the Apostle Paul's theology of justification by faith but developed more broadly and stated in language that need not be tied to Christianity yet assumes a basic faith. The absolute paradox holds together unconditioned meaning and conditioned reality.<sup>57</sup> Not only does Tillich see this paradoxical form in experiences of faith, especially as expressed by mystics and prophets, but he also argues for holding the paradox as a criterion for a theological system. Faith includes the experience of the unconditional by a finite, conditioned person, but one can never hold the unconditional or attach unconditional to any conditioned thing or person. Tillich states that the degree to which a theological system includes the absolute paradox as a "living element" that animates and sustains the whole, the system will have greater certainty of faith. Of course, no system can be fully certain.<sup>58</sup> Tillich argues that both individuals and the church hold doubt as an element of the spiritual life and make the absolute paradox effective, by not absolutizing any finite element of life.<sup>59</sup> Connecting this critical principle to logic, Tillich argues that "there is an anti-logical element immanent in the logical," giving a paradoxical root to logic itself.<sup>60</sup> To put in the terms of continental discussions of his time, the paradoxical unity of identity and difference grounds knowledge. That Tillich tries to keep this guardian principle is clear in writings on knowledge ("Kairos und Logos" of 1926), on faith (*Dynamics of Faith* and *The Courage to Be*), and in his discussion of encounter with the world religions (*Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions* and "The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian"). In relation to the dualism of absolutism and relativism, the key element is holding together the Yes of the Absolute (essential to the

possibility of religious experience at all) with the No (that nothing finite or conditioned is Absolute). In *Dynamics of Faith*, he states the criterion of the truth of faith as including “an element of self-negation”: “That symbol is most adequate which expresses not only the ultimate but also its own lack of ultimacy.”<sup>61</sup>

This generic way of stating the criterion allows for application outside of Christianity, as Tillich did in some writings on politics and ethics. I am arguing here that we can use the critical principle to criticize absolutisms wherever one finds them. Moreover, one can also use Tillich’s connection between idolatry and injustice to show the injustices that occur when finite truths or people are absolutized. These two criteria can work in other world religions, at least for liberal thinkers of those traditions. Liberal participants in interreligious dialogue generally agree on the limits of human experience and human language to understand or to express absolute meaning or reality. That the critical principle against idolatry links to injustice might take more discussion, but I believe many would acknowledge the connection and readily apply it to fundamentalist movements and actions with which they deal in their own traditions.

Taylor calls “the conflict of competing absolutisms” the source of present day dangers in our world, in part because one cannot mediate the opposition of one absolutism against another.<sup>62</sup> At the root of these conflicts is “the logic of either/or that is constitutive of all dualisms.” Taylor argues that this logic “becomes not only destructive but self-destructive: by defending self through the negation of the other, one destroys the other without whom one cannot be oneself.”<sup>63</sup> Here, the issue is not only the injustice to the other but also the final injustice to oneself.

Taylor, like Tillich, connects the conflict of absolutisms to the relation of identity and difference and sees the interplay of those in the Infinite or the ongoing emergent process. “The true Infinite is neither dualistic nor monistic but is the creative interplay in which identity and difference are codependent and co-evolve.”<sup>64</sup> While I would argue that both Tillich and Taylor would see this relationship of identity and difference as dynamic, clearly Taylor’s description of it shows this dynamic quality much more clearly. For Tillich, the tension in the absolute paradox is dynamic, as one lives on the boundary of that unity of the Unconditional and the conditioned. Taylor’s emphasis on the two codependent rhythms

of finitizing the infinite and infinitizing the finite, underscores the never-ending movement of the Infinite.<sup>65</sup> In language somewhat reminiscent of Tillich’s use of boundary, Taylor speaks of living “along the unfigurative edge,” where all is “in play,” with every stabilizing structure disrupted and disfigured but also with ongoing construction and figuring.<sup>66</sup>

On the practical level, Taylor argues that, “absolutism must give way to relationalism.”<sup>67</sup> Put differently, “relativity is absolute” and the absolute is relative.<sup>68</sup> In support of a relational approach and countering either/or logic, Taylor offers four governing principles for ethics and for reframing the issues in our culture: (1) “Embrace complexity,” (2) “Promote cooperation as much as competition,” (3) “Accept volatility,” and (4) “Cultivate uncertainty.”<sup>69</sup> Taylor calls on people to recognize the interdependence in our world, the network of networks that provide order and meaning in life but also must adapt to change.

While Taylor does not address world religions, his ideas of relationalism, interconnections, and codependence would find appreciation in several eastern traditions, including Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism. With respect to the monotheistic traditions of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, at least some theologies that take changes in nature and development in history seriously could work with Taylor’s approach.

Berger and Zijderfeld also try to work out a system that allows for doubt and yet absolutes, for a middle position between relativism and absolutism. With much critique of absolutists or fundamentalists, both religious and secular, Berger and Zijderfeld explicitly agree with Tillich that doubt is “an intrinsic part of faith.”<sup>70</sup> In fact, they argue that doubt is the middle ground between belief and unbelief, between knowledge and ignorance.<sup>71</sup> Doubt prevents one from turning to an “ism” on either side, as all “isms” stifle doubt. They encourage living with “sincere and consistent doubt,” searching for “falsifications” as a way to come closer to “a resemblance of truth.”<sup>72</sup> They suggest that such doubt grounds both tolerance and democracy.<sup>73</sup> Like Taylor, they offer principles that will help individuals and communities develop and maintain a middle position between relativism and fundamentalism. These principles are: (1) differentiating between the core of a view and marginal elements; (2) being open to applying modern historical scholarship to one’s religious tradition; (3) rejecting the “isms,” both of cynical relativism and closed fundamentalism; (4) ac-

cepting doubt as positive in a faith community; (5) not defining people with different world views as enemies; (6) developing and maintaining a liberal democratic state and other institutions that offer freedom of views and civil debate; and (7) seeing choice as morally desirable.<sup>74</sup> Recognizing that doubt has limits, especially in some moral situations, which may require immediate action to save a life, they still see doubt as helpful in most moral decisions and in most areas of knowledge.

Pulling these approaches together, one sees an ongoing process of negation and affirmation, of critique but also openness to others and to diverse ideas and practices. All recognize the human need for meaning and order, for truth, but they want people to address that need, not by grabbing at an easy certainty, an “ism,” but through an ongoing process of doubt and critique, coupled with meaningful affirmations and actions that are important but never absolutized. None of the writers expects absolutists of whatever stripe to follow their proposals, as they write not for the fundamentalists but for more open-minded people. They write to encourage moderates to express their doubts, to criticize the “isms” around them, to encourage this in both communities of faith and in secular groups. They want people to recognize the complexity and interconnections of our global world in order to foster respect and cooperation rather than destructive oppositions.

While all ground their approaches in some dimensions of Christianity and more specifically the Protestant tradition of Luther, their principles can be taken up by open-minded people of diverse faiths. Not only are the principles stated in relatively universal terms but also thinkers in diverse traditions can point to similar positions in their own faiths. We need voices from many faith traditions to address and critique religious and cultural dimensions of fundamentalisms. It is important that they do not simply supply the other side of a dualism but work to develop positions that respect religious experience, are open to new possibilities, critique absolutisms, and engage in self-critique.

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Tillich, “On the Idea of a Theology of Culture,” *What Is Religion?* ed. James Luther Adams (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 162, 164, 178. Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, ed. Robert C. Kimball (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 6-9, 41-42.

<sup>2</sup> Tillich, “On the Idea of a Theology of Culture,” 178.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>9</sup> Tillich uses this term in his 1919 “Rechtfertigung und Zweifel,” *Religion, Kultur, Gesellschaft: Unveröffentlichte Texte aus der Deutschen Zeit (1908-1933)*, edited by Erdmann Sturm (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1999), 127-230 (includes both the 1919 and 1924 essays). Robert Scharlemann translated the 1919 essay into English (unpublished).

<sup>10</sup> Tillich, “On the Idea of a Theology of Culture,” 168-181 and Paul Tillich, *The Religious Situation*, trans. H. Richard Niebuhr (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), originally published by Henry Holt and company, Inc., 1932 and originally as *Die religiöse Lage der Gegenwart* (1926). Also available in *Gesammelte Werke X:9-93 and Hauptwerke 5:27-97*.

<sup>11</sup> Mark C. Taylor, *After God* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 12.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 28-33.

<sup>13</sup> Taylor, 347.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 346.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 347.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 345-346.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 345.

<sup>19</sup> Peter L. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative: Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation* (London: Collins, 1980), 136. Peter L. Berger, “Introduction: Between Relativism and Fundamentalism” and “A Lutheran Approach,” *Between Relativism and Fundamentalism: Religious Resources for a Middle Position*, edited by Peter L. Berger (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 11-13, 152-163. He exemplifies his position in a brief essay offering a Lutheran Layman’s approach toward a middle position that finds helpful resources in several core Lutheran ideas, including faith alone, scripture alone, two realms, and a statement from the Augsburg Confession that allows diverse “ceremonies” in different places.

<sup>20</sup> Peter L. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative*, 189.

<sup>21</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol.1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), 3-5.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* New York: Harper \* Row, Publ., 1957), 12-13.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 12, 16, 109-110.

<sup>25</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1:4.

- <sup>26</sup> Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 12.
- <sup>27</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1:216-217.
- <sup>28</sup> Taylor, 258, 254.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 259, 264-265, 275
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 254, 255.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 255, 256-297.
- <sup>32</sup> Peter Berger and Anton Zijderfeld, *In Praise of Doubt: How to Have Convictions Without Becoming a Fanatic* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009), 86.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.
- <sup>35</sup> Donald Wildmon of the American Family Association in June, 1989 on the Serrano piece.
- <sup>36</sup> Obscenity charges were placed against seven of the Maplethorpe photographs in the 1990 trial in Cincinnati, Ohio. Also Senator Jesse Helms and others organized mail campaigns and political efforts in Congress that described these works as obscene, pornographic, and "perverted, deviant art." See discussion of this in Wendy Steiner, *The Scandal of Pleasure* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 23-24.
- <sup>37</sup> See the May 11, 1989 editorial in the *Arizona Republic* quoted by Steiner, *The Scandal of Pleasure*, 13, and Gustav Niebuhr's discussion of comments by the Roman Catholic Cardinal John O'Connor and Mayor Giuliani, *The New York Times*, October 3, 1999.
- <sup>38</sup> See Dan Frosch, "Provocative Image of Christ Sets Off a Debate Punctuated With a Crowbar," *Loveland Journal* (October 10, 2010).
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>40</sup> Steiner, 96.
- <sup>41</sup> See Hjörtur J. Guðmundsson, *The Brussels Journal*, January 22, 2006.
- <sup>42</sup> See discussion by Satish Jacob, "Water Fires Up Hindu Controversy," abcNews.com, May 26, 2006.
- <sup>43</sup> See www.BrightLightsFilm.com/28/water. (April 2000, Issue 28)
- <sup>44</sup> See Wendy Steiner, *The Scandal of Pleasure*, 33, 36-37, 60-61. Steiner critiques the literalism of fundamentalists from both the right and the left. Also see Ruthven, ch.3; Almond, Appleby, and Sivan, 96.
- <sup>45</sup> Tillich, "On the Idea of a Theology of Culture," 178.
- <sup>46</sup> Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 190.
- <sup>47</sup> Taylor, *After God*, 347.
- <sup>48</sup> Berger, "A Lutheran Approach," 156, 159.
- <sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.
- <sup>50</sup> Tillich, "On the Idea of a Theology of Culture," 169.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 171-172.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

- <sup>53</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1:83,85,88-89.
- <sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.
- <sup>55</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 249-268.
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 255,257,258, 264-265.
- <sup>57</sup> Paul Tillich, "Justification and Doubt," (1919), 24.
- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-29.
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.
- <sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.
- <sup>61</sup> Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 97.
- <sup>62</sup> Taylor, *After God*, xvii.
- <sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 346.
- <sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 347.
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 355.
- <sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 356.
- <sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 356-358.
- <sup>70</sup> Berger and Zijderfeld, *In Praise of Doubt*, 103.
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.
- <sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 112-113.
- <sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.
- <sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 116-119.

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# TILlich's THEOLOGY AND COGNITIVE SCIENCE: THE PROSPECTS FOR THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

SAMUEL M. POWELL

**Editor's Note:** *This paper was delivered at the annual meeting in Atlanta in 2010.*

## Introduction

It is well known that Paul Tillich had a high regard for psychology and incorporated it into his theology. He had, for example, a lengthy and active involvement in the New York Psychology Group.<sup>1</sup> It is also well known that he had a special love for depth psychology—the sort represented by Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and others.

Although it would be unfair to say that depth psychology is today discredited, it is true that it does not enjoy either the public confidence or the professional stature that it had in Tillich's day. It was legitimate for Tillich to make use of depth psychology, for in his day the only serious alternative was the Behaviorist school of psychology, whose interests and presuppositions were alien to Tillich's. However, the situation today differs from Tillich's. The number of basic psychological approaches has multiplied, scientific research into the brain and behavior has made importance advancements, and the theological community has developed increasingly sophisticated ways of relating to extra-theological disciplines.

The question, then, is this: what would a Tillichian approach to psychology look like today? I suggest there are good reasons to suppose that Tillich would be intrigued by evolutionary psychology, cognitive science and other overtly scientific modes of psychological study. In spite of their scientific character and lack of humanistic, therapeutic concerns, I believe that Tillichians today should be interested in incorporating their insights into theology just as Tillich incorporated the insights of depth psychology.

Evolutionary psychology can be characterized in the following ways:

1. It is an attempt to make psychology a rigorous science by bringing the subjects of mind and behavior into theoretical connection with biology and especially with the theory of evolution.
2. It argues that human cognition is an ensemble of many discrete functions of the brain that evolved at

the dawn of human history and in our primate ancestors. Such functions include kin recognition, cheater detection, predator detection, food recognition, and so on.

3. It is associated with cognitive science in its view of the mind, which it seems as a set of processes that receive informational inputs from the environment and produce behavioral outputs.

## Tillich and Freud

To see contemporary Tillichians might find a dialogue with evolutionary psychology helpful, let us ask what Tillich found attractive in depth psychology. To keep things simple, I will focus on Tillich's use of Freud, with only minor reference to Jung. I will also focus on psychoanalytic *theory* and its contribution to theology, omitting any consideration of psychoanalytic *therapy*. What follows are some of the most important points of attraction.

*First*, Tillich located Freud within a grand narrative of Western intellectual history. Within this history were two impulses: a rationalistic impulse (illustrated by Thomas Aquinas, Erasmus, and Descartes) and an irrationalist (Duns Scotus, Luther, and Pascal). The irrationalist tradition culminated, for Tillich, in 19<sup>th</sup> century existentialists such as Dostoevsky, with their focus on the will, the unconscious, and estrangement.<sup>2</sup> Tillich shared with this tradition a common vocabulary (alienation, authenticity, and so on) and a common suspicion of the rationalistic tradition.

Tillich believed that Freud had brought the intuitions of this tradition to clear idea and scientific precision: "All the things which in these men were ontological intuition or theological analysis now through Freud became methodological scientific words. Freud, in his discovery of the unconscious, rediscovered something that was known that was known long since, and had been used for many decades and even centuries to fight the victorious philosophy of consciousness."<sup>3</sup>

For Tillich, who regarded the dominance of philosophies of consciousness with alarm, Freud was important because he supported the belief that the most important aspect of human nature is not reason but the unconscious. Tillich's embrace of Freud was a function of his theological concern that an emphasis on consciousness went hand in hand with an emphasis on moralism in religion. Freud's psychology of the unconscious rendered such moralism untenable.

This brings us to a *second* point, which is that Tillich located modern Protestantism within this same grand narrative about rationalism and the irrational. Tillich was disappointed with Protestantism because, he averred, it was no longer a religion of redemption but was instead a religion of conventional morality. It no longer saw sin as a power and as estrangement but only as individual sins and unconventional behavior.<sup>4</sup> This was not Tillich's only critique of Protestantism, but it was the one to which he repeatedly returned. As indebted as he was to the heritage of liberal theology—the theology of Ritschl, Herrmann, Harnack, and Troeltsch—his understanding of religion, nourished by Romanticism and existentialism, was inevitably different from their Kantian-inspired connection between religion and moral *Persönlichkeit*.

As Tillich argued, “The first and most fundamental point [for theology today] is the rediscovery of the truth of the doctrine of man's predicament as professed by Augustine and the Reformers.”<sup>5</sup> Semi-Pelagianism “weakened the valuation both of the hidden power of sin and the unconditional power” of grace.<sup>6</sup> “Protestant theology had to rediscover its own tradition about what man is and about what healing powers are through the impact of the psychology of the unconscious.”<sup>7</sup>

In a theological context in which liberal optimism and moralism seemed triumphant, Tillich felt that Freud's elevation of the unconsciousness provided a needed critique of Protestant moralism:

But with the empirical rediscovery of the old philosophical concept of the unconscious, he broke through his own moralism...The rediscovery of the unconscious was the confirmation of the inability of autonomous morals to lead man to his fulfillment...Freud showed the ambiguity of goodness as well as of evil, and in doing so, he helped to undercut Protestant moralism. This perhaps was the most important existentialist contribution of psychoanalysis to the doctrine of man. Man is not what he believes himself to be in his conscious decisions.<sup>8</sup>

For Tillich, Freud's concept of the unconscious not only connected him to the irrationalist tradition, but also called into question the liberal picture of human beings as autonomous moral agents, possessing freedom. Freud's psychology, in alliance with existentialist philosophy, set forth a view of human nature both less flattering than the liberal picture and more in tune with historic Protestant convictions about sin:

Both existentialism and depth psychology are interested in the description of man's existential predicament...in contrast to man's essential nature...The focus in both...is man's estranged existence...The term ‘therapeutic psychology’ shows clearly that here something that contradicts the norm, [something] that must be healed, is expressed.<sup>9</sup>

Accordingly, Tillich criticized Jung and others who, he believed, had lost Freud's sense of existential estrangement, and “went more to an essentialist and optimistic view of man.”<sup>10</sup> They “have described the human situation as correctible and amendable, as a weakness only...In all these representatives of contemporary depth psychology I miss the feeling for the irrational element that we have in Freud.”<sup>11</sup>

At the same time, Tillich was not an uncritical reader of Freud. In particular, he felt that Freud was not able and willing to distinguish between man's essential and his existential nature...He is very consistent in his negative judgments about man as existentially distorted. If you see man only from the point of view of existence and not from the points of view of essence, only from the point of view of estrangement and not from the point of view of essential goodness, then this consequence is unavoidable.<sup>12</sup>

Freud, in other words, had performed an important and necessary service to theology by supporting a robust idea of sin and laying a psychological basis for rejecting moralism, rationalism, and free will. He had presented a scientific analysis of humankind's existential condition. However, Freud, like Existentialists generally, mistook an account of our existential situation for an account of human nature as such. He had overlooked the essential elements of human nature. That is why, beyond psychotherapy, divine salvation is required:

Neither Freudianism nor any purely existentialist consideration can heal these fundamental presuppositions [i.e., the existential presuppositions of every disease]...The existential structures cannot be healed by the most refined techniques. They are objects of salvation. The analyst can be an instrument of salvation...But as analyst he cannot bring salvation by means of his medical methods.<sup>13</sup>

Besides this criticism, Tillich resisted reductionistic approaches. Writing about psychotherapy, he noted that “it makes two answers impossible: the neo-orthodox one and the humanistic one.” If the humanistic answer were true, the divine would sim-

ply be the religious function of the human spirit and “healing would be self-healing. But only something healthy can heal what is sick...[What is sick] can only receive healing powers from beyond itself.”<sup>14</sup>

In summary, Tillich forged an alliance with depth psychology for several reasons, including: (1) the fact that he felt an affinity to the larger existentialist tradition of which it was a part; (2) Freud’s emphasis on the unconscious, which supported Tillich’s revolt against the Protestantism of his day; and (3) the fact that Tillich found Freud’s psychology to be a fundamentally correct analysis of humanity’s existential condition.

