BULLETIN

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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

The editor apologizes for the late arrival of this Spring Bulletin. He will make every effort to have the Summer and Fall Bulletins mailed on time. Thank you for your understanding. Please send in any papers delivered at the NAPTS, the AAR Tillich Group, or other relevant meetings to the Secretary for publication in the Bulletin. Thank you

2015 JAHRBUCH: A MESSAGE FROM MARY ANN STENGER

[Editor's Note: this message was sent electronically to member of the NAPTS six weeks ago.]

The next *Tillich Jahrbuch*, volume 10 (2015), will have the theme of "The Kingdom of God and the Ethics of Expectation" (Reich Gottes und Ethik der Erwartung). I invite proposals for contributing an article in English on this theme. Proposals with a proposed title and brief description of the argument should be sent to:
Mary Ann Stenger at masten01@louisville.edu or masten01@gmail.com by July 15, 2014.

You will receive a response to your proposal by August 1, 2014.

If your proposal is accepted, the article will be due to Mary Ann Stenger by December 1, 2014. Each article is to be 20 pages, 1.5 line spacing, and 1

inch margins.

The *Tillich Jahrbuch* is published by Walter de Gruyter, with these editors: Christian Danz, Marc Dumas, Werner Schüssler, Erdmann Sturm, and Mary Ann Stenger.

If you have any questions, please e-mail Mary Ann Stenger to the addresses above.

New Publications

Carr, Paul. "Is Religion Irrelevant? Paul Tillich's Answering Theology."
http://www.slideshare.net/paulhcarr/tillich-isreligionirrelevant

This is an overview of Tillich's life and thought with photos of his memorial park in New Harmony, Indiana.

Inexhaustible Depth: The Role of the Nothing in Paul Tillich's *Systematic Theology*

Richard Grigg

It seems a safe assumption that everyone in this room has some appreciation for Paul Tillich's theological work, and that the majority of you find him a particularly significant thinker. At the very center of Paul Tillich's theological achievement stands his three-volume *Systematic Theology*. I trust that the real Tillich aficionados among you hold, as I do, that this great work is almost as fresh today as when Tillich finished it five decades ago. But why should this be so? What gives it its enduring power? It is probably foolish to suppose that there is a single answer to this question. Certainly, the *Systematic Theology,* while constituting a coherent whole, is a complex work. It is not ponderously complex, in the way, for example, that Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* is, but rather inasmuch as it provides an extraordinarily thorough analysis of human life before God, a painstaking phenomenological analysis of the many ways in which the divine appears to human consciousness. It is quite clearly the product of a lifetime of reflection.

Part of the *Systematic Theology's* staying power, then, undoubtedly has to do with the fact that its rich detail rewards repeated readings. But, still, it seems to me that it is worthwhile to consider whether there might not in fact be some single characteristic of the work that, if not the sole reason for its continued relevance, plays a particularly significant role in keeping the *Systematic Theology* fresh. My suggestion here will be that this single characteristic is the manner in which Tillich's *magnum opus* is able to provide an extraordinarily detailed exploration of the human person's relation to God while all the while keeping that God almost a complete mystery. If this is a valid insight, there is both good news and bad news attached to it. Let's get the bad news out of the way first: Because what Tillich really tells us about God is next to nothing, there is an inviting opening in his theology into which one may place one's own vision of the nature of God and mistake it for what Tillich actually intended. I do not want to confuse this unhappy phenomenon with the quite different and legitimate one of finding clues within Tillich's thought that suggest profitable ways to modify Tillich's thought or to appropriate his insights for ends other than those that were strictly his own. But I do worry about very traditional Christian notions of God that get attached to Tillich's God as being-itself, an attachment that, just perhaps, is what led to Tillich's famous request of Thomas J. J. Altizer always to remember that the real Tillich is the radical Tillich.

But the good news that follows in the wake of recognizing that Tillich's God is, at root, radically mysterious is that radical mystery suggests inexhaustibility, if not where reflection, strictly speaking, is concerned, then at least for what we might term "contemplation." Hence, the ongoing relevance, and the rewards offered by repeated readings, of Tillich's *Systematic Theology*.

In order to see just why, as well as just how, I want to maintain that Tillich's God should be regarded as radically mysterious, I must ask your indulgence as I begin by briefly going over some of the basics with which most of you are already quite familiar. Karl Barth famously said that the only reason for not becoming a Roman Catholic is the doctrine of the *analogia entis*. For Barth, there is no continuum of being upon which God and creatures can both be found. As part of his reaction against the *analogia entis,* Barth rejects any purely human, philosophical pathway to God. The Barthian project ultimately fails for the fairly obvious reason that a theologian is always operating with assumptions about the nature of reality, both finite reality and transcendent reality, and that merely avoiding the technical jargon of philosophical analysis does not allow one to skirt philosophy. Rather, it only succeeds in hiding from oneself and one's readers the

details of the philosophy that one is in fact employing. To be fair to Barth, he does come clean, perhaps, when he explains his use of the *analogia fidei*.