### **Tillichian Theology and Evolutionary Psychology**

What, then, might Tillich find attractive about evolutionary psychology and related disciplines? Why should Tillichians pay attention to it? There are several reasons.

#### *Its Scientific Character*

The first reason is because of its scientific character. One of the things that distinguished Tillich was his willingness to dialogue with disciplines outside theology. Naturally, there were limits to this willingness—Tillich was more interested in some fields than in others—but to practice theology in the Tillichian spirit is to seek out dialog partners. In our situation today, this inevitably means a dialog with the sciences, at least in so far as science contributes to an analysis of humankind’s existential situation.<sup>15</sup>

This observation raises the question of whether evolutionary psychology actually does provide insight into humanity’s existential situation. It certainly does seek to describe concrete human phenomena such as thought and behavior. However, it does so without express association with existentialist (or any other) philosophy. For that reason, it will look quite foreign to a Tillichian looking for a contemporary equivalent to depth psychology. Evolutionary psychology cannot, therefore, be for a contemporary Tillichian everything that depth psychology was for Tillich. Moreover, with the plurality of approaches in contemporary psychology, there can be no possibility of evolutionary psychology constituting a complete psychological paradigm and theology’s sole dialog partner.

At the same time, it is important to remember that Tillich use of depth psychology was both selective and eclectic.<sup>16</sup> Many aspects of Freud’s theories

(such as the theory of dreams) played no role in Tillich’s thought. On the contrary, Tillich carefully made use of just those elements of Freud’s theory that agreed with Tillich existential commitments. So, although evolutionary psychology seems quite remote from existentialist concerns, it could be that so far no one has arisen to point those concerns out.

Does evolutionary psychology reveal anything about our existential situation? Yes, and much more than does Freud’s psychology. What were Freud’s contributions to existential analysis? (1) Discovery of the unconscious, which helped undercut Protestant moralistic views of salvation; (2) the rediscovery of sin and its interpretation as estrangement.<sup>17</sup> These are important, but they surely do not provide an exhaustive analysis.

Evolutionary psychology helps us see more concretely than ever the ambiguous nature of human morality, which evolutionary psychology views as the result of evolutionary pressures and which, in many respects is ill adapted to modern life. To give another example, it connects us to our evolutionary primate ancestors with far greater empirical depth and precision than Freud’s conjectures in *Totem and Taboo*, thus making our sense of freedom and transcendence more puzzling than ever.

The contemporary Tillichian, therefore, will gladly engage evolutionary psychology as a dialog partner, not least because of its scientific character.<sup>18</sup> Although claims that evolutionary psychology will finally give to psychology the scientific character that it has so long sought are, like all such claims, premature, exaggerated, and unnecessary, evolutionary psychology does show promise of providing a firm and extensive empirical basis for understanding human nature. In this, it represents a distinct advance on depth psychology.

#### *Its Monistic Commitments*

However, more is required of evolutionary psychology than its scientific character; accepting the results of a science is not the same as using those results to practice theology. What also recommends evolutionary psychology is the way in which it understands the mind.

The premise of evolutionary psychology is that the mind is an ensemble of evolved functions, and thus the result of evolutionary pressures. The human organism, interacting with a dynamic environment, long ago evolved a set of basic cognitive functions that process information from the environment. It is

those functions that condition human thought and behavior today.

It is clear from this premise that evolutionary psychology views mind in thoroughly monistic terms. Tillichians will find this view attractive (as long as it does not imply a reductionistic view of God). This is because Tillich's anthropology is monistic. Spirit is the actualization of life; it is not a spiritual substance:

Spirit does not stand in contrast to body. Life as spirit transcends the duality of body and mind...Life as spirit is the life of the soul, which includes mind and body, but not as realities alongside the soul. Spirit is not a 'part,' nor is it a special function. It is the all-embracing function in which all elements of the structure of being participate. Life as spirit can be found by man only in man, for only in him is the structure of being completely realized.<sup>19</sup>

Evolutionary psychology is one of the most thoroughgoing scientific expressions of anthropological monism. Through its link with neuroscience and cognitive science, it argues that mind is an ensemble of cognitive functions that have evolved in just the way in which all biological properties have evolved. Moreover, in comparison with traditional materialistic views of mind, evolutionary psychology has a detailed model of the mind that gains empirical content from its link to neuroscience and theoretical robustness from its link with cognitive science. It is not just philosophical materialism with scientific jargon. On the contrary, it has a powerful research agenda, capable of generating empirical data and spinning off fruitful sub-theories.

Nevertheless, can this approach leave room for a Tillichian conception of spirit? Is not its detailed explanation of humanity's evolved functions so reductionistic as to eliminate any consideration of spirit? Although the task is daunting, it is not necessarily more daunting than the task of merging Tillich's concept of spirit with Freud's view of the self. Freud was, in his own way, as monistic and materialistic as are evolutionary psychologists. No one who began with Freud's psychology would end up with Tillich's view of the spirit.

Yet, it is not required that the theologian *derive* the idea of spirit from an empirical science. A Tillichian view of spirit is not a deduction from psychological science, whether Freudian or evolutionary. A Tillichian view of spirit is instead an addition to psychology based on ontological analysis.

According to John Dourley, Tillich's method

consisted in presenting "a cogent ontological description of humanity's experience of the ambivalence of divine life in terms of psychological experience and language, and, in so doing, elevat[ing] the psychological to the domains of the ontological and religious."<sup>20</sup> As Tillich himself admits, Freud's existential analysis had to be supplemented with a philosophical description of humanity's essential nature.

Tillich understood that theology makes use not only of empirical disciplines but also of ontology. The use of ontology places the results of psychology in an appropriate framework and mediates them to theology. Tillich found it relatively easy to use depth psychology since it was at home, to some extent, in the existentialist tradition that Tillich loved. It had already received, so to speak, an ontological mediation. Evolutionary psychology seems initially to offer little to the Tillichian because, in its attempt to be scientific and lacking a humanistic background, it has received little philosophical mediation (except in so far as modern science counts as an ontology). Nonetheless, the important thing is not whether a psychology has connections with any particular philosophical tradition, but instead whether it truly discloses elements of humankind's existential situation that can be mediated to theology via ontology.

Evolutionary psychology can be a suitable dialogue partner for theological anthropology as long as it can be joined without contradiction to an ontology of spirit. It does not have to imply the idea of spirit but need only be capable of being interpreted within an ontology of spirit.

Why then prefer evolutionary psychology to Freudian psychology? Not only because of its superior scientific—empirical and theoretical—character, but also because it is perhaps the most consistent and empirically informed statement of monism.

### *Its View of the Unconscious*

Tillich valued depth psychology because it had given powerful theoretical and therapeutic content to the idea of the unconscious. It thereby offered a severe critique of rationalistic and moralistic views of human nature.

If this critique is important to Tillichians, they ought to receive evolutionary psychology with enthusiasm. Evolutionary psychology, in conjunction with neuroscience, posits of view of mind in which rational decisions and ideas appear, not so much the cause of action, as the result of complex neural

events. Conscious thought, in other words, is not the most salient fact in human action and morality. Most salient are the cognitive capacities, linked to specific regions of the brain, which enable us to perform many everyday moral judgments and calculations unconsciously and almost instantaneously.

What Tillich found most important in Freud's view of the unconscious was two things: first, "confirmation of the inability of autonomous morals to lead man to his fulfillment...Freud showed the ambiguity of goodness as well as of evil, and in doing so, he helped to undercut Protestant moralism. This perhaps was the most important existentialist contribution of psychoanalysis to the doctrine of man. Man is not what he believes himself to be in his conscious decisions."<sup>21</sup> Second, "To the degree in which the unconscious motivations were discovered, even in our fully conscious acts, the appeal to 'free will' became impossible. The question now had to be: How can unconscious motivations be changed? And the answer was: By forces which enter the unconscious even if the entering door is consciousness."<sup>22</sup>

The concept of the unconscious, then, performed two services: (1) it critiqued an ensemble of concepts (free will, conventional morality, rationality, consciousness) which constituted a decadent anthropology; and (2) it identified the ontological location of the divine Spirit's work on the human person. The view of evolutionary psychology clearly performs the first of these services. Anyone who takes the anthropology implicit in evolutionary psychology must revise the idea of human agency, thought, and morality. But can it perform the second function? Can it identify the place of estrangement and sin? This is, perhaps, the most problematic aspect of evolutionary psychology for a Tillichian.

The unconscious was important ultimately for Tillich because it was the field in which salvation and healing take place:

The basic problem in the relation of religion and health is the 'intermediate area' [between body understood as mechanism and soul understood as consciousness], the psychic, including the unconscious, the 'drives,'—that which is open to magic or psychotherapy. The whole doctrine of man is centered in this problem.<sup>23</sup>

For Tillich, existential estrangement is found concretely to the extent that we are not centered selves. In other words, whereas our essential nature is to be centered selves, existentially we are a mass of drives that conflict. Tillich commented on the idea of disturbance in the 'whole' [person] itself. This presup-

poses that the 'whole' is a harmony of contrasting forces. This idea was first expressed in connection with health, bodily and psychic, by the Pythagorean Alkmaion...[and was later used by Hippocrates and Galen] who considered disease as a disturbance of the harmonious constitution of the body based on the balance of *dynameis* or juices...This tradition continued in Paracelsus, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century psychologists, and in Schelling...The present day dynamic psychology of the unconscious belongs clearly to this line of thought, from which it borrows...the basic idea of illness as the disturbance of a dynamic balance by conflicting drives.<sup>24</sup>

This view of the self reflects the influence of Friedrich Schelling, for whom being consists of tensed opposites. The self, for Tillich, is essentially "a harmony of contrasting forces." These forces inhabit (or constitute) the "intermediate area" between body and soul—the unconscious. Illness in this middle area occurs when, under the conditions of existence, the contrasting forces become conflicting. Salvation is the restoration of balance, the overcoming of conflict. (Of course, salvation shares in the ambiguity of all life and is only provisional and fragmentary.)

Freud's psychology lent itself to an anthropology based on conflicting forces. Does evolutionary psychology? In at least one important respect, evolutionary psychology is analogous to Freud's theory. For Freud, one of the fundamental conflicts within the person is between the demands of the *id* and those of the *super-ego*. Each creates its own sort of anxiety. The task of the ego is to find ways of reducing these two sorts of anxiety in healthy ways, such as sublimation. Evolutionary psychologists have no patience for Freud's language, but they are concerned about the central insight of Freud's theory, namely that there is a conflict between our instinctive desires and the demands of morality.

If we abstract from Freud's particular conceptuality of *id* and *super-ego*, we can say with fairness that evolutionary psychology likewise locates a conflict between the rather "hard-wired" cognitive and behavioral processes given to us by evolution and the moral demands of human life. On one hand, there are powerful evolutionary incentives to cooperate with and care for those who are genetically in close relationship to us. On the other hand, most people feel the moral force of injunctions to love the neighbor, regardless of genetic connection. The tendencies of evolutionarily guided sexual behavior likewise conflicts with the moral and legal precepts

of most societies.

Perhaps, then, what is called for is a more precise conception of morality that locates the fundamental place of conflict, not in the person, but in the interaction between the evolved brain and our moral sense. Of course, our moral sense is not disembodied; it is a product of the brain. Perhaps the point is that historical communities have the capacity to create moral insight and sensitivity that transcends evolved human nature. If so, then maybe spirit is a function of human communities interacting with the evolved brain. To speak of spirit, then, would be to speak of a harmony between evolution and morality.

### Concluding Questions

My purpose in this essay has been to explore the possibility of a Tillich-inspired engagement between theology and evolutionary psychology. Necessarily, I have been overly brief and adumbrative. Any future development of this engagement would need to consider the following questions:

- Can the idea of the centered self, which is so important for Tillich's concept of freedom and spirit, be sustained if we take evolutionary psychology seriously?
- Is evolutionary psychology compatible with a Tillichian ontology?
- What are the points of tension between Tillich's thought and evolutionary psychology? Just as psychology can heal neurotic anxiety but not existential anxiety, what are the limits of evolutionary psychology—what can only grace do?
- What is the therapeutic and pastoral contribution of evolutionary psychology and ancillary psychological disciplines? How do they describe or address existential concerns?

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<sup>1</sup> See Allison Stokes, *Ministry after Freud*. New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1985. Chapter 6, pp. 109-141 discusses the New York Psychology Group. See also: Terry D. Cooper, *Paul Tillich and Psychology: Historic and Contemporary Explorations in Theology, Psychotherapy, and Ethics*, Mercer Tillich Studies. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2006, chapters 4-5.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Tillich, "Psychoanalysis, Existentialism, and Theology," in *The Meaning of Health: Essays in Existentialism, Psychoanalysis, and Religion*, ed. Perry LeFevre, 131-39 (Chicago: Exploration Press, 1984), 133.

<sup>3</sup> "Psychoanalysis, Existentialism, and Theology," 134.

<sup>4</sup> "Psychoanalysis, Existentialism, and Theology,"

138.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Tillich, "The Impact of Pastoral Psychology on Theological Thought," in *The Meaning of Health: Essays in Existentialism, Psychoanalysis, and Religion*, ed. Perry LeFevre, 144-50 (Chicago: Exploration Press, 1984), 144.

<sup>6</sup> "The Impact of Pastoral Psychology on Theological Thought," 145.

<sup>7</sup> "The Impact of Pastoral Psychology on Theological Thought," 145.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Tillich, "Existentialism and Psychotherapy," in *The Meaning of Health: Essays in Existentialism, Psychoanalysis, and Religion*, ed. Perry LeFevre, 151-64 (Chicago: Exploration Press, 1984), 158-159.

<sup>9</sup> "Psychoanalysis, Existentialism, and Theology," 134.

<sup>10</sup> "Psychoanalysis, Existentialism, and Theology," 134.

<sup>11</sup> "Psychoanalysis, Existentialism, and Theology," 137.

<sup>12</sup> "Psychoanalysis, Existentialism, and Theology," 135.

<sup>13</sup> "Psychoanalysis, Existentialism, and Theology," 137. Elsewhere ("Existentialism and Psychotherapy," 160-162) Tillich discussed the difference between neurotic anxiety, which is amenable to psychotherapy, and existential anxiety, which is not.

<sup>14</sup> "The Impact of Pastoral Psychology on Theological Thought," 149.

<sup>15</sup> Orville S. Walters comments on Tillich's overly generous estimation of depth psychology's scientific character: "Tillich depreciated the importance of conscious activity and overestimated the scientific status of psychoanalysis.... The repeated references to scientific discovery imply an empirical foundation. Tillich treats the unconscious as an existent explanatory entity rather than as a descriptive term denoting mental material that is more or less inaccessible." "Psychodynamics in Tillich's Theology," *Journal of Religion and Health* 12/4 (1973): 346. This quotation points to Tillich's validation of scientific criteria, even if he misapplied them in this case.

<sup>16</sup> "Tillich does not consistently follow any one model of personality, but uses terms from both Freud and Jung, although the two systems are incompatible," Orville S. Walters, "Psychodynamics in Tillich's Theology," *Journal of Religion and Health* 12/4 (1973): 343.

<sup>17</sup> "Psychoanalysis, Existentialism, and Theology," 138.

<sup>18</sup> Admittedly, Tillich's conception of science was probably more in tune with the Germanic tradition than with the empirical tradition and its conception of science. Moreover, the dialog may well be one-sided, with the

theologian learning from the psychologist but with little motivation for the psychologist to listen to the theologian. But was it really much different in Tillich's day? Although Tillich shared the vocabulary of estrangement with Erich Fromm, was Fromm's psychology materially affected by Tillich's theology?

<sup>19</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology: Three Volumes in One* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 1:250.

<sup>20</sup> John Dourley, "Tillich in Dialogue with Psychology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Paul Tillich*, ed.

Russell Re Manning (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 241.

<sup>21</sup> "Existentialism and Psychotherapy," 159.

<sup>22</sup> "The Impact of Pastoral Psychology on Theological Thought," 145.

<sup>23</sup> Paul Tillich, "The Relationship of Religion and Health: Historical Considerations and Theoretical Questions," *The Review of Religion* 10:4 (Ma7 1946):376.

<sup>24</sup> "The Relationship of Religion and Health: Historical Considerations and Theoretical Questions," 371-372.

### TILlich AT THE TIP OF THE SPEAR

JEFFREY MOORE

**Editor's Note:** *This paper was delivered at the annual meeting in Atlanta in 2010.*

Humanity (and human beings) is (are) "estranged from the ground of [their] being, from other beings and from [themselves]."<sup>1</sup> Love, as the "striving for the reunion of the separated," is able to overcome this estrangement.<sup>2</sup> Yet, this estrangement is only ever overcome in "fragmentary and ambiguous" ways.<sup>3</sup> By locating our lives within love, we place ourselves on the boundary as we experience estrangement, its being overcome, and its remaining lingering effect.

As Tillich says, "The human boundary-situation is encountered when human possibility reaches its limit, when human existence is confronted by an ultimate threat."<sup>4</sup> During the Cold War, the notion and policy of mutually assured destruction (MAD) suggested that war could have been and was an ultimate threat. Although the Cold War has ended, war remains a reminder of the human boundary-situation, even when it is only a penultimate threat.

Tillich offers love as way to develop an ethic that is both eternal and able to experience change. I want to explore this ethical theory "at the tip of the spear," where warrior confronts warrior. It is at the tip of the spear that we experience as is that this letter to overcome it with any permanence. What I hope to show is how Tillich's thought, how thinking with Tillich and perhaps beyond Tillich (beyond in the sense of having gone through), will allow us to envision some fragmentary ways in which we might overcome our estrangement even at the moments we

realize it most concretely—in armed conflict for instance.

Although Tillich's ethical thought does not explicitly deal with "combat ethics," it, like the rest of his thought, was forged and recast through the experience of military chaplaincy.<sup>5</sup> As a chaplain for the German Army in World War I, Tillich lived, thought, and ministered on the front where he "became a grave-digger as well as a pastor."<sup>6</sup> These experiences and the thought that they informed make Tillich an ideal dialogue partner as we seek to think ethics "at the tip of the spear."

### Ethics

The ethical dilemma for Tillich lies in the tension between absolutism and relativism. Tillich's solution is to overcome this dichotomy by choosing both as opposed to either. "There must be something immovable in the ethical principle, the criterion and standard of all ethical change. And there must be a power of change within the ethical principle itself; and both must be united."<sup>7</sup> What he finds that is able to be both eternal and realized in finite ways is love. "Love alone can transform itself according to the concrete demands of every individual and social situation without losing its eternity and dignity and unconditional validity."<sup>8</sup>

In *Love, Power and Justice*, Tillich seeks to understand the relationship between these three primal realities through ontology. He argues that, "the problems of love, power, and justice categorically demand an ontological foundation and a theological view in order to be saved from the vague talk, idealism, and cynicism with which they are usually treated. Man cannot solve any of his great problems if he does not see them in light of his own being and of being-itself."<sup>9</sup>

Even as Tillich seeks to ground solutions to the problem of love ontologically, he finds himself pushing toward a pre-ontological solution.<sup>10</sup> “Metaphysically speaking,” he tells us, love “is as old as being itself.” He even goes so far as to say that love was a “god” before it “became a rational [quality] of being.”<sup>11</sup> There can be “no definition of love...because there is no higher principle by which it could be defined.”<sup>12</sup>

Heidegger tells us that the uniqueness and greatness of a thinker is to be found in the inexhaustible and “unthought” within his or her thought.<sup>13</sup> What remains unthought in Tillich is this idea of love as the pre-ontological ground.<sup>14</sup> In order to mine the depths of this unthought in Tillich, we shall engage his thinking along two different trajectories.

#### *The experiential roots of morality in the person-to-person encounter*

Tillich’s ethical thought is significantly influenced by the thinking of Martin Buber’s *I and Thou*.<sup>15</sup> Buber’s mystical thinking locates the emergence of the individual in the direct encounter of another subject. Every time that immediate experience is abandoned and subject is transformed into an object (Thou into It, to use Buber’s language) this encounter is lost. Objects, according to Buber, are able to be surveyed, coordinated, ordered, and ultimately understood. The confrontation between two subjects (I and Thou) avoids being understood; it comes in the way of a pure confrontation. As soon as we seek to understand and classify the other, we have objectified him or her. We have failed to encounter the other as a radical subject. Tillich describes Buber’s articulation here as the “experiential root of morality.”<sup>16</sup>

Following the work of Lévinas, Zygmunt Bauman articulates the roots of morality in the willingness to let the other make demands upon us. For the ability-to-be-commanded to be moral, our response must be more than compulsory. Morality exists when we are free to ignore or disregard the command and yet obey it. Morality transcends being when “...I am willing to listen to the command before the command has been spoken, and to follow the command before I know what it commands me to do.”<sup>17</sup>

What this means for Bauman is that “morality is before ontology; for is before with.”<sup>18</sup> Acknowledging the ontological impossibility of placing something “before being,” Bauman still proceeds to state that, “Ethically, morality is before being.”<sup>19</sup> From the

ontological perspective, morality is not “inevitable” or “determined” in any sense.<sup>20</sup> “Morality is the *absolute beginning*.”<sup>21</sup>

It is at this point that Bauman helps us move into Tillich’s unthought. Bauman tells us that, “morality is endemically and irredeemably *non-rational*.”<sup>22</sup> This is the indefinable love that serves as the meaning of ethics. It transcends all concrete realizations in indefinable infinity, and it is simultaneously embodied in “the forms and structures in which life is possible.”<sup>23</sup> This tension between love’s infinite consistency and particular realization are what constitute a morality that is filled with a “gnawing sense of unfulfilledness.”<sup>24</sup> Because there is always “more of love” that can be realized, the “moral self is always haunted by the suspicion that it is not moral enough.”<sup>25</sup>

The first way in which we have engaged the unthought in Tillich was through Bauman’s articulation of morality as pre-ontological. Bauman’s language of the willingness to let the command come to us and command us before we even know what will be commanded points us in a second direction (second more in the sense of following than in the sense of taking a different way, or of taking different steps along the same path) that helps us understand the pre-ontological dimension of morality. This has been articulated in Heidegger and subsequently in Marion and Caputo in the language of the call.

#### *Call*

The notion of the call continues to think out the unthought in Tillich.<sup>26</sup> It moves us into that pre-ontological space. As Marion has articulated, “Before Being has claimed, the call as pure call claims.”<sup>27</sup> Or, as Caputo has suggested, the event of the call is beyond being.<sup>28</sup>

In the second chapter of the second section of *Being and Time*, Heidegger takes up Dasein’s attestation of an authentic potentiality-for-being, and resoluteness (*Die daseinsmäßige Bezeugung eines eigentlichen Seinkönnens und die Entschlossenheit*). Heidegger argues that Dasein gets carried along with the nobody and finds authenticity by bringing “itself back from the ‘they.’”<sup>29</sup> Dasein finds itself. Dasein is brought back to itself by the call of conscience:

If we analyze conscience more penetratingly, it is revealed as a call. Calling is a mode of discourse. The call of conscience has the character of an appeal to Dasein by calling it to its ownmost potentiality-for-Being-its-Self; and this is

done by way of summoning to its ownmost Being-guilty.<sup>30</sup>

Heidegger tells us that the “call is from afar unto afar.” (Gerufen wird aus der Ferne in die Ferne.)<sup>31</sup> Heidegger tells us that the call of conscience comes in the mode of keeping silent and that the summons comes without calling for anything. Furthermore, Heidegger tells us that the call “does not require us to search gropingly for him to whom it appeals.”<sup>32</sup> This is because “*Der Rufer des Rufes*” (that which calls the call) “simply holds itself aloof from any way of becoming well-known.”<sup>33</sup> Heidegger will go on to say that “*Das Dasein ruft im Gewissen sich selbst.*”<sup>34</sup> Yet this location of the call in Dasein’s self does not violate Heidegger’s position that being drawn into being considered and talked about goes against the kind of Being of the caller.

Indeed the call is precisely something which we ourselves have neither planned nor prepared for nor voluntarily performed, nor have we ever done so. ‘It’ calls, against our expectations and even against our will. On the other hand, the call undoubtedly does not come from someone else who is with me in the world. The call comes from me and yet from *beyond* me and *over* me.<sup>35</sup>

In words that foreshadow Caputo’s weak theology, Tillich rethinks the nature of the call with the locution “being grasped.” Although the idea is repeated within his thought under the idea of the *kairos* and the tension between the transcendent and imminent in the kingdom of God, it is perhaps most clearly found near the conclusion to *The Courage to Be*.

Absolute faith, or the state of being grasped by the God beyond God, is not a state which appears beside other states of the mind. It never is something separated and definite, an event which could be isolated and described. It is always a movement in, with, and under other states of mind. It is the situation on the boundary of man’s possibilities. It is the boundary...It is not a place where one can live, it is without the safety of words and concepts, it is without a name, a church, a cult, a theology. But it is moving in the depth of all of them.<sup>36</sup>

When Caputo tells us that the “hiddenness of the source is actually constitutive of the call, part of its positive phenomenal makeup, a positive function of its weak force, and a permanent feature of our anarchic and weakened theological condition,” we should hear Heidegger behind his thinking saying that *Der Rufer des Rufes* holds itself (him-

self/herself) aloof from any way of becoming known. We should hear Tillich talking of being grasped by the God beyond God. With the pure form of the call, we are again returned to that pre-ontological space. In Marion’s words,

...I recognized myself as *inetloqué* well *before* having consciousness or knowledge not only of my eventual subjectivity, but especially of what leaves me *interloqué*. The imprecision, the indecision, and indeed the confusion of the claiming instance attests much rather that in the beginning is found the pure form of the call, as such...Without knowing either by whom or by what, I know myself from the beginning already *inerloqué*.<sup>37</sup>

We can think of being for before we are because we are always already *interloqué*. It is in this sense that we are morally grounded and constituted. For Tillich, the tension between this absolute call and our relative, finite, and temporal responses to it are summed up in the notion of love, which is however indefinable.<sup>38</sup> It is *Der Rufer das Rufes*.

The time and space of this paper do not allow us the liberty to further examine the unthought in Tillich. Having briefly sketched the ways in which love grounds ethics in a preontological space-time, we move into the space-time of the warrior and look at ways in which love is realized within the historical moments of combat.

Does this theory of morality allow for truth to be determined along pragmatic lines? In order to answer that question, we return with Tillich to the front, to the tip of the spear. Can we apply this non-rational (pre-rational/ pre-ontological) notion of morality to warriors in the “thick of the fight?”

## War

As Walzer points out, “the world of war is not a fully comprehensible, let alone a morally satisfactory place.”<sup>39</sup> Our desires and attempts to understand and make it more satisfactory are continually thwarted. As Baumann points out, we cannot defeat ambivalence. We can only “learn to live with it.”<sup>40</sup>

## Calling

Dick Couch argues that being a warrior is not something one turns on and off. It is an identity that pervades one’s life. They “follow a warrior ethos” both “in combat” and “off duty and in garrison.”<sup>41</sup> Those who live this way “find virtue and nobility in their *calling*.”<sup>42</sup>

The men and women of the United States Military are an all-volunteer, or as Martin Cook suggests, an all-recruited military force. Those who serve represent less than one percent of the larger population and are “unrepresentative of” and “deeply alienated from” the “society [they] serve.”<sup>43</sup> Brennan identifies the source of this alienation in the militaries hermetic nature, which seals “it off from the large, inchoate civilian society, and in this resides at once its difference, its obligation, its sense of isolation, and its honor.”<sup>44</sup> This separation and difference simultaneously necessitates and generates the call.

The modern member of the military is one who has answered a call for which the caller remains hidden by the sheer multiplicity of possible callers. They are called by their own conscience, their own desire for a better life. They are called by recruiting campaigns. They are called by their nation. They are called by communities (civic and private). They are called by those whose presence on a field of battle summons others to respond to their challenge. They are called by those who ask for help and those who cannot. They are called by justice.

Although the call originates from “we know not where,” we know all too well to where those who are called must go.

If we accept that we need an army, then we must accept that it has to be as capable of surviving as we can make it. But if society prepares a soldier to overcome his resistance to killing and places him in an environment in which he will kill, then that society has an obligation to deal forthrightly, intelligently, and morally with the result and its repercussions upon the soldier and the society.<sup>45</sup>

### On Killing

Grossman argues that “Looking another human being in the eye, making an independent decision to kill him, and watching as he dies due to your action combine to form one of the most basic, important, primal, and potentially traumatic occurrences of war.”<sup>46</sup> Tillich speaks of the resistance to killing that Grossman says must be overcome.<sup>47</sup>

June 4, 1942, SS-Obergruppenführer Tristan Heydrich dies from wounds sustained by an assassination attack coordinated by the Czechoslovak government in exile and executed by the British Special Operations Executive. Four days later, Paul Tillich addresses the German people via “The Voice of America.” Tillich talks about the death and suffering

that was inflicted directly and indirectly by this individual. As he reflects on guilt and innocence, he looks back on the four years he spent on the front and how those he served with “didn’t want to kill.”

Now, it is very difficult—indeed, often impossible—for a refined, sensitive person to slay a guilty person, because a refined sensitive person accommodates himself to others, and what he must do to others, he does to himself. And it is difficult for a refined, sensitive, human person to slay the enemy on the battlefield, because he has a sense of him as the son of a mother or as the husband of a wife or as the father of children.<sup>48</sup>

Tillich’s observations are reinforced by the research of S.L.A. Marshall, whose research Grossman reviews. Marshall initially interviewed soldiers coming off the line in World War II. Based on these interviews he concluded that only 15 to 20 percent actually fired their weapons at the enemy.<sup>49</sup> Grossman reinforces the point that this was not simply a form of sentimentality or a sign of weakness. These combatants were “courageous and strong.”<sup>50</sup> “Those who would not fire did not run or hide (in many cases they were willing to risk great danger to rescue comrades, get ammunitions, or run messages), but they simply would not fire their weapons at the enemy, even when faced with repeated waves of banzai charges.”<sup>51</sup>

These numbers have been reversed through concerted effort within the military.<sup>52</sup> As Grossman puts it, “every modern soldier or police officer who shoots at a silhouette or a photo-realistic target or a video training simulator should take a moment to remember and thank S. L. A. Marshall.”<sup>53</sup> More combatants are actually killing.

In order to navigate the challenges for the warrior in combat, Grossman provides us with a continuum that seeks to help us identify the different ways a warrior kills. On the one end, he would put slaying the noble enemy. At the other end of the spectrum, he puts executions. Between the two, he puts ambushes and slaying the ignoble enemy.<sup>54</sup> Much thought today reflects on how technological advances in weaponry place killing more in the middle of this continuum.<sup>55</sup> The warrior is not necessarily asked to make sense of the ambiguity, but to live with it.<sup>56</sup>

### *The person-to-person encounter in battle*

One way that warriors seek to eliminate the ambiguity of the space-time of battle is through the dehumanization of the enemy. This “impulse to dehu-

manize and disrespect the enemy must be resisted, whether its basis is religious, nationalistic, or racist. The soldier's physical and psychological survival is at stake."<sup>57</sup> Resisting this impulse begins with the pre-ontological grounding of the second-personal standpoint that is articulated by Tillich, Buber, Levinas, Bauman, et al. That this thinking is rooted in Jewish and Christian traditions is complicated when Shay argues that it is "biblical culture, which insists on turning every story into a war of good and evil and a drama of blame and punishment."<sup>58</sup>

### **Classical Greek Morality versus Ethical Monotheism**

Shay's study compares the stories of Vietnam combat veterans with Homer's story of the *Iliad*. Shay shows how damaging it is for warriors to dishonor the enemy, to see them as non human through the use of derogatory slang. When he compares the racism and dehumanizing tendency in Vietnam with the *Iliad* he demonstrates a drastic difference. In the *Iliad*, the warriors honor their foes. His conclusion is that the source of the "modern habit of dehumanizing the enemy originates in biblical religion."<sup>59</sup>

Shay reaches this conclusion by comparing and contrasting the communication between combatants in the *Iliad* with that of communication David and Goliath in 1 Samuel 17. Within Homer's epic, the combatants maintained respect for the enemy. The enemy was seen as equally good, valiant, and holy. This is contrasted by the way in which "Philistine" sounds like a racial epitaph in the exchange between David and Goliath. There is even a contrast between the tone of Goliath's challenge and David's.

Shay notes that the key difference is that David identifies divine favor for Israel's cause. This is contrasted with Hector in the *Iliad* who "does not boast of divine favor, even though he knows he has it."<sup>60</sup> Shay draws from the contrast here that modern forms of nationalism and racism have developed from the biblical idea that "God's enemies should be exterminated like vermin."<sup>61</sup> The final result is the form of a new form of patriotism. Patriotism, loyal-nationalism "has taken over the biblical tendency to measure loyalty by how vehemently one dehumanizes the enemy."<sup>62</sup> As he says:

The Judeo-Christian (and Islamic). worldview has triumphed so completely over the Homeric world view that dishonoring the enemy now seems natural, virtuous, patriotic, pious. Yet in the *Iliad* only Achilles disrespects the enemy. In Homer's world, this is not a natural but an in-

human state into which Achilles has tragically fallen. Homer's warriors are never weakened by respecting the enemy.<sup>63</sup>

Shay's insight on this reality within our culture is particularly astute. What he fails to give adequate time and space to is the complexity of culture that produces both those who dishonor the enemy and those who honor the enemy. The same cultures produce both kinds of people, or even produce the same behavior within the same person.<sup>64</sup> The enemy is honored and dehumanized within classic Greek thought. The enemy is honored and dehumanized within the biblical literature. The enemy is honored and dehumanized by contemporary warriors.

The desire to distinguish between Greek and Biblical sources and to set them up in a polar relationship is very old. References to Jerusalem and Athens are many in the Christian tradition and they are present from its beginning. Tillich is but one example of those who have found this dichotomy to be false. We are not Greek or ethical monotheists. Our identities, as Terrence Tilley so aptly put it, are muddy.<sup>65</sup> We are Greek and ethical monotheists.<sup>66</sup> Ultimately, Shay's simple dichotomy fails and we are left with a complex problem with no easy answers.

Dismissing Shay's dichotomy of Greek/ biblical must not cause us to avoid the hard work involved in resisting our tendency to dehumanize the enemy. The way to overcome this tension within our traditions is not to remove the ambiguity of the other but to fully encounter them as stranger and other. All attempts to avoid this ambiguity through either universal rules or particular relativism "turns into poison."<sup>67</sup>

### **Conclusions**

Tillich made clear the need of attributing human dignity to "every person—even the enemy, even the weak, even the foreigner."<sup>68</sup> An ethic of love rooted in notions of calling the second-personal standpoint points a way forward for warriors engaged "at the tip of the spear." Current military literature suggests that this is not wide-eyed optimism but rather the way many in our military already see the situation.<sup>69</sup>

As this project took shape and I explained what I envisioned discussing, the comment that often arose was that it seemed silly to think about ethics at the tip of the spear. In that situation, when the door was being taken and guns were blazing, it was kill or be killed. In such situations, they argued, it is so obviously right to kill that the question does not even

make sense. I hope that Shay, Grossman, et al. have helped to demonstrate that the ethical considerations at the tip of the spear involve not whether one kills, or even necessarily how or who one kills. What matters is how one sees the enemy and understands the killing that one does oneself. However, as Shay so eloquently opines, the ethical choice to see the world in this way “cannot be coerced. It can only be called forth by persuasion, education, and welcoming appeal.”<sup>70</sup>

Much of current military training in ethics is based on virtue models and deontological models. The radical ambiguity of life and combat in the twenty-first century suggest that a more dynamic and robust approach to ethical existence (thinking and being in a way that acknowledges being *for* before being *with*) is needed. I think that Tillich’s ethical thoughts around love open up a vibrant way of thinking through ethical existence that avoids the traps of relativism and absolutism. Thinking with Tillich and thinking the un-thought in Tillich are helpful resources for ethical development whether one finds oneself at the tip of the spear or not.

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Volume Two* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 44.

<sup>2</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Volume Two*, 47.

<sup>3</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Volume Two*, 177. See also, 165-180.

<sup>4</sup> Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, trans. James Luther Adams (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957) 197.

<sup>5</sup> Mary Ann Stenger and Ronald H. Stone argue that Tillich's articulated and explicit thought on war focused on the question of the goal of the war. Mary Ann Stenger and Ronald H. Stone, *Dialogues of Paul Tillich*, 22. As Erdmann Sturm's excellent study of Tillich's war theology points out, Tillich's preaching during World War I tended also to come back to this question of the reason for

the war. This places Tillich's thinking on the side of *ius ad bellum*, as opposed to the question of *ius in bello*.

<sup>6</sup> Wilhelm & Marion Pauck, *Paul Tillich* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1976), 45.

<sup>7</sup> *The Protestant Era*, 154. That this solution is theonomous, is easily recognized to the reader familiar with Tillich. Schweitzer's excellent introduction to *Morality and Beyond*, makes the theonomous nature of Tillich's ethical thought quite explicit.

<sup>8</sup> *The Protestant Era*, 155.

<sup>9</sup> 124-125.

<sup>10</sup> Tillich's drive toward a pre-ontological solution is also created in his use of the locution "ground of being." In that the ground is that from out of which being rises and into which being returns and is ultimately prior to being, it is pre-ontological.

<sup>11</sup> 21

<sup>12</sup> *The Protestant Era*, 160. Again in *Love, Power and Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 21.

<sup>13</sup> Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking*, trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper Collins, 1968), 76.

<sup>14</sup> Heidegger's language of "unthought" suggests a certain arrogance in the interpreter being able to think what the original thinker could not. Heidegger seeks to mitigate this by indicating that the unthought is not a lack, yet one could argue that unarticulated might be a more humble way of identifying the phenomenon and that the pre-ontological is unarticulatable for Tillich. Although Heidegger's language is used, it is acknowledged that it has a variety of complications, not the least of which is the suggestion of interpretive arrogance.

<sup>15</sup> The fourteenth chapter of a *Theology of Culture* makes this relationship explicit and provides Tillich's interpretation and presentation of Buber's thought.

<sup>16</sup> Tillich, *Morality and Beyond*, 36.

<sup>17</sup> Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics*, 73.