But Tillich, I want to argue, is as successful as the Barth of *The Epistle to the Romans*—which we should remember influenced Martin Heidegger—in preserving the divine mystery despite his extraordinarily detailed philosophical analysis of the structure of finite being and the points where the divine can shine through it. As scholars such as Jean Richard have long ago pointed out, while Tillich may use the word "analogy" from time to time, there is no doctrine of the *analogia entis* functioning in his thought. We recall that Tillich identifies God with being-itself, and although he waffles a bit, his most consistent position is to say that this is in fact the only literal, non-symbolic statement that one can make about God: God is being-itself. As the ground of being rather than a being, God cannot, strictly speaking, be said to exist. In this, Tillich agrees with the venerable theological approach known as the *via negativa*. And if God is not a being, indeed does not even exist in the technical sense, then there are no qualities that we can predicate literally of God in and of Godself. We can only make negative and relational statements about God, such as the assertions that God is *not* a being and that he *transcends* all beings. This puts Tillich's God in almost precisely the same position as the Hindu Brahman without qualities. And indeed Tillich himself references that notion in his *Systematic Theology*. Now this position is not without its difficulties: If the divine in and of itself has no qualities, in what sense can avatars of the divine or symbols of it represent or re-present it? There is literally nothing to represent, and no sense in which one avatar or symbol could be more appropriate than any other.

Wait a moment, though: what about the negative and relational properties that we can in fact predicate of being-itself, such as Tillich's relational assertion that being-itself is made present to consciousness in the phenomenon of existential courage, the self-affirmation of being in spite of the threat of nonbeing? This seems to offer us a foothold for symbolizing the divine. But if we can make thoroughly *literal* negative and relational assertions about being-itself, why do we need recourse to symbolic assertions? I have long supposed that the answer to this question is that Tillich's symbols of the divine—he can aver, for example, that God is "living" and that God is "creative"—are not functioning primarily as non-literal or symbolic *assertions* about God, but are instead ways of mediating the divine *presence*. I believe that I was set on this fruitful approach to Tillich when, as an undergraduate in Robert Scharlemann's course on "The Theology of Paul Tillich," I was required to read Guy Hammond's fine introduction to Tillich, *The Power of Self-Transcendence*. There is, of course, an assertion being made when one says symbolically that God is living or creative, but the assertive function is secondary; it is in service of making God present to human consciousness. The symbol provides a concrete object of consciousness. This approach helps us to understand how Tillich can claim both that God as being-itself is the "source" of courage, which suggests causality, and that causality is a category of finite being and thinking, much as it is for Kant, in which case God as being-itself cannot be implicated in causal relations. For, if we have a symbol of God, such as when the creator God of traditional Jewish and Christian monotheism symbolically represents God as being-itself—this is where Tillich's statement that "God is [a] symbol of God" comes into play—the presence of God to human consciousness that the symbol provides can serve as a source of courage: it is, technically, the symbol that is implicated in a causal nexus.

In the past, it has seemed to me that this is very much the whole of what Tillich is up to in his *Systematic Theology,* namely, the investigation of how symbols of the divine function as sources of empowerment in the three realms that he labels essence, existence, and life. For he cannot be exploring the particular cognitive content of these symbols in the sense of attributing other than negative and relational qualities to being-itself, for being-itself once again has no such qualities. But more recent reflection has convinced me that there is another possibility: one can also read Tillich as indicating where within the structure of finite being as it is given to consciousness under the various conditions of essence, existence, and life, one encounters the abyss for thought that is being-itself, in other words, vantage points within the structure of finite being from which one can contemplate the divine mystery.

Time constraints dictate that we make due here with just the first of Tillich's realms of essence, existence, and life. His analysis of the realm of essence focuses upon the essence of human finitude. Such finitude is being that is limited by nonbeing. And the divine aid that is required here is the aforementioned courage as the self-affirmation of being

in spite of the threat of nonbeing. The phenomenon of courage is the presence of God to consciousness.

In order to sharpen the contours of what I have in mind, I want to bring into the conversation a relatively recent book by the well-known physicist Lawrence Krauss, a book entitled *A Universe from Nothing: Why There Is Something Rather than Nothing*. Now recall that Tillich suggests that the primal form in which both nonbeing and being-itself are given to consciousness is what he calls the "metaphysical shock," the wonder occasioned by considering the fact that there is anything at all rather than simply nothing. For Tillich, as well as for theologians who are less radical than he is, it is fair to say that God is, at least in some appropriately qualified sense, the answer to the question "Why is there anything at all, why not simply nothing?"

But Lawrence Krauss wants nothing to do with the God-hypothesis as a possible explanation for the existence of our universe. Hence, he takes it upon himself to show that one can, purely on the basis of quantum physics, get a whole universe from nothing. His argument focuses on the quantum vacuum, which is a void in that there are no ordinary instances of matter or energy present within it. But thanks to the notorious Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, so-called "virtual particles" continually pop in and out of existence within the quantum vacuum, and when the phenomenon that cosmologists dub inflation is thrown into the mix, it is theoretically possible, or so Krauss argues, for virtual particles to become the seeds of a universe. Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow make a similar argument in their book *The Grand Design*.

Now Krauss complains that, whenever theologians are shown that it is possible to get something from nothing and thus that the universe does not need a creator, those theologians will argue that Krauss's version of nothing is not the real nothing of which theology speaks, the nothing referenced in the traditional doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. Indeed, even non-theologians have suggested that even if we grant that, thanks to the laws of quantum physics, one can get a universe from nothing that is the quantum vacuum, it is still necessary to ask where the laws of quantum physics came from.

I must say that I have some sympathy with Krauss's annoyance here. The quantum vacuum seems pretty close to nothing. Aren't theologians just playing a version of the old God-of-the-gaps game when they claim that there is some deeper nothing beyond the quantum vacuum, a nothing outside the reach of scientific investigation? Perhaps, but what is important for our purposes is to note that Tillich is not interested in the origin of the physical universe out of a physical nothing: *Krauss's nothing is the simple absence of being; Tillich's is the dialectical negation of the negation of being*.

I suspect that my search here for a Nothing beyond nothing will sound to some ears likes so much postmodern jargon, one more variation, for example, on Derrida's infamous *differance*. Truth be told, however, I have no interest in the postmodernists. I am perfectly comfortable, indeed a firm adherent of, that "meta-narrative" that is the scientific worldview, though if I had my druthers, I would add a few philosophical and theological chapters to that narrative. And Tillich's approach to the divine Nothing is, if truth were told, a foundationalist enterprise, not at all a postmodern one. For his phenomenological ontology is of a decidedly transcendental sort, claiming to uncover the universal conditions for the possibility of human consciousness. Granted, Tillich imbibes a bit of Heidegger's opposition to "technical" reason and opposes it to what Tillich himself calls "ontological" reason. But his undertaking is a decidedly rational one. Note, for instance, how he details the structure of finite being, beginning with the basic self-world structure presupposed in all human consciousness, and then proceeding to the polar elements, based on that self-world tension: freedom and destiny, individuation and participation, and dynamics and form.

It is my contention that Tillich provides us with a unique avenue to contemplation of the divine mystery inasmuch as his phenomenological ontology offers a variety of specific vantage points from which to contemplate that mystery. Now the divine mystery, a Nothing for thinking, something that produces Rudolf Otto's "blank wonder," does not lose its mysterious character even when we talk of the divine mystery being "revealed" to us. Tillich explains in *Systematic Theology,* volume I, that the word "mystery" is derived from *muein,* "closing the eyes" or "closing the mouth"… A genuine mystery, however, is experienced in an attitude that contradicts the attitude of ordinary cognition. The eyes are "closed" because the genuine mystery transcends the act of seeing.

Mystery characterizes a dimension that "precedes" the subject-object relationship. The same dimension is indicated in the "closing of the mouth." It is impossible to express the experience of mystery in ordinary language, because this language has grown

out of, and is bound to, the subject-object scheme Whatever is essentially mysterious cannot lose its mysteriousness even when it is revealed… It is just this seeming paradox that is asserted by religion and theology 109).

I can illustrate what I have in mind when I say that Tillich's analysis of the structure of finite being offers us various vantage points from which to contemplate the divine mystery by considering the polar elements of freedom and destiny. Under the conditions of existential distortion, the elements can become detached from one another so that freedom degenerates into mere arbitrariness and destiny into mechanical necessity. But in their essential polar tension, there is something of a paradox: the stronger the element of destiny, the stronger the element of freedom. How can this be so? If freedom is considered in the context of human being as *Dasein,* a being whose integrity and authenticity is underwritten by its always being situated in a particular "*there,"* then my being-this-particular-one-here is dependent upon my having a specific destiny as the context in which I can be the one that I am. And yet, the concepts of freedom and destiny as ordinarily understood undeniably suggest tension if not opposition. Thus, their paradoxical relation under the conditions of essential finitude, in which more freedom means more specific destiny and vice-versa, means the point at which they touch is exactly that, a mathematical, extensionless point, a nothing for thought. And, of course, from Tillich's theological perspective, this essential polar unity of freedom and destiny is grounded in God, so that it is God in Godself that is this point, this Nothing.

Now, if God were genuinely Nothing for thought, then it would seem that every confrontation with the divine would involve the very same sense of blank wonder. But the point here is that this is not entirely true, thanks to Tillich's phenomenological analysis of the structure of finite being. For now, while I am ever contemplating the same divine Nothing, I am doing so from different perspectives from within the structure of finite being, analogous to how I can survey the same landscape from different visual perspectives. I have illustrated how one can contemplate the divine Nothing from the vantage point of the polar tension between freedom and destiny, but one can also contemplate it from the perspective of the polar elements of individuation and participation, and dynamics and form. And one can contemplate it from the perspectives provided by the myriad variations that Tillich works upon the structure of finite being when he goes on to explore the dimensions that he calls "existence" and "life."