<sup>18</sup> Bauman, 71; emphasis in original.

<sup>19</sup> Bauman, 75.

<sup>20</sup> Bauman, 75.

<sup>21</sup> Bauman, 74.

<sup>22</sup> Bauman, 60. Tillich's work with the idea of religious ecstasy help us to reframe this understanding of non-rational. Tillich argue that the ecstatic state "does not destroy the rational structure of the mind." (ST I, 113) Thus, "although ecstasy is not a product of reason, it does not destroy reason." (114) Tillich describes that which appears within the structures of reason and yet "transcends them in power and meaning" as "the depth of reason" (ST I, 79). As Darwall points out, second-person rationality operates within its own constituted rationality (Darwall, 59).

<sup>23</sup> Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, 160.

<sup>24</sup> Tillich, 80.

<sup>25</sup> Bauman, 80. Tillich articulates the source behind this feeling in *The Courage to Be*, 52: "...under the conditions of man's estrangement from himself this is an actuality. Even in what he considers his best deed nonbeing is present and prevents it from being perfect. A profound ambiguity between good and evil permeates everything he does, because it permeates his being as such."

<sup>26</sup> Specifically, the unthought here lies within Tillich's correlational approach of question and answer. In this case the call is simultaneously call and answer. It is also found in his ideas of salvation as participation and the gospel as decision. Decision assumes call. Tillich's thought around the Kairos also reveals the unthought of the call.

<sup>27</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, *Reduction and Givenness*, 197.

<sup>28</sup> John D. Caputo, *The Weakness of God* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 5.

<sup>29</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John MacQuarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper-one, 1991), 313. (Hereafter abbreviated as BT.)

<sup>30</sup> BT, 314.

<sup>31</sup> BT, 316 (German 271).

<sup>32</sup> BT, 318.

<sup>33</sup> BT, 319.

<sup>34</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 275.

<sup>35</sup> BT, 320.

<sup>36</sup> *The courage to Be*. 188-189.

<sup>37</sup> Marion, *Reduction in Givenness*, 202.

<sup>38</sup> *The Protestant Era*, 160.

<sup>39</sup> Walzer, 327.

<sup>40</sup> Baumann, 182.

<sup>41</sup> Dick Couch, *A Tactical Ethic* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2010), 92.

<sup>42</sup> Couch, 92; emphasis added.

<sup>43</sup> Martin L Cook, *The Moral Warrior* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), ix. Couch speaks of the same phenomenon, citing Thomas Ricks, *Making the Corps*, which speaks of a "widening gap between the military and society." Couch describes the gap as "Grand Canyon-esque—and growing." (*A Tactical Ethic*, 15) According to Peter Feaver, this gap exists because of "different moral and political competencies" that are developed within the civilian and military spheres despite the occasional "civilianization of the military" or "militarization of the civilian sphere." *Armed Servants* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 8.

<sup>44</sup> Brennan, *Foundations of Moral Obligation*, 8.

<sup>45</sup> Grossman, 287. Walzer makes the same point in another way: "Soldiers and statesmen live mostly on this

side of the ultimate crisis of collective survival; the greater number by far of the crimes they commit can neither be defended nor excused. They are simply crimes. Someone must try to see them clearly and describe them "in express words." Even the murders called necessary must be similarly described; it doubles the crime to look away, for then we are not able to fix the limits of necessity, or remember the victims, or make our own (awkward) judgments of the people we kill in our name" (326).

<sup>46</sup> Grossman, 31. One example of this is recorded in Daniel Hallock, *Hell, Healing and Resistance* (Farmington: The Plough Publishing House, 1998), 69: "When I got back to Can Tho, I started to cry – and I couldn't stop. For two days I wept continuously, never stopping. All I could think about were the people I had killed, about the good men I saw die about my buddy – and I kept crying until our company doctor sedated me. I was taken to 3<sup>rd</sup> Surg where I told a doctor everything I had seen and done in nineteen months. All he did was put me on 60 mg of valium a day and lock me in a room for two weeks."

<sup>47</sup> There are those in the military who think Grossman got this wrong and that it is not that difficult for an individual to kill.

<sup>48</sup> Tillich, *Against the Third Reich*, 36. Jean Bethke Elshtain articulates this theme that Tillich touches on as she describes the masculine character of the Just Warrior and feminine equivalent of the Beautiful Soul. Tillich's language clearly refers back to this idea of the woman at home who is left a widow as motivating the combatant. Elshtain focuses more on how women sent men to kill and took pride in the conquest of their man (son, lover, spouse) than on the reverse effect it had on dissuading combatants from killing.

<sup>49</sup> Grossman, *On Killing*, 3-4.

<sup>50</sup> Stone and Weaver, 37.

<sup>51</sup> Grossman, 4.

<sup>52</sup> The firing rate (the percentage of soldiers who fired their weapons) increased from around 15% in World War II to around 90% in Vietnam. Grossman, 132. Grossman puts the first stat at 15-20% and the second as 90-95%

<sup>53</sup> Grossman, xix.

<sup>54</sup> Grossman, 197-204.

<sup>55</sup> Zizek argues that we construct the fantasy of the face-to-face encounter in order to escape the Real of the depersonalized war turned into an anonymous technological operation." (*The Fragile Absolute* [New York: Verso, 2000], 77.)

<sup>56</sup> This ambiguity is heightened by the changing form of conflict. "War no longer exists. Confrontation, conflict and combat undoubtedly exist all around the world . . .

and states still have armed forces which they use as symbols of power. Nonetheless, war as cognitively known to most non-combatants, war as battle in a field between men and machinery, war as a massive deciding event in a dispute in international affairs: such war no longer exists” Rupert Murdoch, *The Utility of Force* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 3. Murdoch’s point on the transition from industrial interstate warfare to war among the people represents the predominate thinking among military thinkers. Crawford, *Manhunting* (Hurlburt Field: The JSOU Press, 2009), 38-39: “Industrial-age and information-age warfare have become cost-prohibitive and politically untenable.” Others use a broader and vaguer definition of war that does not reveal the shift in current political realities: i.e. David Mapel, “Realism and the Ethics of War and Peace,” in *The Ethics of War and Peace*, ed. Terry Nardin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 56. “war is ‘organized violence carried out by political units against each other,’ . . .” This definition includes “undeclared wars, total wars, and some kinds of internal conflict and rebellion.”

<sup>57</sup> Shay, 119.

<sup>58</sup> Shat, 118.

<sup>59</sup> Shay, 104.

<sup>60</sup> Shay, 113.

<sup>61</sup> Shay, 114.

<sup>62</sup> Shay, 115. See also Cole, 87: “. . . nations usually like to get their citizens on the war-fighting band-wagon by inciting a crusading spirit. In such propaganda, the enemy is typically dehumanized to the point of beastliness, while our own cause is glorified to the point of pure righteousness.”

<sup>63</sup> Shay, 115.

<sup>64</sup> One example of those who fought in Vietnam and honored the enemy will suffice here. Harold G. Moore and Joseph L. Galloway, *We Were Soldiers Once... and Young* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992), 5: “While those who have never known war may fail to see the logic, this story also stands as tribute to the hundreds of young men of the 320<sup>th</sup>, 33<sup>rd</sup>, and 66<sup>th</sup> Regiments of the People’s Army of Vietnam who died by our hand in that place. They, too, fought and died bravely. They were a worthy enemy. We who killed them pray that their bones were recovered from the wild, desolate place where we left them, and taken home for decent and honorable burial.”

<sup>65</sup> Terrence. W. Tilley, “Incommensurability, Intratextuality, and Fideism,” in *Modern Theology* 5, 2 (January 1989), 105.

<sup>66</sup> An excellent example of this is Brennan’s *Foundations of Moral Obligation* which weaves back and forth

between Greek and Judeo-Christian (Biblical) sources. Cole also identifies “Christian virtue” as rooted in “Jewish, Greek, and Roman thought.” (*When God Says War is Right*, 54).

<sup>67</sup> Bauman, 239. “. . . while universal values offer a reasonable medicine against the oppressive obtrusiveness of parochial backwaters, and communal autonomy offers an emotionally gratifying tonic against the standoffish callousness of the universalists, each drug when taken regularly turns into poison.”

<sup>68</sup> Tillich, *Against the Third Reich*, 131.

<sup>69</sup> *Generation Kill*, 75: Sgt. Colbert “. . . make sure you don’t shoot the civilians. . . We are the invading army. We must be magnanimous.” The contrast is also highlighted between the professional warrior, a Marine Officer, and the general public. *One Bullet Away*, 143: Describing a visit to Ground Zero, the Pentagon and the White House, Fick tells his readers that he “saw mourning and sorrow. But also bluster. Posturing. People vowed not to interrupt their daily routines, not to let “them” destroy our way of life. My time in Afghanistan hadn’t been traumatic. I hadn’t killed anyone, and no one had come all that close to killing me. But jingoism, however mild, rang hollow. Flag-waving, tough talk, a yellow ribbon on every bumper. I didn’t see any real interest in understanding the war on the ground. No one acknowledged that the fight would be long and dirty, and that maybe the enemy had courage and ideals, too. When people learned that I had just come from Afghanistan, they grew quiet and deferential. But they seemed disappointed that I didn’t share in the general bloodlust.”

<sup>70</sup> Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, 209. Emphasis added.

### Dr. Farris’s Birthday

The Society is grateful for the presence of Paul Tillich’s daughter at our annual meeting in San Francisco this past November.

On February 13, 2012, Dr. Mutie Tillich Farris will celebrate her birthday. If any one wishes to send her a greeting, please do so: her address is:

540 West 122 St./ Apt. 63  
New York, NY 10027

**TILlich AND THE SPILLED COFFEE CUP:  
THE BREAKTHROUGH OF THE SPIRIT IN  
CONTEMPORARY CHURCH ARCHITECTURE**

BERT DAELEMANS

**Editor's Note:** *the Figures mentions in the following article can be found immediately after the text and note. To see them perfectly, one must download the Bulletin; they will not be duplicated perfectly in the printed copy.*

In recent years, it has become fashionable for well-known “starchitects”<sup>1</sup> to build a church, which can be a statement of contemporary architecture inasmuch as a railway station or a concert hall, to which the huge amount of visitors witness. We may think of the Roman Catholic Cathedral of Christ the Light in Oakland, California. From the outside, this building, designed by Craig Hartman and opened to the public in 2008, looks like a huge steel and glass shrine, with its materials not too different from the surrounding buildings [Fig. 1, 2]. It would appear that the originality of its shape offends some people, as reported by a blog contemporary to the building project, which considers it “[p]erhaps the greatest theological failure of our age,” and makes fun of it with the title “Our Lady of the Laundry Basket,” as a complement to “Our Lady of Maytag” in San Francisco.<sup>2</sup> Particularly amusing is another post, calling it “Our Lady of the Spilled Coffee Cup.”<sup>3</sup> Worthy of note is the interpretation of this failure not so much as architectural but as *theological*. In one of his recent well-received books on Catholic church architecture, the author of this blog claims that a church is not a church when “it does not look like a church.”<sup>4</sup> Roman Catholic architects and theologians like him discard contemporary church architecture theologically as “no place for God” and “ugly as sin,” pleading for revival styles as the only appropriate ones today, for only these are, in their view, open to divine transcendence.<sup>5</sup>

Without denying that church architecture is theological expression, or that architecture should be open to divine transcendence, is it possible to draw on Paul Tillich’s occasional dealings with architecture in order to provide an apologetics of contemporary church architecture in general, and of the Oakland Cathedral in particular? It is only during the last decade of his life that Tillich delivered his four lectures on religious architecture.<sup>6</sup> Unlike his dealing with the fine arts, he never discusses concrete exam-

ples, and is particularly parsimonious in providing practical suggestions.<sup>7</sup> However, despite the fact that he treats architecture only on the periphery, as a response to invitations from meetings of architects, rather than in systematical thought, he is one of the few theologians with a particular interest in architecture. A few months before his death he recalls:

In my early life I wished to become an architect and only in my late teens the other desire, to become a philosophical theologian, was victorious. I decided to build in concepts and propositions instead of stone, iron, and glass. But building remains my passion, in clay and in thought, and as the relation of the medieval cathedrals to the scholastic systems shows, the two ways of building are not so far from each other. Both express an attitude to the meaning of life as a whole.<sup>8</sup>

In the light of the controversies around the Oakland Cathedral, Tillich’s following comment is clarifying: “Every new church in a new style is an experiment. Without the risks of experiments that fail, there is no creation...New church building is a victory of spirit, of the creative human spirit and of the spirit of God that breaks into our weakness.”<sup>9</sup> At some distance from the modernist architectural optimism of his time, I believe that Tillich’s intriguing connection between architecture and spirit is more than a poetic metaphor, and intimately reflects the theology of his later years. Today, fifty years later, is it possible to claim the same spiritual victory when considering contemporary church architecture, such as the Oakland Cathedral? This will be the main question of my paper, which aims at demonstrating the ongoing validity of Tillich’s intuitive criteria for a contemporary theology of architecture.

Instead of presenting Tillich’s theology of architecture, which has been done well by Bernard Raymond and Martin Dudley,<sup>10</sup> I will first of all focus on three theological polarities that I claim are still valuable today. This will shed new light on the particular place of architecture within a Tillichian theology of art. Then, by focusing on *breakthrough* (*Durchbruch*) as the expressionistic element in architecture, this article will aim not only at giving a constructive complement to the pioneering study of “breakthrough documents” by Uwe Carsten Scharf,<sup>11</sup> but also at providing a first tentative answer to Russell Re Manning’s and Wessel Stoker’s suggestion for interpreting *breakthrough* anew in order for a Tillichian theology of art to have validity in a post-modern context.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps somewhat stretching Til-

lich's thought, but, I hope, in fidelity to him, I will explore his intuitions in two directions: on the one hand, I propose a closer connection between *break-through* and the spirit; and on the other, I examine this connection with a controversial example of contemporary Catholic church architecture.

### The Spatial Polarity between a Movement Inward and a Thrust Forward

In retracing Tillich's theological principles of architecture, Raymond and Dudley somehow overlooked Tillich's first address on architecture of 1933, on the occasion of the dedication of a house in Potsdam.<sup>13</sup> This relatively short philosophical account in a delightfully pagan setting establishes two essential characteristics of dwelling as the creation of space, which are also proper to a theological account, namely a movement inward and a thrust forward. Tillich discusses the relationship between the "concrete, living reality" of dwelling and the abstract notions of space and time, "[f]or in the proximate, the daily, the apparently small, there is hidden in truth the metaphysical; the here-and-now is the place where meaning is disclosed, where our existence must find interpretation."<sup>14</sup> Space is neither a mere object nor a container of things, but the way and the power (*Raummächtigkeit*) in which living beings come into existence, by creating their own spatiality (*Räumlichkeit*).<sup>15</sup>

Tillich examines four ways of "creating space." *Inorganic* spatiality is "filling" space (*Raumerfüllung*): things endure in time, next to each other (*Nebeneinander*) and even against each other (*Gegeneinander*), without any inner unity of space: "eine innere Einheit des Raumes gibt es hier nicht."<sup>16</sup> *Organic* spatiality is unfolding (*Enfaltung*): plants are characterized by a thrust forward (*ein Vorstoßen*), a self-expansion (*ein Sich-Ausbreiten*), and a mutual penetration (*gegenseitige Durchdringung*) in time.<sup>17</sup> There is a unity, even a "sympathy" of space. Vegetative space is at the same time concentrated and unfolded. *Animal* spatiality is characterized by mobility (*Bewegung*). The animal can break through the vegetative stability of place and thrust forward into distant spaces. At the same time, there is a drive towards an enclosing, sustaining, limited space (nest or cave). *Human* spatiality transcends the other forms *forwards* and *inwards*; *forwards*, in the sense that, even though it remains always finite, human space has an infinite capacity, because its characteristic is to break through<sup>18</sup> every finite boundary:

"Space is infinite because the human mode of creating space for oneself is that of breaking through every finite boundary."<sup>19</sup> It also transcends *inwards*, because by dwelling, human beings appropriate space, that is to say, they create space into *theirt* 1st and most immediate worthy. Instead of attributing the creation of space only to architects, he understands the common human feature of *dwelling* as synonymous to creating space. Dwelling is the first and most immediate human relationship (*Beziehung*) with space: only from there are they able "o "thrust forward into space at large, into infinite space."<sup>20</sup> This relation is essentially *creative*: as dwellers and users of the space, we are the architects of our space. According to John Dillenberger, "Architecture is an exercise in creating space... Architecture should express our finitude and our openness to the infinite."<sup>21</sup> This creative way of appropriating space is for Tillich the only way to reach towards infinite space, that is to say, to discover the infinite within the finite.

The relationship between dwelling and time is characterized by newness: A human being "goes beyond every configuration, and beyond every forming space, toward something new; and in the new, the boundary of the old space and the old configuration is breached."<sup>22</sup> Time becomes present only in space: "Time gains presence only in space; presence is the mode in which time is near to space."<sup>23</sup> Space and time are only united in the present. Only the one who has found space can live in the present. Each situation thrusts towards the new, towards a space of unity (*einheitlichen Raum*),<sup>24</sup> toward ever growing living spaces (*immer wachsender Lebensräume*), towards "an integrated house of mankind, detached from every special territory." This thrust forward fights against the "original holiness of space" (*eine ursprüngliche Heiligkeit des Raumes*), the territorial demons of finite space, which simultaneously sustain and bind us to the soil.<sup>25</sup> Every building is called to provide such a unity of space and time, within finite space.<sup>26</sup> The first polarity that has to find architectural expression is the balance between the will to fence oneself off (*abzugrenzen*) and the urge to thrust forward (*vorzustößen*).<sup>27</sup> The four occurrences of breakthrough explored by Scharf in this text all concern the overcoming of the limits of a former spatiality. In the new human creation, the limits of the old are broken through. In order to create a human space for dwelling, architecture aims at giving expression to this breakthrough of the human spirit, able to unfold both inwards and forwards.

### The Religious Polarity between Sacred Emptiness and Religious Symbolism

The notion of breakthrough brings to mind Tillich's problematic claim that "all specifically religious art is *expressionistic*."<sup>28</sup> All authors on the question agree that his understanding of the expressionistic style as "the principle of breaking through the beautified naturalistic surface of things to the real depths which break out with disruptive power"<sup>29</sup> needs some correction if it is to have any future.<sup>30</sup> On the one hand, due to its practical purpose, architecture has "a definite character," without going "wild with irrational imagination."<sup>31</sup> Therefore, Tillich calls architecture the "basic artistic expression" which may even provoke a renewal of religious art.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, the expressiveness of architecture is not as easy perceivable as in the fine arts, for "architecture cannot be in the same way directly and purposely expressive as a picture or sculpture."<sup>33</sup> As a result, its religious character might be difficult to perceive.

From my point of view, the so-called disadvantage of architecture caused by its practical purpose indicates a real advantage for understanding the breakthrough anew as spatial expressiveness, that is to say, less identified with the disruptive expressiveness of German Expressionism, which, in the perspicacious view of Russell Manning, took Tillich in "as the Trojan Horse of a secular and nihilistic aesthetic alternative to religion."<sup>34</sup> Indeed, Tillich was aware of the specific expressiveness of architecture, in its structure, its space, and the play of light within, as "a mysticism from below," which he wanted to preserve from imitating naturalism and beautifying idealism.<sup>35</sup> It is my contention that Tillich's recognition of a specific architectural expressiveness—and therefore religious character—caused him to plead for what he called "sacred emptiness" as the expressionistic element of religious architecture.

As far as I could retrace, there are five occurrences of the term "sacred emptiness" in Tillich's writings.<sup>36</sup> It appears for the first time in 1952, during his first lectures on art and architecture in the United States.<sup>37</sup> He suggests that "the most expressive form of art today in connection with religion might be sacred emptiness; an emptiness which does not pretend to have at its disposal symbols which it actually does not have."<sup>38</sup> There are two valuable elements in this intuition. First, it does not mean that church space should be devoid of all symbols, but

only the ones that "have died," that is to say, "when the relationship they have mediated in opening up the soul is no longer powerful."<sup>39</sup> Second, Tillich is aware of the expressive power of the empty space as such. One could say it is "expressive emptiness," in contrast with the "desperate," "ugly," "painful," and "simple" emptiness of the early Reformation, which did not understand the Roman Catholic expressiveness of their inherited churches.<sup>40</sup> Tillich calls it "sacred," which means that *as space* it is a religious symbol in itself. It is a symbol only when it expresses something more than just void. It is able to express the presence of the holy through its absence, in opposition to an "abundant manifoldness" of symbols. It is emptiness not by privation, but by inspiration, "filled with the presence of that which cannot be expressed."<sup>41</sup>

The sacred void can be a powerful symbol of the presence of the transcendent God. But this effect is possible only if the architecture shapes the empty space in such a way that the numinous character of the building is manifest. An empty room filled only with benches and a desk for the preacher is like a classroom for religious instruction, far removed from the spiritual function which a church building must have.<sup>42</sup>

In discussing this notion of sacred emptiness, Tillich might have been inspired by the German Roman Catholic architect Rudolf Schwarz. In 1955, Tillich refers explicitly to Schwarz's visionary *Vom Bau der Kirche* of 1938, in fact just before dealing with sacred emptiness.<sup>43</sup> Although the literal term "sacred void" appears only once in this original theory of church architecture, emptiness is a recurring theme and always a synonym for God's "resplendent abundance."<sup>44</sup>

Tillich believed that the renewal of religious art would start within the church building, which is its greatest symbol expressing our ultimate concern.<sup>45</sup> Ultimate concern needs our creativity.<sup>46</sup> "The convincing power of a religious building strengthens the convincing power of that for which it is built."<sup>47</sup> Prophetically, Tillich suggested sacred emptiness as the preliminary space "for the next foreseeable time,"<sup>48</sup> in which old symbols regain their expressiveness afresh, not by being at our disposal, but rather by "looking at us."<sup>49</sup>

For Tillich, sacred emptiness is the adequate architectural expression of the Protestant principle, which ensures "the majesty of the Divine against every human claim, including every religious claim."<sup>50</sup> André Gounelle speaks of the Protestant

principle and Catholic substance as two complementary attitudes.<sup>51</sup> In my understanding, Catholic substance finds architectural expression in the symbols displayed in sacred emptiness, for “[t]he experience of the presence of the holy by the kind of space the architect has created is what must be intended, even before anything else happens within this space.... Since the experience of the holy is never directly possible, because it transcends everything finite, its presence must be mediated by authentic representation and symbolic expression.”<sup>52</sup> Although Tillich did not provide specific practical suggestions in order to maintain and create such sacred emptiness, he pointed out its lasting importance even for us today. Appropriate symbolism within sacred emptiness is the architectural expression of the complementary balance between Catholic substance and Protestant principle.

### **The Expressive Polarity between Artistic Honesty and Religious Consecration**

Towards the end of his life, another polarity surfaces in Tillich’s theology of art, namely the polarity between honesty as form-affirmation and consecration as form-transcendence. We perceive this evolution both in the fourth part, “Life and the Spirit,” of his *Systematic Theology* and in his writings on art and architecture. I believe they emerge here, especially because of their relationship with the Spiritual Presence. As far as I could retrace it, the term “honesty” in the context of art appears first in 1954. Six years later, honesty and consecration form a pair in his thought. I believe they form an essential polarity of the late Tillich to understand architectural expressiveness as a spatial breakthrough.

For Tillich, “religiously expressive art” should be “more honest than any other art,” that is to say, the “result of a creating ecstasy,” not imitating creative ecstasies of the past.<sup>53</sup>

The request that new buildings be stylistically contemporary is rooted in the nature of creativity and in the ethical principle of honesty. A creative act is normally born out of a cognitive and emotional participation in many or few creations of the past. But when the creative power of the artist or architect goes to work, it breaks through to the new, expressing the creator and through him his period. After a certain inevitable resistance and hesitation, his contemporaries come to recognize themselves in his work.<sup>54</sup>

Honest architecture does not *imitate* former styles, but is in touch with an unconscious, symbol-creating side of the artistic process. Honest architecture does not *beautify* the structure, but looks for the expressivity of the structure itself, for “the beauty must lie in the adequacy and expressive power of the structure.”<sup>55</sup> Tillich pleads for replacing the word “beautiful” by “expressiveness.” Honest is the architect who penetrates “into the demands of the material.”<sup>56</sup> Tillich was aware of the coldness and hardness that sacred emptiness could create, in losing the character of owning the space—corresponding to dwellers, as we noticed above. Sacred emptiness emphasizes the thrust forward, but must be balanced with the movement inwards of dwelling as creating and appropriating the space.

Out of the personal passion of individuals who in total honesty and total seriousness penetrate into the demands of the material with which they work, who have a vision of the form which is adequate to their aim, and who know that in the depth of every material, every form and every aim something ultimate is hidden which becomes manifest in the style of a building, of a poem, of a philosophy. Out of this depth, symbols can and will be born which, by their very character, say “no” to present conformity and which point to an environment in which the individual can find symbols of his encounter with ultimate reality.<sup>57</sup>

Tillich’s manifest for honest religious architecture can be understood in the modernist optimism of his time, which reacted perhaps too fiercely against an overloaded sentimentalism of *Saint-Sulpice* art, perceived as unnecessary decorative distraction. Similar claims for artistic honesty can be heard in those years from a Roman Catholic perspective.<sup>58</sup> According to Tillich, honesty is an ethical principle. The architect who imitates and beautifies “has ceased to be a mirror to his contemporaries and instead prevents them from awareness of their actual being. He deceives them—even though often they like to be deceived.”<sup>59</sup>

Nevertheless, in pursuing honesty, one does not yet create automatically a *consecrated* place. In principle, God can be found in every place on earth, but due to our existential estrangement, we need specific places that remind us of God’s majesty:

It is the task of the church architects to create *places of consecration* where people feel able to contemplate the holy *in the midst of their secular life*. Churches should not be felt as some-

thing which separates people from their ordinary life and thought, but which opens itself up into their secular life and *radiates through the symbols of the ultimate into the finite expressions of our daily existence.*<sup>60</sup>

These places of consecration do not undo the principle of honesty. The principle of consecration allows places of honesty to “radiate through the symbols of the ultimate,” rather than being separated from them. In contrast with Martin Dudley, who, favoring honesty above consecration, concludes that Tillich’s criteria rule out the need for a specifically religious architecture, we can say with Tillich that churches, places of consecration, are necessary *for the moment*, as pointers to unambiguous life, in the midst of existential estrangement.<sup>61</sup> One could say that the principle of honesty is necessary for a religiously expressive architecture in the *broad* sense—for “[t]here is truth in every great work of art, namely the truth to express something”<sup>62</sup>—but this principle should be balanced with the principle of consecration for a religiously expressive architecture in the *narrow* sense. The emphasis on the autonomy of architecture is not enough, for “surprise wears off, and the new, if it lacks genuine adequacy to the meaning of the church buildings, becomes almost intolerable.”<sup>63</sup> The principle of religious consecration is “the power of expressing the holy in the concreteness of a special religious tradition.”<sup>64</sup> Such expression is therefore rooted in tradition. Tillich claims that religious architecture should express the holy, more than being merely a room for a gathering community. This has nothing to do with style, understood as the obligation to follow some normative canon, but rather through the expressiveness of its structure. According to Tillich, this can be done neither by the *naturalistic* way of imitating former styles, as following a sort of magical formula, nor by the *idealistic* way of beautifying the structure. The issue is about the way in which the space is arranged, whether there is room for “sacred emptiness,” and whether there is an honest search for new symbols—or a new way of presenting old symbols.

The three polarities essential to a Tillichian theology of architecture discussed here are the spatial balance between intimate and infinite space, that is to say, the building must allow dwellers to create and appropriate the space at the same time as to reach beyond into infinite space; the religious balance between symbolism and sacred emptiness; and the expressive balance between honesty and consecration. Only under these conditions are we able to

look at another “experiment” in church architecture, and speak of another “victory” of the human and the divine spirit.

### Spiritual Victory in Architecture

Let us now come back to the sentence that started this reflection, and focus on the intriguing presence of the spirit in this discussion on architecture: “New church building is a *victory of spirit*, of the creative human *spirit* and of the *spirit* of God that *breaks into* our weakness.” I will focus subsequently on the terms *spirit*, *breaking into*, and *victory*.<sup>65</sup>

Firstly, let us examine the term *spirit*. It is striking that Tillich, when considering church architecture of his time, spontaneously speaks of the human and the divine Spirit in one *breath* and in one *breadth*. In his *Systematic Theology*, he claims that in places where honesty and consecration are honored, where a sacred emptiness is created for new symbols to emerge, and where the polarity between a thrust forward and inward is balanced, “[t]he Spiritual Presence makes itself felt in the architectural space, the liturgical music and language, the pictorial and sculptural representations, the solemn character of the gestures of all participants, and so on.”<sup>66</sup>

According to Frederick Parrella, “[w]ithout his doctrine of the Spirit, [Tillich’s] theology of culture ... would lie on infertile ground.”<sup>67</sup> The problem that concerns us here is recognizing the work of the divine Spirit within a cultural object. In other words, he concern is to apprehend the Unconditional in the conditioned, which is always, as Werner Schüßler points out, “a *symbolical* apprehension of the divine.”<sup>68</sup> Therefore, the cultural creation never gives absolute certainty about the Unconditional, but only points towards it. For Tillich, “[t]he conditioned is the medium in and through which the Unconditional is apprehended. To this medium belongs, likewise, the perceiving subject. It too, never appears as something that provides the ground, but rather as the *place* where the Unconditional becomes manifest within the conditioned.”<sup>69</sup> Applied to my research question, I therefore propose looking at contemporary church architecture as this “place where the Unconditional becomes manifest within the conditioned.”

Let us briefly recall that Tillich uses the same word “spirit” for two purposes.<sup>70</sup> First, this word designates the dimension of human life where morality, culture, and religion *originate* and where they find

*fulfillment*.<sup>71</sup> Second, it is used symbolically for God. For Tillich, it is the “most embracing, direct, and unrestricted symbol for the divine life,” which does not need to be balanced by another symbol.<sup>72</sup> Tillich remarks that it would have been impossible to *understand* and to *express* the experience of God’s presence as Spirit without the experience of the human spirit as unity of power and meaning. For this experience, he uses the radically *spatial* symbol of Spiritual Presence.

The *relationship* between the human spirit and the divine Spirit, which is “no correlation, but rather, mutual immanence,”<sup>73</sup> can be expressed by the *spatial* metaphor of *indwelling*.<sup>74</sup> As the Spirit “breaks into” the spirit, it “drives the human spirit out of itself.”<sup>75</sup> The first spatial metaphor implies the other: “The ‘in’ of the divine Spirit is an ‘out’ for the human spirit.”<sup>76</sup> The ecstasy caused by the divine Spirit does not destroy the structure of the human spirit as in demonic possession, however much driven and grasped by something ultimate that comes from outside.

Man in his self-transcendence can reach for it, but man cannot grasp it, unless he is first grasped by it. Man remains in himself. By the very nature of his self-transcendence, man is driven to ask the question of unambiguous life.<sup>77</sup> The question of unambiguous life is born in the self transcendence of the human spirit, but the answer can come only from the creative power of the Spiritual Presence. Without being grasped, the human spirit cannot grasp the divine Spirit: “Only Spirit discerns Spirit.”<sup>78</sup> For our investigation, it is essential to note that for Tillich, the only valid criterion to discern the Spirit is the manifestation of *creativity*.<sup>79</sup> In *indwelling*, the Spiritual Presence makes itself known: “The relation to the divine ground of being through the divine Spirit is *not agnostic* (as it is not amoral); rather it includes the *knowledge of the ‘depth’ of the divine*.”<sup>80</sup> Therefore, we can argue that it is the Spirit who gives personality to the otherwise still anonymous *Grundoffenbarung* as “presence of God prior to any knowledge of God.”<sup>81</sup> As *author* of the breakthrough, the Spirit gives accurate knowledge of God, and can do so through ‘cultural victories of spirit,’ that is to say, theonomous forms of our creativity. These do no force the Spirit in a direct way, but can be grasped by the Spiritual Presence and raised “beyond themselves by the creation of faith”:

Man’s spirit cannot reach the ultimate, that toward which it transcends itself, through any of its functions. But the ultimate can grasp all of

these functions and raise them beyond themselves by the creation of faith. Although created by the Spiritual Presence, faith occurs *within the structure, functions, and dynamics of man’s spirit*. Certainly, it is not *from* man, but it is *in* man. Therefore, in the interest of a radical transcendence of the divine activity, it is wrong to deny that man is aware of his being grasped by the divine Spirit, or as it has been said, ‘I only believe that I believe.’ Man is conscious of the Spiritual Presence’s work in him.<sup>82</sup>

This consciousness of the Spiritual Presence is at once called faith and love, the former emphasizing the ecstatic thrust, the latter the *indwelling* reunion of both spirits: “The divine Spirit manifests itself within the human spirit through the ecstatic movement, which from one point of view is called *faith*, namely being grasped by the ultimate concern; and from the other *love*, being taken into the reunion of unambiguous life.”<sup>83</sup> Faith is the “human reaction to the Spiritual Presence’s *breaking into* the human spirit; it is the ecstatic acceptance of the divine Spirit’s *breaking-up* of the finite mind’s tendency to rest in its own self-sufficiency.”<sup>84</sup> As such, the Spiritual Presence makes itself felt in the architectural space in an ecstatic movement of faith, aiming at an *indwelling* communion of love.

Secondly, let us examine the term *breaking into*. In both the fourth part of the *Systematic Theology* on “Life and the Spirit,” published in 1963, and in his lecture of 1961 on the theology of art and architecture, Tillich uses the same verb “breaking into” (*einbrechen*) instead of “breaking through” (*durchbrechen*), which was the dominant term for the early Tillich, according to Robert Scharlemann:

The concept of breakthrough (*Durchbruch*), which is one of the identifying marks of his rejection of idealism, is introduced into Tillich’s thought about 1919 – it appears in “On the Idea of a Theology of Culture” in that year – in order to *formulate the way in which the unconditional is manifest in the conditional: it breaks into it*. To a theology of culture, the unconditional *Gehalt* that is breaking in shows itself in the content by means of the form—the ordinary content becomes accidental and the form is transformed as it tries to grasp the depth-content breaking in. Revelation is a breakthrough in this sense.<sup>85</sup>

Scharf has pointed out that this latter term lost its importance in Tillich’s later writings, at least in its prophetic and political urgency.<sup>86</sup> From my part, I would argue that his use of *einbrechen* recuperates

and restores an older, perhaps softer and smoother meaning of breakthrough: not the *disrupting* and *alienating* breakthrough of German Expressionism, but a more *spatial* one, closer to Tillich's own initial pre-reflective experience of the expressive power of art, which he recalls when standing in front of the Botticelli:

Gazing up at it, I felt a state approaching ecstasy. In the beauty of the painting there was Beauty itself. It shone through the colors of the paint as the light of day shines through the stained-glass windows of a medieval church. As I stood there, bathed in the beauty its painter had envisioned so long ago, something of the divine source of all things came through to me. I turned away shaken.<sup>87</sup>

Essential to this account are the spatial terms in which Tillich describes his experience. The space of the painting opened up. Through it and in it shone Beauty, which filled the space and surrounded him. The enveloping effect of the painting is similar to that of architecture, as shown in the spatial analogy of light filling a medieval church, and in the "feeling of inner fulfillment in places where good architecture surrounded" him.<sup>88</sup> An example of good architecture for him was the fifteenth-century Gothic church of his hometown, which "had influence on [his] decision to become a theologian and on some lasting elements in [his] theological thought."<sup>89</sup>

This spatial experience has a strong and lasting effect on him: the Beauty moving towards him puts him in a state of near ecstasy, outside of himself. This reminds us of the aforementioned comment: "The 'in' of the divine Spirit is an 'out' for the human spirit."<sup>90</sup> Indeed, Tillich himself points out the similarities with Revelation, and being grasped by the Spiritual Presence:

That moment has affected my whole life, given me the keys for the interpretation of human existence, brought vital joy and spiritual truth. I compare it with what is usually called revelation in the language of religion. I know that no artistic experience can match the moments in which prophets were grasped in the power of the Divine Presence, but I believe there is an analogy between revelation and what I felt. In both cases, the experience goes beyond the way we encounter reality in our daily lives. It opens up depths experienced in no other way.<sup>91</sup>

The spatial description of depths opening up to him will be his description of the expressive element in art. This breakthrough is not so much disruptive,

as it is a spatial experience. In some instances mentioned by Scharf, the verb *durchbrechen* still implies the destruction of the autonomous human creativity. In contrast, even if the verb *einbrechen* could give the impression of a heteronomous impact from above, it does not destroy human autonomy. According to Scharf, "[f]or a breakthrough to occur, there needs to be an element which must stay continuous while being altered, a structure that needs to maintain its integrity while an opening is created in it—and through it as well—for something new to emerge out of the old."<sup>92</sup> In the phrase on which we are commenting, this autonomy is even more emphasized through the adjective *schaffenden*. The indwelling collaboration between the human and the divine Spirit is an expression of theonomy, the "state of culture under the impact of the Spiritual Presence." George Pattison affirms that theonomy "does not negate the principle of autonomy but accepts and deepens it until it becomes transparent to its divine ground; it is the discovery of new substance, new content, on the ground of autonomous existence, but with no weakening of the principle of autonomy; it is the unity of the horizontal (autonomous) and vertical (heteronomous) dimensions of life."<sup>93</sup> Tillich states in another context:

The Spiritual Presence which creates the Spiritual Community does not create a separate entity in terms of which it must be received and expressed; rather, *it grasps all reality, every function, every situation*. It is the 'depth' of all cultural creations and *places them in a vertical relation to their ultimate ground and aim*. There are no religious symbols in the Spiritual Community because the encountered reality is in its totality symbolic of the Spiritual Presence, and there are no religious acts because every act is an act of self-transcendence.<sup>94</sup>

Every reality, every cultural object, can be grasped by the Spiritual Presence, so that in the ideal situation of the Spiritual Community, every act and every reality is theonomous, expressing the Spiritual Presence. The Spiritual Presence is able to grasp every honest reality, "placing it in a vertical relation to its ultimate ground and aim."