Thus, it is, if for no other reason, that the *Systematic Theology* will reward repeated readings. It is, among other things, a multi-faceted manual for contemplating the divine darkness.

Intimacy through Self-loss: Intersections in the Paradoxical Soteriologies of Paul Tillich and Sebastian Moore

Alexander T. Blondeau

"The presence of God is like the air we breathe. You can have all you want of it as long as you don't try to take possession of it and hang onto it."[1]

Introduction[2]

This paper argues that intimacy is often frustrated by our attempts to achieve it, and that a certain salvation is necessary for its manifestation. But salvation is itself exposed to the same problem. In seeking to save ourselves, we lose our salvation. This classical matter of self-salvation has been given new life in recent years due to the work of Ernest Becker and terror management theorists who have taken their cues from his work.

From our innate love of life and the accompanying fear of death[3] and meaninglessness, we are driven to seek salvation in powers greater than our own limited power. However, since nothing we can point to, talk about, or conceptually define is able to overcome death and doubt,[4] the threat of death and meaninglessness, as Ernest Becker argued, is largely repressed.[5] In this reduced consciousness, our awareness of existential threats is likewise reduced; thus, a *sort* of salvation is here attained more easily. The price, however, is that life must now be lived within the limits of this easily attained salvation; for the fullness of life runs to the limit of life, and this limit, death, is something we simply cannot face. Under such conditions, deep intimacy, both in the realm of cognition, and between persons, is impossible. We are too committed to living our illusions to risk being that vulnerable.

The question I seek to answer, therefore, is how salvation from death-anxiety makes intimacy, both in the realm of understanding and interpersonal rela-

tionships, possible. Behind the details of my answer lies the assumption that only the eternal could ever have the power to save us.[6] But how is a power that is so total, so all encompassing, to be accessed, and how does it create in us the conditions for intimacy and life to its fullness?

My conclusion is that access to the eternal, to salvation, comes by way of a paradoxical release of all attempts to grasp it. Salvation is an anti-technology. Our easily attained salvation requires a certain kind of work. It clings to its salvific objects and builds up resistances to broader horizons of reality. In a very real way, then, salvation consists in salvation from our salvation projects. A sort of death must precede new life. Such a death-into-new-life can philosophically manifest the release of our conceptual security, and psychologically the release of our ego-organized self-identity.[7]

This paper will proceed by way of three rather terse overviews with a goal of introducing a vision that emerges amongst them at a high level of abstraction. The examples will have three different modes: philosophical, psychological, and practical. The hope is to cast light onto a single soteriological dynamic that emerges in all three and suggest a way of living into that salvation. In the philosophical mode, we will be looking at Paul Tillich's treatment of reason as extended by Robert Scharlemann. In its psychological mode, we will consider the Christology of Sebastian Moore. Finally, Centering Prayer will be suggested as daily practice in this paradoxical salvation, resulting in a greater capacity for intimacy.

1. Paul Tillich's Paradoxical Revelation

The appearance of salvation in the realm of reason is, for Paul Tillich, the experience of revelation. Revelation, in his terms, is "saved reason."[8] But what is the form of death that revelation saves from? On the cognitive level[9] of reason there are two basic answers: disintegrating *error* and *emptiness*.

To see how these dual forms of death are manifest in Tillich's thought, we need to have before us the broad outline of his ontology of reason. It has three levels,[10] beginning with that which precedes (and follows) reason: the *depth* of reason. Second, there is the *structure* of reason, which is made up of the subject-object relation, and, finally, there are three sets of polar elements that constitute that structure. For our purposes, the concepts of structure and depth will be critical. Again, the depth of reason is not itself reason; rather it is that towards which all reason aims[11] and that from which it emerges. Depth is the union of subject and object. This makes sense of the way we call certain profound instances of understanding "deep." The more intimate the cognitive union, the deeper the knowledge.

From this ontology of reason, we can see Tillich's conceptualization of the basic problem of reason. If an act is rational, it occurs within the subject/object structure. This implies a "gap" between subject and object that a successful act of knowing overcomes cognitively.[12] Yet, it is overcome in a peculiar way. To quote Tillich, "The unity of distance and union is the ontological problem of knowledge."[13] This is a problem because of the way the *disunity* of union and distance leads to disintegrating *error* and *emptiness*.

On the one hand, the element of *union* leads to the great risk of error. Tillich refers to knowledge predominated by the element of union as "receiving knowledge."[14] In receiving knowledge, one's emotions serve the primary purpose of uniting oneself with the object of knowledge. The object of knowledge is passionately taken in to one's own cognitive structure where it is allowed to reorganize the existing content. This form of knowing is therefore significant for the knowing subject because of its passionate reception and the consequent novel effects in the subject's cognitive structure. If the object of knowledge manifests truth, the result is fulfillment. If, on the other hand, it only claims to manifest truth, then the result is cognitive disintegration.[15] If the religious dimension of life is involved in this error, the results can be catastrophic. It is from this risk that the need for critical detachment emerges.