An important element in this matter is that the Spiritual Presence is not only grasped intellectually or spiritually, but *through the theonomous forms of culture*. In this sense, Frederick Parrella argues:

If Tillich's understanding of the multidimensional unity of life is disregarded and the person is understood only in terms of moral will and in-

tellec, then the reality of the divine Spirit can be mediated to the person only in terms of his/her moral and intellectual grasp of it.... The Spiritual Presence, when grasped only intellectually, is not genuinely spiritual at all.<sup>95</sup>

Only *theonomous* forms of culture will be directed towards the Spiritual Presence. For Tillich, theonomy *gives direction* to human autonomy. On its own, human creativity has no direction: "The development of all human potentialities, the principle of humanism, does not indicate *in what direction* they shall be developed."<sup>96</sup> By themselves, human beings cannot break through their estrangement and achieve reunion with God: "In the reunion of essential and existential being, ambiguous life is raised above itself to a transcendence *that it could not achieve by its own power.*"<sup>97</sup> This comment reminds us of another occurrence of breakthrough unnoticed by Scharf, taken from the second volume of the *Systematic Theology*:

Grace does not destroy essential freedom; but it does what freedom under the conditions of existence cannot do, namely, it reunites the estranged. Nevertheless, the bondage of the will is a universal fact. It is the inability of man to *break through* his estrangement. In spite of the power of his finite freedom, he is unable to achieve the reunion with God.... Man, in relation to God, cannot do anything without Him. He must receive in order to act. New being precedes new acting.<sup>98</sup>

Only the impact of the Spiritual Presence lays bare the "directedness of the self-creation of life under the dimension of the Spirit toward the ultimate in being and meaning."<sup>99</sup> Tillich continues, "Theonomous culture is Spirit-determined and Spirit-directed culture, and Spirit fulfils spirit instead of breaking it."<sup>100</sup> Transposed to our concern, we could say that any church building, which is not a "victory of the spirit," would be either unable to express *the divine Spirit at work* (as a mere autonomous and empty container for gatherings), or unable to express *our creative humanity* (as merely the heteronomous and aseptic product of a predetermined program, that is to say, naturalistic imitation or beautifying idealism). Neither *naturalism* nor *idealism* has a direct relationship with the Spiritual Presence in architectural space. Tillich seems to suggest that the way to experiencing the Spiritual Presence architecturally is only opened—although without direct causality—through expressiveness. Once again, "[t]he 'in' of the divine Spirit is an 'out' for the human spirit."<sup>101</sup>

Finally, the victory of spirit is "the *conquest of the ambiguities of culture by creating theonomous forms* in the different realms of the cultural self-creation of life."<sup>102</sup> The ambiguous character of our existence "is *not conquered by avoiding the finite as much as possible*, that is, by ontological asceticism. The *tragic is conquered by the presence of being-itself within the finite.*"<sup>103</sup> The fact that the tragic is conquered *within the finite*, not by discarding it, emphasizes its being also the *victory of the creative (schaffenden) human spirit*. Transposed to our concern, we might say that the aim of church architecture is creating space for this "presence of being-itself within the finite," giving it architectural expression, as "theonomous forms" in this realm of the cultural self-creation of life. However, this victory is always fragmentary, as Tillich explains:

But theonomy can never be completely victorious, as it can never be completely defeated. Its victory is always fragmentary because of the existential estrangement underlying human history, and its defeat is always limited by the fact that human nature is essentially theonomous.<sup>104</sup>

Nevertheless, even *fragments* have value, as Tillich acknowledges: "The fragment of a broken statue of a god points unambiguously to the divine power which it represents. The fragment of a successful prayer elevates to the transcendent union of unambiguous life."<sup>105</sup> A church building is a theonomous form of culture when, representing a fragmentary victory of spirit, it is able to point towards, and thrust forwards, into unambiguous life, in the midst of its ambiguities of existential estrangement.

One of Tillich's lasting contributions to a theology of art, and of architecture in particular, is his claim that "[t]here is no theonomy...where a new style of artistic creation is suppressed in the name of assumedly eternal forms of expressiveness."<sup>106</sup> This is a still valuable answer to the current critique, which dismisses the Oakland Cathedral for lacking "the conventional architectural markers of churchliness"—"a cross, tower, dome, conventional shapes, and proportions."<sup>107</sup> Theonomy, in "permanent struggle"<sup>108</sup> with autonomy and heteronomy, is distorted into heteronomy when there is no place for autonomy, when "the *freedom which characterizes the human spirit as well as the divine Spirit* is repressed. And then it may happen that autonomy *breaks through* the suppressive forces of heteronomy and discards not only heteronomy but also theonomy."<sup>109</sup> In this quote, we note the surprisingly *disruptive* use of breaking through, where we would

have expected breaking apart. The reason for this may be the *subject* of the breakthrough, which is autonomy in disregard of theonomy, as an extreme reaction to heteronomy. This happens when the healthy polarities between the thrust inwards and forwards, between the Protestant principle and Catholic substance, that is to say, between sacred emptiness and religious symbolism, and between artistic honesty and religious consecration, are broken. According to André Gounelle, “[s]pirit unites the opposites. Spirit does not suppress one or other of the opposites, but it changes their negative antagonism into positive polarity.”<sup>110</sup> The negative antagonism between autonomy and heteronomy in contemporary theonomous church architecture are united into a positive paradox. Paraphrasing Tillich, we could say that “theonomous architecture is Spirit-determined and Spirit-directed architecture, and Spirit fulfills spirit instead of breaking it.”<sup>111</sup>

### Spirit Breaking into Christ the Light

Let us finally look at the Oakland Cathedral through the lens of Tillich’s criteria for a religiously expressive architecture.<sup>112</sup> In the limited context of this article, what follows can only be an initial exploration in a contemporary Tillichian theological aesthetics of architecture, tentatively tested on one example. This can be done here only in a general overview of the current situation rather than examining every one of its specific details and symbols in the unpredictability of their contextual design process.

The first polarity we have to deal with, because it strikingly appeals from the building itself, is the expressive tension between *architectural honesty and religious consecration*. Not surprisingly, most current critiques are addressed here, claiming that this building lacks religious consecration in favor of architectural honesty, as a merely autonomous form of culture rather than a theonomous one.

In 1965, when Tillich noticed his passion for building in architecture and in theology, this one-off comment may indeed, as Dudley suggests, be mere politeness addressed to architects, confirmed by some of Tillich’s own comments on his lack of architectural expertise.<sup>113</sup> Nonetheless, the reason Tillich provides for this passion is noteworthy: it is not so much their structural and systematic order that he underlines, but the fact that both theology and architecture “express an attitude to the meaning of life as a whole.”<sup>114</sup> A building appears as a *whole*, a totality,

which expresses *meaning*, or at least one interpretation of it. It was this expressive power that Tillich was looking for.

Which attitude to the meaning of life can be perceived in the Oakland Cathedral? Considering only its exterior, the message of Oakland Cathedral is unmistakably *contemporary*, adopting a postmodern look, blurring the distinctions with its secular environment. At first sight, the Cathedral is not easily discernable in the grey sea of office buildings [Fig. 1]. Our eyes rest on the glass shrine as the focus of our journey, initially blurring the solid “bunker” underneath, which we have to “conquer” in order to reach the main entrance. Surrounded by much taller buildings, this glass dwarf does not impose itself by its size. On the one hand, this could clash with more traditional, vindicatory conceptions of religiosity, which promulgate more prominent presences in post-modernity, stretching the distance between the so-called profane and the sacred. On the exterior, the lack of “churchliness” (McNamara), the lack of Christian symbols, apart from the modest and unfortunately faceless wooden cross [Fig. 7], could indeed be perceived as the *absence* of transcendence, or at least as the absence of any desire to promulgate divine transcendence, that is to say, in Tillichian terms, the lack of religious *consecration*. This could be interpreted even as a shameful capitulation to the secular, which is perhaps seen as sinful and in desperate need of salvation. On the other hand, even if one does not like the Oakland Cathedral, at least it has the *honest* courage to attempt a contemporary translation of tradition into the new. Without the risk of failure, there is no creativity.

As mentioned earlier, the shape of this building is unusual for a church, confirming its *autonomy*, not only in the immediate context of downtown Oakland, but also in the long history of church building. Therefore, the first legitimate question from a Tillichian point of view, even before entering this church, is to ask if it is a *theonomous* form of culture. Does it keep autonomy and heteronomy in the right balance, so that it not only corresponds to its practical *purpose*, but also to its being, albeit fragmentary, a *symbol of unambiguous life*? The question with this particular church is not whether it is an expression of our creative human spirit, for even if it is a product of a particular architect’s mind, it participates at our common creative humanity. As an autonomous product of the human spirit, it is ambiguous. As a finite product, it cannot *force* the divine Spirit to reveal itself. The question is whether

this particular church is able to allow the Spiritual Presence to express itself within this space, that is, to lay bare the “*directedness of the self-creation of life* under the dimension of the Spirit toward the ultimate in being and meaning.”<sup>15</sup> How does this cultural form express ultimate concern understood by a particular tradition—in this case, the Roman Catholic tradition? Which architectural features point towards this understanding of unambiguous life?

The *form* is unique for a church, born as a new creation out of the architect’s intention to shape a distinctive space, as an attempt perhaps to grasp the essence of “churchliness,” or a specific “attitude to the meaning of life as a whole,” rather than *imitating* traditional ideas of churches [Fig. 2]. In Tillichian terms, such intention is understood as honest. Furthermore, its *materials* (glass, concrete, steel, stone, marble, and wood) are left bare, without particularly *beautifying* them through the addition of special ornamentation. The materials are shown in the inner beauty of their structure, in the simplicity of their purpose. For instance, *concrete*—so massive and inhumane at the plaza outside—forming a ring, which embraces the liturgical space inside, is treated with delicacy [Fig. 4]. Its smooth, polished surface appeals to the sense of touch. The concrete wall gives a sense of protection, and yet, by its subtle inclination upwards, not only ensures stability in the likely event of an earthquake in this area, but also gives leeway to the space, playfully rejecting its reduction to well-known associations as cold, hard, vast, and solid. The same can be said for the *jet mist granite* of the baptismal font and ambo, and the *Cararra marble* of the altar, which, as material, become *symbols* in a sacred emptiness [Fig. 6, 8]. In contrast, the *glass*, so prominent that the Cathedral is identified by it from the outside, even though remaining virtually invisible from the inside, unconsciously and archetypically speaks of transparency, whereas the building comes across as hermetically opaque, except when exiting the church. According to Tillich’s criteria, this church, therefore, due to its unique shape and its straightforward use of materials—apart perhaps from the treatment of the glass—could be understood as an artistically *honest* building.

Inside, this building respects the principle of *consecration* through the careful *mise-en-scène* of well-chosen *symbols*, such as, for instance, the dominating image of the Christ in Majesty from Chartres [Fig. 5]. In fact, this image is highly controversial. For many people, it is too oppressive, too

present, too judging, too dominating. Personally, I have not come across people who actually like it. On the one hand, I believe that Tillich would deplore this picture due to its being a copy, a photograph, that is to say, an imitation, of the sculpted masterpiece of the cathedral of Chartres. Perhaps this relationship with a European archetype is meant to give the cathedral some legitimacy. On the other hand, I suggest that Tillich might have appreciated the fact that this sculpture is reinterpreted, transformed and corrected into a new creation through digital technology. It is computer-enhanced and made out of 94,000 perforations in aluminum panels. He might have considered it as a powerful reinterpretation of an old symbol. In fact, the image we are looking at is actually not there. The light that breaks into it not only allows us to look at Christ the Light, but also “to be looked at,” as Tillich would say. Even before anything happens in this space, we can experience the presence of the holy, mediated by authentic representation and symbolic expression.

Other symbols of significance are the circular baptismal font and square marble altar on the main axis, the way of the cross on eyelevel around the liturgical space, the bronze crucifix as a tree of life hovering above the ambo, and the bronze statue of the Virgin at the foot of the clergy seating area. Furthermore, there are *floor inscriptions*, literally “footnotes,” rendering the space readable, guiding towards a deeper interpretation of the space, pointing towards another space, like delicate subtitles interweaving bible and building. For instance, the inscription in the porch reads: “I am the door. Whoever enters through Me will be saved” (John 10:9). Words become image, wood, and door, which can be touched in all its heaviness. By pulling the handle, words pass syn-aesthetically through the body by means of the door [Fig. 3]. Behind the wooden doors, which so dramatically stop vision beyond them, opens a horizon, a direction, a desire towards light. Then, draped around the baptismal font, another footnote reads: “The Spirit of God hovered over the waters. And God said ‘Let there be light’ and there was light” (Gen. 1:2-3). After entering through Christ the Door, pilgrims are welcomed by the Spirit, around this baptismal sea in miniature, this huge basin of holy water inviting them to dress themselves with the Trinitarian name in which they were baptized, converting their itinerary, in order to enter Christ the Light [Fig. 6].

In terms of symbols, according to the second, religious, polarity between *sacred emptiness and relig-*

*ious symbolism*, the space created by this building can be described in Tillichian terms as “sacred emptiness.” This light-filled emptiness is the cathedral’s greatest implicit religious symbol. It is especially created as one, unified, whole space, accentuating only slightly the distinction between sanctuary and nave. Nevertheless, because of cost, the original plan for a sloping floor towards the sanctuary was abandoned, leading to the unfortunate solution of the far too elevated altar and bishop’s cathedra, which creates too sharp a distance within the celebrating community. It seems that, at this point, an unnecessary heteronomous element breaks the expressive symbolism of the building as unified and yet differentiated gathering space apart, instead of speaking the same theonomous language, letting the gathering and yet differentiating Spirit break through (See 1 Co 12).

Leaving this particular question aside, let us return to light as the cathedral’s major symbol, which *consecrates* the building’s emptiness, albeit in the broadest religious sense. The cathedral bears the name of Christ the Light, and we may indeed agree with Tillich that the great symbol of this church is the building itself, for light inhabits generously its sacred emptiness, and is indeed an adequate architectural expression of the Protestant principle, preserving God’s Majesty. We enter light itself, which is the same light as outside, and yet different, filtered, enriched. According to Mary-Cabrini Durkin: “Light does not simply *illuminate* this cathedral. It is *intrinsic* to it. The building creates an experience of light, a fluid, ever-changing experience.”<sup>116</sup> Light has become the dynamic and ungraspable material of the architect. In Lefebvrian terms, it is light that, breaking into the space, continuously “produces” it.

Finally, the spatial polarity between the *movement inwards* and the *thrust forwards* can also be examined in this building. I believe Tillich would applaud the exterior appeal of this church as religious in the broadest sense, for, sculpturally, the shape brings together an uplifting and a gathering dimension [Fig. 2]. More than aiming to be merely a container for liturgical action or a “praying machine,”<sup>117</sup> this symmetrical and colorless—or at least color-low—building aims to be an expressive work of art. Theologically, its vertical and circular dimensions can be read as *transcendence* and *ecclesia*, implicitly suggesting its nature as a *domus Dei* and a *domus ecclesiae*.<sup>118</sup> Outside, the uplifting dimension from solidity to airiness is oblique. The vertical procession goes from a massive but gentle concrete

curve, over translucent glass walls, into air held together, as it were, by svelte “architectural exclamation points,” as the architect puts it.<sup>119</sup> These metallic pointers become apophatic when reaching the sky, opening this seemingly roofless church as a symbolic *axis mundi* to the heavens, and at the same time as converging into one invisible point. Inside, the generosity of light and space raises the spirit up to the infinite space of the heavens [Fig. 5]. At the same time as moving *inwards*, creating a protected interior space without any exterior view—except when one exits the building—the space lifts the mind *upwards*. Within the visual uplifting, a spiritual one is addressed to our embodied spirit. We enter light, which is formed through natural light, and yet which speaks of the transcendent Light of Christ.

Nevertheless, the building stands or falls with the Tillichian criterion of a *movement inwards*, that is to say, the building’s ability to be appropriated by a particular community. In a Tillichian view, this particular building is an experiment that risks failure, that is, if it does not work for people to appropriate it, to shape the spirit of the place into their own—in Raymond’s words, if the structure is not by itself, apart from all visual symbols displayed in it, a symbol inviting into prayer and communion.<sup>120</sup> For many reasons, which this article cannot explore, apart from hinting at some architectural ones, the community’s absence in the Oakland Cathedral is almost tangibly felt in its most profane and disgracefully inhumane emptiness. If it is the Cathedral of Christ, the Light of all Nations, I deplore the fact that all nations present in the diocese do not find or receive their place and their home in this building. I believe the Cathedral’s sacred emptiness is flexible enough to be appropriated by a multiplicity of nations adoring one Lord, expressing their identities not in a uniform way, but in a paradoxically integrated manifoldness of expressions. Today, sacred emptiness, born out of a modernist tradition, seems to wait for a return of religious symbols, preferentially provided by the living community.<sup>121</sup> Today, in downtown Oakland, there is an empty, color-low, and experimental space waiting for a colorful community of nations to be appropriated, in order to become truthfully a place for all nations, a symbol and vision of whom, and where, the Church wants to be in our age.

Therefore, the living community will be the building’s greatest acid proof. Is this space indeed flexible enough to be appropriated by a particular community? That is the question, to which an answer has to be found in the years to come. But even

apart from that, instead of the “greatest theological failure of our age,” the Oakland Cathedral can be considered a victory of spirit, albeit fragmentary, because it dares to search for new forms to express an attitude to the meaning of life as a whole. It does so, at least by the choice of emphasizing light and by providing an explicit communitarian space, gathered around the altar. Taken as a whole, I believe this church is an honest victory of humanity’s spirit, by conquering deceptive compromises of being Christian.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I borrow this term from Edward W. Soja, *Third-space: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real and Imagined Spaces* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 79.

<sup>2</sup> Denis R. McNamara, "Oakland Cathedral Update," (February 28, 2008) <http://www.creativeminorityreport.com/2008/02/oakland-cathedral-update.html> [accessed January 11, 2011]. He is the author of *Catholic Church Architecture and the Spirit of the Liturgy* (Chicago, Mundelein, IL: Hillenbrand, 2009) and *How to Read Churches: A Crash Course in Ecclesiastical Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> This reaction was posted on the same date of the original post, February 28, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> For McNamara, in order for a church to look like one, it needs "the conventional architectural markers of churchliness," which are "a cross, tower, dome, conventional shapes, and proportions." McNamara, 2009, 27.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Rose, *Ugly as Sin: Why They Changed Our Churches from Sacred Places to Meeting Spaces and How We Can Change Them Back Again* (Omaha, NE: Sophia Institute Press, 2001). Moyra Doorly, *No Place for God: The Denial of the Transcendent in Modern Church Architecture* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Paul Tillich, "Theology and Architecture," in *Architectural Forum* CIII, 6 (December 1955): 131-134, 136; in *On Art and Architecture*, ed. John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger, trans. Robert P. Scharlemann (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 188-198. Henceforth, OAA. "Zur Theologie der bildenden Kunst und der Architektur," in *Auf der Grenze* (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1962); in *Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. IX: *Die Religiöse Substanz der Kultur*, ed. Renate Albrecht (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1967), 345-355. Henceforth, GW. English translation: "On the Theology of Fine Art and Architecture," OAA 204-213. "Contemporary Protestant Architecture," in *Modern Church Architecture: A Guide to the Form and Spirit of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Religious Buildings*, ed. Albert Christ-Janer and Mary Mix Foley (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1962), 122-125; OAA 214-220. "Honesty and Consecration in Art and Architecture," first published as "Wanted for Religious Architecture Today: Honesty and Consecration," in *Protestant Church Buildings and Equipment* (September 1965); OAA 221-228.

<sup>7</sup> When, in his first talk on architecture, Tillich still opts for specific preferences, as colored glass, broken light, and geometric forms, as supposedly more religiously expressive, he tends to become normative. OAA 193.

<sup>8</sup> OAA 221.

<sup>9</sup> OAA 213. "Der neue Kirchenbau ist ein Sieg des Geistes, des schaffenden Menschengestes und des in unsere Schwäche einbrechenden Gottesgestes." GW 355.