The valid element of detachment in all human knowing recognizes that the "strangeness" of the object of knowledge requires the knowing subject to both honor and fear that unknown reality with a posture of detachment. The fear is of uniting one's self with elements of reality that only *seem* to be real.[16] When out of balance with receiving knowledge, however, this "controlling reason,"[17] as Tillich calls it, becomes the cognitive attempt to remain merely "safe" in a detached technical analysis of the object of knowledge. In so doing, the object becomes *objectified*.[18] It is integrated into the subject's cognitive structure only to the extent that it is familiar and can thereby be controlled. Such knowledge is safe, but it is not significant.[19] Nothing new is received. The result is emptiness in safety and the loss of the religious dimension of life.[20]

The paradox of salvation, developed from Tillich's thought by Robert Scharlemann, avoids these dual forms of death by uniting union and detachment religiously.[21] From the subjective point of view, the paradox of salvation frees reason from the fear of disintegrating error and emptiness by moving through three moments. The first moment, which is predominately characterized by receiving knowledge, is the undifferentiated, pre-critical moment of encounter. Here thought and being are one.[22] The next moment, characterized by controlling knowledge, is the emergence of critical awareness. Here thought and being are irrevocably separated in a sort of *cognitive fall* by the question "what is it *really*?"[23] Thought, thus estranged from being, cannot save itself. It is trapped between the alternatives of trying to return to Eden by the suppression of critical consciousness to apprehend significance, or of living with insignificant answers to its question.

The appearance of salvation, however, manifests a power that enables the paradoxical moment. In the grip of this power, reason is given the courage to take its "secure" conceptual answer to the question of "what is it *really?*" and negate it,[24] thus redirecting its attention once again to the singular reality that occasioned thought in the first place.[25] What appears in this moment is the religious union of union and distance, of passionate reception and criticism. It is not a mere doubting of doubt;[26] rather, it is a fragmentary cognitive fulfillment that moves through reception and doubt to the ever-emerging, but never graspable, depth of being, as appearing through structure.

In view of the fact that the appearance of the depth of reason is the fulfillment of reason, controlling rationality, with its tendency to reduce the unknown to the known, must engage in a sort of noetic discipline. It must be disciplined "…to refrain from filling the open space (left by the negation of our conceptual grasp) with anything other than the subject with which we took our start."[27] Without this conceptual release, deep cognitive intimacy will remain forever impossible.

2. Sebastian Moore's Paradoxical Christology

We move now to the appearance of the paradox of salvation in the Christology of Sebastian Moore.[28] Where our time with Tillich focused principally on intimacy as present in the cognitive act, Moore seeks to point at the heart of desire that precedes intimacy of any sort. He calls this the "wobble" that lies at the heart of *both* human greatness and evil.[29] The basic problem he articulates is an understanding of original or "generic" sin as a subconscious self-limitation, a deep-seated refusal to grow, to stifle and misdirect our basic desire. This refusal, as he sees it, gives rise to the fear of death and meaninglessness. The figure of Jesus brings salvation by manifesting life not limited by this basic refusal, a life free to give itself away completely.

To see the emergence of generic sin as refusal to grow, we must begin with Moore's concept of desire. Desire, he is fond of saying, is "love trying to happen."[30] In contrast to the dominant philosophical tradition since Plato, Moore wishes to insist that desire does not begin from a sense of lack, but rather, from a sense of *fullness*.[31] From the developmental-psychological standpoint, this is Freud's "oceanic" condition wherein the child floats as a bundle of pleasure in the amniotic fluid.[32] In arguing this, Moore is taking a page from Aquinas[33] and extending it; his starting point is that to be is to be good. Therefore, "…consciously to be is to be, consciously, desirable."[34]

But in our developmental journey, this undifferentiated pleasure cannot last. Moore traces the disruption of this original desirability through the developmental crises of emerging self-awareness. The original omnipresent desirability is lost, first, through the separation from the mother. Here the child gets the message, "be a part of me, or be on your own,"[35] This, of course, is intolerable to the child. Moore takes this to be *the* human moment[36] by which we can understand all the human conflicts that arise from our conflicting drives toward union and detachment. Out of this unbearable tension, a sort of compromise emerges wherein the child learns to repress its original "love of all life"[37] in deference to mother's "no no's." The child learns to live out of a reduced conception of its own desirability thereby learning to live within the boundaries of its own "ego-organized potential."[38] This self-repression is not itself the emergence of generic sin; rather, generic sin emerges when this reduced conception of desirability is taken to be *all there is*. "It is the universal decision that this feeling is correct, is the thing to live by. Sin is self-denial.[39] And this is the denial of God."[40]

It is in this that our easily attained salvation consists. That "…we set our own limit on the meaningfulness of our life in our refusal to grow beyond [this] stage [of consciousness]. We build an invisible wall round our life. Outside that wall, uncharted by

us, is death."[41] For consciousness thus restricted, death takes on a sinister symbolism. "Our egoistic self-importance leads us to see death, which is in reality simply part of the life process, as the end of what we consider as alone significant, the work of the ego."[42]

Thus, in Moore's thought, it is from the drama of the emergence of self-awareness that our problem arises. In the faces of our fist caregivers and in the face of society and culture, we emerge into the structure of those possibilities and those limits.[43] The whole complex of human evil is a sort of arrested-development within *exclusively* those limits.[44] As such, the salvation Moore sees in Jesus is, at least, the breaking out of this stalled developmental place, namely, the limiting of our sense of desirability within the context of social arousal.[45]

What Jesus represents for Moore is a "quantum leap in human intensity."[46] Jesus was "sinless" in that his sense of desirability was not determined by the context of indirect social arousal.[47] His oneness with the Father was characterized by the direct experience of his own desirability. The effect he had on his disciples was essentially the leading of them to the limit of indirect social arousal and then beyond it by his chosen self-sacrifice. The symbolism of death, thus, is transformed in this sinless one. His sense of desirability, not mediated by the social context, made it possible for his own passion to stretch to the limit of life, death, and beyond.[48]

The paradox here is formally identical with what we saw in Tillich's thought above. This salvation is the reorienting of our sense of self by releasing our grasp on the limited self that we have come to identify with. In seeking our identity, then, our attention is thus redirected to the immediate power in which we are at all times emerging, the primary mystery of our own being,[49] limited by nothing but the threshold of God's loving embrace: death.[50]

In making this move, we free others from having to provide the context by which we see ourselves. Interpersonal intimacy is therefore made possible by freeing others to be themselves just as we are being freed to be ourselves. I will close this section with Moore's own words. "[T]he work of the Holy Spirit in us is twofold. First, the Spirit awakens our real desires that we have denied. Second, the Spirit teaches us to lose those desires in the huge movement of God in all that exists. We are to become, first, honest, then cosmic."[51]

3. Conclusion: Centering Prayer as Paradoxical "Training" for Intimacy[52]

So far, we have encountered two instances of a paradoxical response to the basic human problem of our own contingency.[53] In the realm of cognition, this response demanded the relativization of our concepts and a continual return to the subject from which thought first took flight. P is ~P was the form of this paradoxical judgment.[54] In the realm of human desire, the paradoxical response called for the relativization of our sense of desirability as constructed out of indirect social arousal to the direct awakening of our sense of being as desirable. I am not "I" was the form this paradox took.[55] In each of these cases, a "common sense" response to human contingency was rejected. This response, in effect, labors to preserve rather than sacrifice its predicate. But such an approach is insufficient. Definitions obscure as they reveal, and the people and powers we identify with invariably die or fail us. Our constructions, however analytically precise or poetically evocative, remain "partializations"[56] of the ever-unfolding concreteness of either self or world. The paradoxical impulse is the ongoing discipline of honoring that truth, of letting being *be* and of being with being.

The common sense response to human contingency essentially turns the self and the world into a technology designed to lay hold of power, control, and esteem. We give ourselves over to "earthly-heroics," as Becker calls them.[57] Religion and the life of prayer are easily caught up into this way of coping. When this happens, prayer becomes the means of achieving those ends. This is the arrested development of religious consciousness. As we have noted, the foe driving this arrest is the fear of death. But as Moore helped us see, the arrest itself is that which gives death its power. The more powerful the threat, the more it is repressed and the more tenacious the self-arrest. The cycle feeds itself.

No spiritual technology could ever break this cycle, for in the moment of its introduction it would be assimilated into the means/ends dynamic in play. What is needed, rather, is an anti-technology, a method that breaks method,[58] a technique to stimulate human development by dying to technique.[59]

I will now conclude this paper by briefly suggesting such an anti-technology. It is a contemporary reclaiming and extension of Christian contemplative prayer developed by Thomas Keating and others called Centering Prayer. Centering prayer is in *prac-*

tice what we have seen Tillich do philosophically and Moore do psychotherapeutically or spiritually. In essence, it is the daily practice of fostering the conditions for intimacy by gently releasing any and all of the contents of the mind. In doing so, the ego-organized self is lost along with all the cognitive objects of either self or world. And yet, the self, totally naked, formless, and mysterious, remains. Thus, what Keating,[60] Merton,[61] and others have called the "False Self," that ego-organized and limited self, is relativized.[62] It is shown *not to be* "all that there is." At the end of one's ritual self-emptying, "you" are still there.

Of course, the temptation is, as I have mentioned, to turn this anti-technology into a technology, a means to some predetermined end. But as Cynthia Bourgeault beautifully notes, "…in Centering Prayer, one aims to attain nothing… It is a prayer that simply exercises the kenotic path: love made full in the act of giving itself away. It is practice, over and over, with that one bare gesture."[63]

Thus from the philosophical, to the psychological, to the practical, intimacy has been shown to result from a paradoxical salvation that essentially removes the threat of death by giving up the effort to name our own terms. In such an act, we move from living in a technology to a gift, from effort to gratitude, and from preoccupation to attention.