<sup>10</sup> Martin Dudley, "Honesty and Consecration: Paul Tillich's Criteria for a Religious Architecture," in *The Church and the Arts*, ed. Diana Wood, Studies in Church History 28 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 515-522. Bernard Reymond, "Le Paradoxe de l'architecture religieuse: remarques en marge de Paul Tillich," *Revue de théologie et de philosophie* 127/2 (1995): 143-153; "D'un temps à l'autre, d'un style d'architecture religieuse à l'autre," *Science et Esprit* 53/2 (2001): 293-307; and "L'architecture entre 'substance catholique' et 'principe protestant,'" in *En chemin avec Paul Tillich*, ed. André Gounelle and Bernard Reymond, Tillich Studien 12 (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2004), 205-210. Dudley reads Tillich's four papers on religious architecture (1955-1965), placing them within their biographical and theological context, and in relation to the modernist architecture of Otto Bartning, Dominikus Böhm, and Rudolf Schwarz after Schneider, 1938. Focusing mainly on the principles of honesty and consecration, Dudley deals with sacred emptiness, purpose and symbol, and the differences between Protestant and Roman Catholic churches. Reymond presents the paradoxical ability of finite architecture to express the ultimate. In doing so, he focuses on the Protestant principle, confronting Tillich's thought with the contributions of Joseph Rykwert. Nevertheless, in this comparison, he seems to overlook Tillich's very first dealing with architecture in his early conference "Das Wohnen, der Raum, und die Zeit" of 1933. Reymond concludes that the essential symbol of religious architecture is its powerful invitation to prayer and communion: "À bien la prendre, une architecture religieuse n'est rien, ou n'est que la moitié d'elle-même, sans le culte qui y prend place, donc sans le paradoxe même de la foi qui y trouve son expression vécue. C'est dire que le symbole dont le caractère paradoxal de l'architecture religieuse a le plus besoin tient moins aux symbolismes visuels qu'on peut y ajouter (Tillich pensait surtout à la croix), qu'à sa destination même. Cette architecture ne devient expression symbolique idoine, dans son insurmontable opacité, que dans la mesure où elle appelle la prière, la prédication et la communion qui en sont à la fois la raison d'être et la fondamentale contestation. Elle est pour ainsi dire un plein qui, par son vide, appelle une autre plénitude, mais d'ordre eschatologique." Reymond, "Le Paradoxe," 153.

<sup>11</sup> Uwe Carsten Scharf, *The Paradoxical Breakthrough of Revelation: Interpreting the Divine-Human Interplay in Paul Tillich's Work 1913-1964*, Theologische Bibliothek Töpelmann 83 (Berlin and New York: de

Gruyter, 1999). In this study, Scharf discusses 39 writings in which the term *Durchbruch* or related terms can be found. He examines three periods, in which the term is dominant (1919-1936), totally absent (1936-1951), and feebly rediscovered (1951-1965). Whereas different terms as *Zerbrechen* (breaking apart), *Einbrechen* (breaking into), and *Durchbrechen* (breaking through) are still used interchangeably in Tillich's early writings, the latter becomes the dominant term in the twenties and early thirties. The term *Durchbruch* is related to divine revelation and its historico-political kairos of Religious Socialism. After 1936, Scharf notices a decline of this term, which pops up only in occasional writings, limited to the realm of art. In the present article, I provide other occurrences of the term, focusing on Tillich's later writings, and proposing a closer connection between *Durchbruch* and the spirit. I will examine especially Tillich's *Systematic Theology*, in which Scharf only noticed one occurrence of breakthrough (ST I, 143), arguing that, even if he overlooked other references, "it certainly does not appear to be a dominant concept." Scharf 278.

<sup>12</sup> Russell Re Manning, *Theology at the End of Culture: Paul Tillich's Theology of Culture and Art* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005); Wessel Stoker, "Does Tillich's Theology of Art Have a Future? In Response to Russell Re Manning, *Theology of the End of Culture: Paul Tillich's Theology of Culture and Art*," in *International Yearbook for Tillich Research*, ed. Christian Danz and Werner Schüßler (Vienna, Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2006), 197-208. In fact, Stoker suggests three corrections to Tillich's theology of art. First, he recommends a broader interpretation of *expressiveness*, for the expressionistic view of disruption of a surface is not the only model to evoke the ultimate in art. Second, and linked with the first, Stoker claims that Tillich is primarily concerned with *alienation*, and suggests to give more attention to different subject matter, as resurrection and grace. Stoker refers here to Tillich's article *Existential Aspects of Modern Art*, in which Tillich indeed discusses paintings that show the human situation of horror, disruptiveness, existential doubt, emptiness, and meaninglessness without any cover. However, in my view, the point here is not the expression of the alienation as such, but the fact that these paintings without explicit religious subject matter do not cover up anything in an idealistic beautification of the surface. The point is the *expressiveness of the depths of reality as perceived in the present*. These depths are uncanny in the case of the situation which led to these paintings. Nevertheless, I would respond to Stoker that, in the same article, Tillich discusses a picture of Jan Steen that struck him *for its vitality*, expressing "power of being in terms of an unrestricted

vitality in which the self-affirmation of life becomes almost ecstatic." (OAA 94) Although without religious content, that is to say, not religious in the narrow sense, this painting is religious in the broad sense. We might also refer to Tillich's lasting experience of the Botticelli. ("One Moment of Beauty," OAA 234-235) Third, Stoker reacts against Tillich's *inclusivism*, that is to say, identifying the ultimate to the Christian God. Therefore, "the theological considerations of other representations of the ultimate in art are too quickly cut off in advance." Stoker, 10. Instead of Tillich's broad concept of religion, which understands all art as potentially — one could even say in a Rahnerian way 'anonymously' — Christian, Stoker suggests to take the more neutral 'worldview' as the basis of a dialogue.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Tillich, "Das Wohnen, der Raum, und die Zeit," in *Die Form* 8 (1933), 11-12; GW IX, 328-332. English translation: "Dwelling, Space, and Time," OAA 81-85.

<sup>14</sup> "Drei Begriffe sind in diesem Thema verbunden, von denen zwei, Raum und Zeit, Ergebnisse höchster philosophischer Abstraktion sind, während der dritte, das Wohnen, konkrete, lebensnahe Wirklichkeit bezeichnet. [...] Denn im Nächsten, im Alltäglichen, im scheinbar Kleinen steckt in Wahrheit das Metaphysische; das Jetzt und Hier ist der Ort, wo sich der Sinn erschließt, wo unsere Existenz Deutung finden muß, wenn sie überhaupt Deutung finden kann." GW IX, 328; OAA 81.

<sup>15</sup> "Raum ist kein Ding, auch kein Behälter, in dem Dinge sind, sondern Raum ist die Art des Lebendigen, zur Existenz zu kommen." GW IX, 329; OAA 82.

<sup>16</sup> GW IX, 329; OAA 82.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> In "Das Wohnen, Der Raum, und die Zeit," there are four occurrences of breakthrough (*Durchbruch*), which Scharf left unnoticed, not even mentioning this article. One occurrence concerns the animal, which by its mobility breaks through the subjection of the soil ("*durchbricht die vegetative Bodengebundenheit*," GW IX, 329; OAA 83). The next two occurrences concern the human being, breaking through every spatial limit, through every finite boundary: "Der Mensch durchbricht jede Raumgrenze," and "die menschliche Art des Sich-Raum-Schaffens Durchbrechung jeder endlichen Grenze ist." GW IX, 330; OAA 83. The last occurrence, translated by "breached," concerns how the new breaks through the old: "im Neuen ist die Grenze des alten Raumes und der alten Gestaltung durchbrochen." GW IX, 331; OAA 84.

<sup>19</sup> “Unendlich ist der Raum, weil die menschliche Art des Sich-Raum-Schaffens Durchbrechung jeder endlichen Grenze ist.” GW IX, 330; OAA 83.

<sup>20</sup> “Er ist die erste und unmittelbarste Beziehung, die der Mensch zum Raum überhaupt hat. In ihr schafft er sich den Raum, der *sein* Raum ist. Und erst von seinem Raum aus kann er vorstoßen in den Raum überhaupt, in den unendlichen Raum.” GW IX, 328; OAA 81-82.

<sup>21</sup> OAA xxv.

<sup>22</sup> “Er geht über jede Gestaltung, auch über jeden gestalteten Raum hinaus, auf etwas Neues zu; und im Neuen ist die Grenze des alten Raumes und der alten Gestaltung durchbrochen.” GW IX, 331; OAA 84.

<sup>23</sup> “Die Zeit gewinnt Gegenwart nur im Raum; Gegenwart ist der raumnahe Modus der Zeit.” GW IX, 331; OAA 85.

<sup>24</sup> Rather than “uniform space” in Scharlemann’s translation. OAA 85.

<sup>25</sup> GW IX, 331; OAA 84.

<sup>26</sup> “Jedes Haus sucht eine solche Gegenwart im begrenzten Raum zu geben.” GW IX, 332; OAA 85.

<sup>27</sup> Architecture has “to single out from the infinite space, into which we are thrown in our nakedness, a piece of finite space which protects us against the infinite,” and “to give him that limited space from which he can then go forward toward infinite space.” OAA 192.

<sup>28</sup> OAA 190.

<sup>29</sup> OAA 191.

<sup>30</sup> In addition to the aforementioned works of Manning and Stoker, see also Russell Re Manning, “Tillich’s Theology of Art,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Paul Tillich*, ed. Russell Re Manning (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 152-172; Michael Palmer, *Paul Tillich’s Philosophy of Art* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1984) and Gesa Elsbeth Thiessen, “Religious Art is Expressionistic: A Critical Appreciation of Paul Tillich’s Theology of Art,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 59/4 (1993), 301-311.

<sup>31</sup> OAA 191-192.

<sup>32</sup> “Architecture is the basic artistic expression, just because it is not only art but because it serves a practical purpose. It is quite probable that the renewal of religious art will start in co-operation with architecture.” OAA 124.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. In his 1926 text *The Religious Situation*, Tillich had written that “architecture made use of expressionistic forms only rarely and then with evident lack of success. For its relation to the practical end of construction forces a realism upon it from which the free arts with their non-utilitarian character can readily emancipate themselves....It is highly characteristic of the religious situation of the present that it is not religious buildings but

economic structures which reveal a little of this tendency toward self-transcendence, of the will to break through the limits of self-sufficient finitude. Religious architecture on the other hand is like religious painting; it is without symbolic power to express the religious situation of the present.” OAA 70-71.

<sup>34</sup> Manning 2009, 168.

<sup>35</sup> OAA 192-93.

<sup>36</sup> Namely, in 1952 (OAA 40), 1955 (OAA 193), 1962 (OAA 218), 1963 (ST III, 171), and 1965 (OAA 227).

<sup>37</sup> Paul Tillich, “Art and Society,” OAA 11-41.

<sup>38</sup> OAA 40.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> OAA 215.

<sup>41</sup> OAA 227.

<sup>42</sup> OAA 217.

<sup>43</sup> OAA 192.

<sup>44</sup> Rudolph Schwartz, *The Church Incarnate: The Sacred Function of Christian Architecture*, trans. Cynthia Harris (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1958), 187. Orig: *Vom Bau der Kirche*, Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1938. On emptiness, see Schwartz’s discussion of the open ring (67-94), esp. 68, 77, 86, 90.

<sup>45</sup> “The renewal of religious art must come out of the house, the building, the building for the assembly of those who are grasped by an ultimate concern and express it in similar symbols. We must start with the unity of technical and artistic creation. In most creative centuries, church buildings gave the most important impulse to everything religious art was doing. I believe that this has to be done again. We do not know how far we can go, but we know that if we start soberly, asking ourself [*sic*] what is the meaning, the purpose, the aim of the building in which the ultimate concern shall be the dominating reality – ask this in terms of external, physical techniques and of technical means to produce this meaning – then we may find a way which avoids the terrible distortion of religious art in the last century. Purpose, in building assembly houses for ultimate concern, means not external purposes; it means adequacy to the religious character of the ultimate concern which is supposed to be expressed.” OAA 39-40.

<sup>46</sup> OAA 41.

<sup>47</sup> OAA 212.

<sup>48</sup> OAA 228.

<sup>49</sup> OAA 40.

<sup>50</sup> OAA 188, 218.

<sup>51</sup> “On the one hand, there is an insistence on the substantial presence of God in certain places and, on the other, an affirmation that God is to be found beyond all we can touch, imagine, or think. God situates Himself outside and above even that which manifests God’s pres-

ence. These two attitudes towards the sacred or the religious are dealt with in all the Christian Churches. The first corresponds, however, to a faith rather of a Catholic type, the second rather to a Protestant type of faith. It is important to distinguish clearly between attitude and confession." André Gounelle, "Tillich: A Vision of Protestantism for Today," in *Spirit and Community: The Legacy of Paul Tillich*, edited by Frederick J. Parrella (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 162.

<sup>52</sup> OAA 226.

<sup>53</sup> OAA 194, 231-232.

<sup>54</sup> OAA 216.

<sup>55</sup> "If some building is architecturally perfect in itself, namely, completely adequate to its purpose, one should not add anything to beautify it. The beauty must lie in the adequacy and expressive power of the structure, not in contingent additions; and I believe that the word *expressiveness* must, at least for thirty years from now, replace the desecrated word *beautiful*, desecrated most by religious art at the end of the nineteenth century." OAA 223.

<sup>56</sup> OAA 203.

<sup>57</sup> OAA 203.

<sup>58</sup> "The Christian has only contempt for pious frauds which are passed off as art, concrete used as though it were wood, steel used as if it were stone, false beams, simulated marble, imitation drapes. This is the heresy of Docetists in art. It is Christ seeming to be man, but not being man in reality." Kilan McDonnell, "Art and the Sacramental Principle," *Liturgical Arts* 25 (1957): 92. "What is required are well-made, genuine things: things that are simple, manly, solid, chaste, honest, unsentimental, noble, hieratic." John Julian Ryan, "Toward a Sound Religious Art," *Catholic World* 187 (1958): 11. Modernist architects as Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, and Adolf Loos promoted values like authenticity, functionalism, simplicity, essentialism, and honesty in architecture. Already in 1908, the modernist Austrian architect Adolf Loos claimed: "Lack of ornament is a sign of spiritual strength." Adolf Loos, "Ornament and Crime," in *Adolf Loos: Pioneer of Modern Architecture*, ed. Ludwig Münz and Gustav Künstler, London: Thames & Hudson, 1966, 231.

<sup>59</sup> OAA 216.

<sup>60</sup> OAA 226. My emphasis. See also OAA 189.

<sup>61</sup> Dudley, 522.

<sup>62</sup> OAA 194.

<sup>63</sup> OAA 223.

<sup>64</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3 volumes (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951, 1957, 1963), III, 198. Henceforth, ST.

<sup>65</sup> For the following discussion, I will draw mainly on references of the fourth part on "Life and the Spirit" of Tillich's *Systematic Theology*, particularly "The Spiritual Presence," ST III, 111-161; and "The Spiritual Presence and the Ambiguities of Culture," ST III, 245-265.

<sup>66</sup> ST III 198.

<sup>67</sup> Frederick J. Parrella, "Tillich's Theology of the Concrete Spirit," in *The Cambridge Companion to Paul Tillich*, ed. Russell Re Manning (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 89.

<sup>68</sup> Werner Schüßler, "Where Does Religion Come From? Paul Tillich's Concept of *Grundoffenbarung*", in *Religion et culture: actes du colloque international du centenaire Paul Tillich, Université Laval, Québec 18-22 août 1986*, edited by Michel Despland, Jean-Claude Petit, and Jean Richard (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval and Éditions du Cerf, 1987), 164-165. My emphasis.

<sup>69</sup> Paul Tillich, "The Conquest of the Concept of Religion in the Philosophy of Religion," in *What is Religion?*, tr. J. L. Adams (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 137-138 (GW I, 377). My emphasis.

<sup>70</sup> ST III 111ff.

<sup>71</sup> ST I 249.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> ST III 114.

<sup>74</sup> ST III 111. Tillich refuses the metaphors of *inspiration* and *infusion*, when they are understood as merely *information about* something rather than *transformation*.

<sup>75</sup> ST III 112.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> ST III 161.

<sup>79</sup> ST III 120.

<sup>80</sup> ST III 117. My emphasis.

<sup>81</sup> Schüßler, 161.

<sup>82</sup> ST III 133. My emphasis.

<sup>83</sup> ST III 129.

<sup>84</sup> ST III 134. My emphasis.

<sup>85</sup> Robert P. Scharlemann, "Tillich's Religious Writings," in Paul Tillich, *Main Works/Hauptwerke*, Vol. 5, *Writings on Religion/Religiöse Schriften*, ed. Robert P. Scharlemann (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), 5 n6. My emphasis.

<sup>86</sup> "[B]reakthrough is used intensively during a four-year period (1924-1927), and later only sporadically." Scharf, 7. See also Scharf, 300ff.

<sup>87</sup> "One Moment of Beauty," OAA 235.

<sup>88</sup> OAA 221.

<sup>89</sup> OAA 222.

<sup>90</sup> ST III, 112.

<sup>91</sup> OAA 235.

<sup>92</sup> Scharf 306.

<sup>93</sup> George Pattison, *Art, Modernity and Faith: Restoring the Image* (London: SCM Press, 1998), 106.

<sup>94</sup> ST III, 158. My emphasis.

<sup>95</sup> Frederick J. Parrella, "Tillich's Understanding of Symbol and Contemporary Catholic Sacramentality," in *Das Symbol als Sprache der Religion: Internationales Jahrbuch für die Tillich-Forschung*, Vol. 2, edited by Christian Danz, Werner Schüßler, and Erdmann Sturm (Wien, Münster: LIT Verlag, 2007), 104-105, referring to ST III, 121.

<sup>96</sup> ST III, 249. My emphasis.

<sup>97</sup> ST III, 129. My emphasis. See ST III, 112-113: "The finite cannot force the infinite; man cannot compel God."

<sup>98</sup> ST II, 79. My emphasis.

<sup>99</sup> ST III, 249.

<sup>100</sup> ST III, 250.

<sup>101</sup> ST III, 112.

<sup>102</sup> ST III, 252. My emphasis.

<sup>103</sup> ST I, 254. My emphasis.

<sup>104</sup> ST III, 250.

<sup>105</sup> ST III, 140.

<sup>106</sup> ST III, 251.

<sup>107</sup> McNamara, 2009, 27.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Gounelle, 166.

<sup>111</sup> See ST III, 250.

<sup>112</sup> For the following discussion, I will refer to the presentation of this church in Mary-Cabrini Durkin, *The Cathedral of Christ the Light* (Oakland, California) (Strasbourg: Éditions du Signe, 2008).

<sup>113</sup> Dudley, 521. See OAA 188, 191.

<sup>114</sup> OAA 221.

<sup>115</sup> ST III, 249. My emphasis.

<sup>116</sup> Durkin, 8. My emphasis.

<sup>117</sup> Paraphrasing Le Corbusier's well-known comment of a house as "une machine à habiter," the French painter Jean Charlot wrote that, "from God's point of view a church is a *machine to live in*, and from man's point of view, a *machine to pray in*." Jean Charlot, "Catholic Art in America: Debits and Credits," *Liturgical Arts* 27 (1958): 21.