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[1] Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart: The Contemplative Dimension of the Gospel*, Twentieth Anniversary Edition ed. (New York: Bloomsbury, 2006), 125.

[2] I would like to thank Mike Jackson, Tracy Witham, Lois Malcolm, Jonathan Jong, Peter Susag, and Adam Chase for taking the time to carefully read earlier drafts of this paper and for providing truly valuable feedback.

[3] I will be using the term "death" in a sense near to the more technical term "non-being." As such it is not only narrowly biological death that will be in view. Most of the time, unless obvious, meaninglessness as an instance of non-being will be assumed as an instance of death.

[4] Marvin C. Shaw rightly notes that the world views that justify radical acts of self-giving are themselves always open to doubt, thus opening up the question of whether the freedom that gave rise to such paradoxical acts is dependent upon the veracity of those beliefs about the nature of reality. The first section of this paper shows how such beliefs must themselves be held paradoxically to avoid succumbing to the forms of death that manifest in in our acts of belief. Marvin C. Shaw, *The Paradox of Intention: Reaching the Goal by Giving up the Attempt to Reach It* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988), 113.

[5] Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press; Simon & Schuster, 1997).

[6] Much as Tillich argued, drawing on Hegel, "…reconciliation must eternally be accomplished, for as Hegel says, 'If life is not reconciled in itself, it is irreconcilable altogether.' the eternal unity of the ground of life is the basis for all actual self-estrangement and reconciliation." Paul Tillich, "Estrangement and Reconciliation," in *The Meaning of Health: Essays in Existentialism, Psychoanalysis, and Religion*, ed. Perry LeFevre (Chicago: Exploration Press, 1984), 6. And from Moore's perspective, "…it is a dependence on the total mystery that constitutes me, this unique good person, and supports my investment of my goodness in the risk-laden adventure of intimacy. The anchor of my new hope is goodness itself." Sebastian Moore, *Let This Mind Be in You: The Quest for Identity through Oedipus to Christ* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985), 28.

[7] It was Ernest Becker who first gave some traction to the idea of dying to self for me. The critical moment came during his discussion of character as a vital lie. Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 57.

[8] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology: Reason and Revelation, Being and God*, 3 vols, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press; repr, 1973), 154-5.

[9] Which is only but one of the four functions of reason in Tillich's system. The other three are the esthetic, the legal, and the communal.

[10] This ontology of reason reflects the ontology he develops for Being and God in Part II. of the System.

[11] Tillich, *Systematic Theology: Reason and Revelation, Being and God*, 1, 79.

[12] Ibid, 94.

[13] Ibid, 94

[14] Ibid, 98.

[15] Both of these statements need to be qualified. It is no easy matter to discern what knowledge is fulfilling and what knowledge is disintegrating. Adding to a consistent falsehood can seem fulfilling without actually being so. But this is an epistemological matter that cannot here be further pursued.

[16] The problem of the seemingly real and the "truly real" is discussed in the section "Truth and Verification. Tillich, *Systematic Theology: Reason and Revelation, Being and God*, 1, 100-105.

[17] Ibid, 97.

[18] Ibid, 97-99.

[19] Ibid, 105.

[20] Ibid, 99.

[21] This dynamic was made most clear for me by the work of Robert Scharlemann and his development of he concept of Absolute Paradox based on Tillich's own hints along these lines. Robert P. Scharlemann, "Critical and Religious Consciousness: Some Reflections on the Question of Truth in the Philosophy of Religion," in *Kairos and Logos: Studies in the Roots and Implications of Tillich's Theology*, ed. John J. Carey (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984).; *Reflection and Doubt in the Thought of Paul Tillich* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969).

[22] "…what marks an object as a religious one is its immediacy. In religion, as the religious consciousness still understands it, thought and object come together in such a way that one cannot even make a difference between them. In the immediately religious state the thought of God is simultaneously the being of God; that we think of God, and that God exists, are one and the same." "Critical and Religious Consciousness: Some Reflections on the Question of Truth in the Philosophy of Religion.", 74.

[23] Ibid, 63-4.

[24] This insight is behind Tillich's always paradoxical words on the nature of religion and the only absoluteness of Christianity. "…a particular religion will be lasting to the degree in which it negates itself as a religion. Thus Christianity will be a bearer of the religious answer as long as it breaks through its own particularity." Paul Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions*, Bampton Lectures in America (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 61. And again, "Jesus could not have been the Christ without sacrificing himself as Jesus to himself as the Christ. Any acceptance of Jesus as the Christ which is not the acceptance of Jesus the crucified is a form of idolatry." *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers; repr, 2001), 122.

[25] "Thinking converges again with the concrete content, and this recourse itself is the thinking of the religious content." Scharlemann, "Critical and Religious Consciousness: Some Reflections on the Question of Truth in the Philosophy of Religion.", 76.