<sup>118</sup> In their document *Built on Living Stones*, the Roman Catholic Bishops of North America argue for churches that are "both the house of God on earth (*domus Dei*) and a house fit for the prayers of the saints (*domus ecclesiae*)." They must be "*expressive of the presence of God and suited for the celebration of the sacrifice of Christ*, as well as *reflective of the community that cele-*

*brates there.*" *Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship: Guidelines of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, 2000), 16. My emphasis. This last point, being "reflective of the community that celebrates there," corresponds in my view with Tillich's argument for a movement inwards in architectural space, which I call the "appropriation" of the space.

<sup>119</sup> Durkin, 30.

<sup>120</sup> Reymond, "Le Paradoxe," 153.

<sup>121</sup> Apart from being physically present, a living community can express their presence in a church through the display of the names of baptized and deceased, catechetical and charity works, images or statues of particular saints, and so on.

<sup>122</sup> Tillich's use of the term *victory* in church architecture might surprisingly correspond to Schwartz's refreshingly pleading for "true and sacred failure," for I believe that both intuit the same mystery. According to Schwartz, "church building is the great form of surrender, the work of hands which open sacred inaction. It is that work which grows ever smaller, gradually ceasing, that work in which man grows ever weaker, until, empty to the dregs, he stands at the brink before God... [B]y ourselves, we can build no churches, that God must do... That which is new in the world comes straight from God at the moment that it is no longer hoped for; this is the mystery of true and sacred failure (Schwartz, 229-31).



**FIG. 1 VIEW FROM LAKE MERRITT**



**FIG. 3 ENTERING THE CATHEDRAL**



**FIG. 2 VIEW FROM THE PLAZA**



**FIG. 4 INTERIOR VIEW OF CONCRETE RING AND WOODEN VAULT IN DOUGLAS FIR**



**FIG 5. VIEW OF THE SANCTUARY WITH CHRIST IN MAJESTY (OMEGA WINDOW)**



**FIG. 7 PORCH AND FRONT**



**FIG. 6 VIEW OF THE CENTRAL AXIS FROM BAPTISMAL FONT TO ALTAR**



**FIG. 8 CRUCIFIX AND AMBO**

**BEING AND GAIA:  
SEEKING RESOURCES TOWARD A VO-  
CABULARY FOR NATURALISTIC THEOLOGY**

RYAN T. O'LEARY

### Tillich's Ontological Theology

In perhaps one of Tillich's most famous (and most difficult to unpack) statements, Tillich claims that, "God is being-itself." More, "Since God is the ground of being, he is the ground of the structure of being. He is not subject to this structure; the structure is grounded in him. He *is* this structure, and it is impossible to speak about him except in terms of this structure. God must be approached cognitively through the structural element of being-itself. These elements make him a living God, a God who can be man's concrete concern."<sup>1</sup> We have in this one short passage a number of important—indeed crucial—themes for the development of an ontological concept of Nature. First, we see the identification of *God* with *being-itself* (which is, of course, arrived at through the method of correlation, which connects theological, religious symbols with philosophical, ontological concepts). Along with this, we find reference to God as the *ground* of being. We see that God not only grounds the structure but that in some important way *God is the structure of being*, and that to speak of God we must speak of the structure of being. We see that somehow the structural elements of being make God a living God—hence, we can speak of the symbol "*divine life*" ontologically in terms of an active interplay of the structural elements of being. Finally, Tillich suggests that God can be our concrete *concern* since God is a living God that we can approach *cognitively* through an understanding of the structure of being.

In Tillich's ontology, being-itself needs to be understood first as the unifying principle of the "basic articulation of being": "the self-world structure." This self-world structure, in turn, is the precondition of the "subject-object" structure that makes possible asking questions and attaining knowledge.<sup>2</sup> Being-itself is thus the presupposition of the self-world structure of existence, which in turn is the presupposition of the subject-object structure, which is the necessary condition for knowledge. Most importantly, in its self-manifestation, being-itself has the character of "the power of being." That is, being-itself, in its self-manifestation and self-realization, has the character of the power of being resisting in-

finitely and absolutely nonbeing. Thus, in *The Courage to Be*, we find the following:

[i]f being is interpreted in terms of life or process or becoming, nonbeing is ontologically as basic as being. The acknowledgement of this fact does not imply a decision about the priority of being over nonbeing, but it requires a consideration of nonbeing in the very foundation of ontology. Speaking of courage as a key to the interpretation of being-itself, one could say that this key, when it opens the door to being, finds, at the same time, being and the negation of being and their unity.<sup>3</sup>

Beings can only exist as an instantiation of—or through participation in—the prior dialectical activity of the self-manifestation of being-itself as the power of being infinitely overcoming nonbeing... and the religious symbol for this is the divine life.

"Power of being," in this interpretation, names the power of being-itself to realize itself by resisting nonbeing and unifying the power of being and nonbeing in an active dialectic by which finite being is structured. On the basis of this dialectic, the self-world and subject-object contrasts are grounded and empowered in their operation and in their unity. It is in and through the dual participation of being-itself and finite being that both finite life and the divine life are enacted. That is, finite being participates in being-itself and does so through the generating and empowering participation of being-itself in finite life as the power of *its* being, and through the active dialectic of the power of being and nonbeing. Hence, Tillich writes,

God himself is said to participate in the negativities of creaturely existence... God as being-itself transcends nonbeing absolutely. On the other hand, God as creative life includes the finite and, with it, nonbeing, although nonbeing is eternally conquered and the finite is eternally reunited within the infinity of the divine life. Therefore, it is meaningful to speak of a participation of the divine life in the negativities of creaturely life.<sup>4</sup>

And again: "Life itself is dialectical. If applied symbolically to the divine life, God as a living God must be described in dialectical statements. He has the character of all life, namely, to go beyond himself and return to himself."<sup>5</sup>

### B. The Ontological Concept "Nature"

To attempt an articulation of the vocabulary of a "naturalistic," panentheistic theology—centrally in-

corporating a theological understanding of the value of nature—we will need to formulate the concepts “nature” and “naturalism” in terms of the grounding ontology interpreted above. The ontology itself cuts off from the beginning the possibility of both reductionist naturalism and religious naturalism that simply identifies “God” with “nature.” A reductive naturalism—that is, an ontology, epistemology, and methodology which identify all of reality with inorganic substance deterministically regulated by mechanistic processes and laws—is already shown to be less than ontologically adequate insofar as the ontology posits a transcendent unity into which such reductive naturalism cannot inquire. Moreover, for reasons that will become more clear below, a simple conflation (or correlation) of the symbol “God” with the concept “nature” is insufficient insofar as Nature must be seen as subject to and constituted by the self-world structure of being.

Here, though, let us begin by noting that “nature” is a constructed concept. Historically, “nature” has been used in at least four crucially important ways, corresponding to two basic categorical types.

In the first type of way the term has been employed, “nature” is discussed in terms of “essence,” or the inherent character or basic constitution of a person or thing. Of course, “essence” has its own place in Tillich’s ontology, and therefore it is important for our purposes that we not confuse the ontological concept “nature” with the ontological concept “essence.” Just so, a second, more classically theological sense of the term used in this first sense must be separated out—this concerns the idea of humanity’s “natural” state as distinguished from a state of grace. Not only does this understanding carry with it theological baggage beyond the scope of this project, but it can also introduce confusion into our attempt to articulate “nature” as an ontological concept.

In the second type of way the term has been used, another understanding of nature has been historically prevalent, and it is this understanding that should be finessed. “Nature” in this third sense concerns the observable phenomena of the material universe, and it is generally contrasted with both human artifice and the “supernatural.” Of course Tillich rejects *both* supernaturalism and a pantheism that would identify God with the cosmos. In any case, this understanding of the term—that is, the observable phenomena of the material universe—commonly includes the “material” substance of the universe (however this may be defined), the physical

constitutions and drives of organisms, and the forces controlling the physical phenomena that are observed. It is from this understanding that the final, most common and most general sense of the term is derived: “nature,” in this sense, means everything apart from the “artificial,” the man-made (and, of course, apart from the “supernatural”). “Nature” in this sense, therefore, does not possess those attributes which are specifically, particularly, and *essentially* human—recall echoes of the first sense of the term shading the fourth. That is, nature is held to be deterministic, not free, and mindless, not self-conscious. Here the second, theological sense shades this fourth sense, precisely *because* humans are created in the image of God that we are free and conscious.

This fundamental ambiguity, and the self-referencing shadings between the four primary meanings of the term, is crucial to our analysis. On the one hand, it is important to make clear that the term “essence” must be maintained as a technical ontological concept and that where we seek to render “nature” another technical ontological concept, we must be careful not to conflate the two. Of course, in so doing we cannot forget the overlap and reciprocal shading that the various senses of the term have historically involved. Hence, it is with the second type—nature as non-human and non-divine—that our analysis can most productively work.

Before continuing with the analysis, let us stop to make a point concerning terminology. In particular, with the word “nature,” there will be times in which the first set of meanings—recalling “essence” and the like—will be useful. Grammatically, we do not want to render ourselves incapable of saying, for example, “Writing of this type, by its very symbolic nature, runs the risk of imprecision.” To try to avoid the risk of terminological imprecision, however, I will consistently capitalize the term to distinguish it as an ontological concept grounded in Tillichian ontology and participating in the fundamental self-world structure of being. Hence, we will develop the concept of “Nature” in terms of an ontological polar contrast, while still reserving the word “nature” in all its linguistic ambiguity. Just so, when we formulate the polarity as the Man-Nature contrast, we are intentionally using “Man” as the other term of the contrast, rather than the gender-neutral “human” we would otherwise employ. This is intended to convey the modernist sense of “Man” as the object of scientific knowledge, the organizer of that knowledge, and the master of nature—evoking the modern pro-

ject of reason and Foucault's claim that "man" is a recent invention, a product of the modernist project.<sup>6</sup>

Now, not only does the term "nature" ambiguously shift between essentialist and materialist meanings, but also, even in the second sense, it contains a fundamental and productive ambiguity. This takes us straight to the heart of the concept and is crucial to our discussion. On the one hand, nature refers to wilderness, to the determining laws governing the functioning of the cosmos—that is, that realm of reality conceptually constituted by being distinguished from the products of human artifice. On the other hand, as organisms, as biological entities, humans clearly are *part* of nature. Hence, Nature is both that from which we come and that from which we distinguish ourselves. As beings that possess freedom and reason we see ourselves, in our "essential nature" standing apart from the unreasoning, deterministic, threatening "wild." This ambiguity, based in separation, can be situated squarely in Tillich's ontological schema by showing it to be a product of the existential estrangement produced by finitely occupying the self-world structure. As such, the Man-Nature contrast clearly partakes of that structure, and belongs to the fundamental condition of humanity.

We saw above that the structure of being is a dynamic dialectic, in which the power of being infinitely overcomes nonbeing in the self-manifestation of being-itself. Again, the basic articulation of the structure of being is the self-world structure, in which human beings have a self and have a world. While the self belongs to the world, it is *not* the world—while the self is free in the world it is also conditioned by the world. It is the self-world contrast that makes existence possible and that makes the ontological question pressing. The self-world contrast is the condition of the possibility of the subject-object contrast, and hence the two together are the conditions for the possibility of existence, experience, and knowledge. We also saw that it is not simply the division of subject and object that makes knowledge possible, but—as Heidegger shows—more primordially the unity of subject and object in being. That is, the contrast makes knowledge possible, but only insofar as the contrast is grounded in a prior unity, and that contrast is reunited in the knowledge of truth that it makes possible. Of course, this is an expression of the dynamic dialectic that drives the divine life, and continues to be instantiated at each level of the structure of being.

Now, in these same terms, we posit another contrast instantiating the same dynamic: the Man-Nature contrast. The concept of Nature is directly a product of the existential estrangement so fundamental to human existence. Estrangement is itself a product of the ontological constitution of finite existence, in which being and nonbeing are mixed imperfectly. Existence, experience, and knowledge are made possible by separation, according to which (relative) nonbeing is a principle of differentiation and otherness—but this constitutive separation of the human being from other human beings, from the world, and from God produces the experience of nonbeing manifested in anxiety, the ontological shock, and estrangement. That is, it is the transcendental awareness of separation that constitutes estrangement and is experienced in anxiety.

In Man's consciousness of the world of which he is a part, then, he instantiates the separation of existence from its source—being-itself or God—in the conceptual constitution of Man as separate from and over against Nature. Moreover, just as human existence is *both* estranged from God *and* participates in the divine life (through the dual participation we named above), just as infinity encompasses and includes finitude even as finitude separates itself from the infinite in its very constitution, so too does Man participate in and take his being from Nature even as he constitutes himself in terms of his estrangement from Nature. Both Man and Nature conceptually constitute each other in this primordial act of separation.

Just as being-itself grounds, incorporates, and transcends the power of being and nonbeing in the dynamic dialectic of the infinitely unifying divine life, Nature does the same on a lower level. Nature gives rise to the subject which separates himself from her both as the biological and environmental precondition of the species and as the conditions for individual organic generation through genetics and the mechanisms of conception and birth. Hence, the primordial unity of Man and Nature makes the contrast possible. Nature also gives rise to the subject conceptually, as the reality of the object from which he is separated—that which Man observes and utilizes is that from which Man separates himself in the very acts of observation and utilization. In that separation Man defines his identity as Man—that is, as neither beast nor determined material process, but as free, rational, and inquiring—and in the same movement defines the Nature from which he is separate. Again, this is clearly an expression of the more

primordial self-world contrast, according to which the self is that being which finds itself thrown into a world that the self must negotiate, learn about, strive to master, or seek harmony with.

So, while knowledge and experience require separation—hence Nature becomes objectified, as does Man himself when he becomes an object of inquiry—Man also participates in Nature in a more fundamental way. He does so, however, on the ground of a still more primordial structure grounded in the unity of being-itself as the ground and necessary condition of the structure of being. Thus Nature as the unity from which Man separates himself is dependent on a deeper unity—Nature remains finite being, conditioned by and dependent upon that which is neither conditioned nor dependant, being-itself. This is why a pantheism that simply equates God with Nature cannot work—Nature is grounded in a God who transcends the self-world and Man-Nature structures.

Nature is that from which Man is estranged, right along with all his other ways of being estranged, and she is that from which Man takes his organic being. However, she is also that which unifies her own internal separation of Man from Nature, insofar as Man participates in Nature and Nature participates in Man. Nature participates in Man through evolution and wonder, and Man participates in Nature as a learner and a shaper.

### C. The Religious Symbol, Gaia

In developing the symbol, Gaia, we will need to remember that Gaia *is* a religious symbol, correlated to the ontological conceptual schema of Nature we have sketched above. Yet where God as being-itself is not subject to the structure of being, Gaia as Nature is subject to that structure. It is within the structure of being that Nature is separated from Man. It is because Man is a self who has a world that he can separate himself from what he calls Nature, yet all separation is always already united and eternally reunited in the dynamic dialectic of the structure of being expressing and grounded in being-itself. Thus, Gaia operates as a symbol for the dynamic through which Nature forms a primordial unity from which Man separates himself and in which that separation can be overcome in reunion. Gaia lives, not because she is an organism, but because she expresses a process through which “actualization of the structural elements of being in their unity and in their tension” is made organically possible.

James Lovelock, the scientist who developed the theory he named the “Gaia hypothesis,” has given us the revitalized symbol. Lovelock himself uses the term Gaia metaphorically to denote the “system of organisms and their planet” which co-evolves as a single system such that the planet is “able to regulate its climate and chemical state.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, the earth is self-regulating and self-maintaining. The earth is “alive,” Lovelock says, “only in a physiological sense,” not in the sense that it has motives or consciousness.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps most important for our purposes is a central insight of the theory: “The evolution of the species and the evolution of their environment are tightly coupled together as a single and inseparable process.”<sup>9</sup>

Gaia is alive symbolically, insofar as the earth and its inhabitants are engaged in an ongoing process whereby the elements structuring the conditions for the possibility of organic life—self-propagating organisms and collective species, the environment of these species, weather patterns, atmospheric constitutions, the processes of evolution, and many more—move “divergently and convergently,” and “separate and reunite simultaneously.” This process forms the ground of organic life and its ultimate reunification in biological interdependence. When we name these processes “Gaia,” we intentionally evoke the image of the Earth Goddess, one of the most primal of religious symbols, and we reinterpret that symbol according to the insights of ecology and guided by the grounding ontology of Tillichian theology.

Gaia, then, partakes of the ontological structure of life as an instantiation of the divine life—itsself a symbolic expression—on a lower ontological level. Gaia lives in a process of going out beyond herself in evolution and returning to herself in the co-evolution of organisms and environment necessary to the process of her self-realization. Hence, not only is the environment necessary for the maintenance of the conditions of the possibility of organic life on earth, but that organic life is the very mechanism of the maintenance of those conditions. Here we find the idea of dual participation recast and given concrete content in the terms of ecology and symbolic expression in the idea of the life of Gaia. Just as the structure of being is grounded in the dynamic self-manifestation of being-itself, and just as Man is part of the very Nature from which he conceptually separates himself, organic life is absolutely grounded in and fully participates in the life of Gaia. Gaia grounds the possibility of organic life by providing

its necessary conditions. Gaia continuously goes out beyond herself in evolution in the increasing complexity and capacity of life as organic life, and she returns to herself insofar as all organic life is continuously in the process of integration and reintegration.

The life of Gaia hence partakes of the process of creative tension that is the divine life—the dialectical dynamic which gives rise to creaturely life and to the conditions of its limitation. Gaia unifies birth and death in a life of structured, infinite complexity, and does so as part of the self-manifestation, self-transcendence, and self-realization of the divine life. As part of the divine life, Gaia expresses the same dynamic which is the movement of the divine life on a lower ontological level. Yet it could be argued that, as that which grounds and encompasses human life as organic life, Gaia participates in the divine life in many ways at a higher ontological level than does human existence. If humans are created in the “image of God”—and we can ontologically explicate this in terms of the structure of being, through which human life expresses and participates in the divine life—then so too is Gaia created in God’s image.

Lovelock writes, “Gaia theory forces a planetary perspective. It is the health of the planet that matters, not that of some individual species of organisms,” not even the human species.<sup>10</sup> This insight is fundamental to what is called deep ecology, which is grounded in the recognition of the deep interconnectedness and interdependence of organic life. Yet a simple recognition of interconnectedness—provided by philosophical reflection and given concrete content in scientific study—is not enough to provide the resources and motivation to live in the necessary ways. Nor can simple self-interest accomplish this, as self-interest is conflicted and fickle.

The image of a living earth, created in the image of God, participating in the divine life even as we

do—and participating in our lives empowered by the participation of the divine in finite being—can provide the imaginative resources to religiously express the moral and existential import of ecological science. This symbol, moreover, is especially effective insofar as it can be articulated in the terms of a grounding theological ontology. This Tillichian ontology allows us to articulate conceptually what we symbolize religiously. It allows us to develop an ontological understanding of Nature. It allows us to develop a theological account of the relation of human existence, Nature, and the divine life. It allows us to articulate a correlation grounded in Tillichian ontology and theology, connecting the religious symbol of Gaia to the ontological and existential Man-Nature contrast: Gaia transcends and reunifies that which was structurally separated in the dynamic unity of the living earth... just as the power of being eternally overcomes nonbeing in the dynamic life of the living God.

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Volume One* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1951), 238-39.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2000), 32.

<sup>4</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Volume One*, 270.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Volume Two* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1957), 90.

<sup>6</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1994), xxiii.

<sup>7</sup> James Lovelock, *The Ages of Gaia: A Biography of Our Living Earth* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988), 7.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, xix.

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