[26] Such would never free us from the trap of emptiness. As Scharlemann says elsewhere, "I cannot escape radical doubt simply by doubting my doubt; but I can escape it if I come upon an objectival presence which, paradoxically, is not removed but established by my doubting of my doubt." *Reflection and Doubt in the Thought of Paul Tillich*, n. xvii.

[27] "Critical and Religious Consciousness: Some Reflections on the Question of Truth in the Philosophy of Religion.", 76.

[28] Moore's Christology is deeply informed by the insights of psychoanalytic theory, particularly as mediated by the anthropology of Ernest Becker.

[29] "I am trying to point to, to name, to describe, and to understand that centre in each of us where both hope and despair, both faith and doubt, both love and indifference, are born." Moore, *Let This Mind Be in You: The Quest for Identity through Oedipus to Christ*, xi.

[30] Sebastian Moore and Stephen McCarthy, *The Contagion of Jesus: Doing Theology as If It Mattered* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), xi.

[31] Moore, *Let This Mind Be in You: The Quest for Identity through Oedipus to Christ*, 5.

[32] Ibid, 5.

[33] "Hence it is clear that goodness and being are the same really. But goodness presents the aspect of desirableness, which being does not present." Thomas Aquinas, *The "Summa Theologica" of St. Thomas Aquinas: Complete English Edition in Five Volumes*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 2nd and rev. ed. (Notre Dame, IN: Christian Classics, 1981), ST I, Q 5, A 1.

[34] And this desirability is, for Moore, the root of all acts of desire. Moore, *Let This Mind Be in You: The Quest for Identity through Oedipus to Christ*, 8.

[35] Ibid, 71.

[36] Ibid, 71.

[37] In Freudian terms, this original love of life is the "id." Ibid, 74, 6.

[38] *The Crucified Jesus Is No Stranger* (New York: Seabury Press, 1977), 7.

[39] It must be stressed that the "self" Moore has in view here is the deep self that is shut up behind the self-isolated empirical self. Giving free reign to the empirical self, the myopically repressed self, does not amount to the freedom that Moore advocates. This can be easily seen by the way this false self remains in bondage to the fear of death and the loss of its little desires.

[40] Moore, *Let This Mind Be in You: The Quest for Identity through Oedipus to Christ*, 77.

[41] Ibid, 127.

[42] *The Crucified Jesus Is No Stranger*, xii. And elsewhere, "Nihilism is the projection of the failure of our self-made, anthropocentric project *onto* death, charging the cosmos itself with our own failure." *Let This Mind Be in You: The Quest for Identity through Oedipus to Christ*, 135.

[43] "Now this state of arrested development, initiated in a partially flunked growth crisis, means that instead of our basic sense of the goodness and greatness of our life directing us to look beyond the human to the all-embracing mystery, our reduced sense of our goodness continues forever to wrestle with the socio-dramatic context never transcended. In this way we create our own limit of desire, the human world with its endless history of injustice and revenge. Far beyond this limit stands our real limit, death." *Let This Mind Be in You: The Quest for Identity through Oedipus to Christ*, 134.

[44] "Now this state of arrested development, initiated in a partially flunked growth crisis, means that instead of our basic sense of the goodness and greatness of our life directing us to look beyond the human to the all-embracing mystery, our reduced sense of our goodness continues forever to wrestle with the socio-dramatic context never transcended. In this way we create our own limit of desire, the human world with its endless history of injustice and revenge. Far beyond this limit stands our real limit, death." Ibid, 134.

[45] Interestingly, psychotherapist David Schnarch centers his method on eliciting this very insight with the surprising result that spirituality is often spontaneously awakened in his patients. David M. Schnarch, *Passionate Marriage: Keeping Love & Intimacy Alive in Committed Relationships* (New York: Norton & Company, 2009), 391.

[46] Moore, *Let This Mind Be in You: The Quest for Identity through Oedipus to Christ*, 133.

[47] Ibid, 117-19.

[48] Moore's imagery here is too good not to recount. "What might it mean to stand on this promontory of the infinite silence, our consciousness not covered with the immemorially self-created membrane, our desire stretched to the full and thus brushed by that final dissolution wherein it will be one with the love that pulsates in all the universe?" Ibid, 128.

[49] "So to grow, to 'put away the things of a child', is to become myself, unique, having mystery alone for my source, spirit alone for my life." Ibid, 113.

[50] Ibid, 127.

[51] Ibid, 127.

[52] Moore himself explicitly points to centering prayer as opening up the possibility of experiencing the direct experience of our own goodness. Ibid, 65-6.

[53] It was Marvin C. Shaw who helped me place the problem that paradox addresses. Shaw, *The Paradox of Intention: Reaching the Goal by Giving up the Attempt to Reach It*, 112.

[54] Note that this form, which, as a principle of thought, is a contradiction, is, as a judgment, a paradox. Scharlemann, "Critical and Religious Consciousness: Some Reflections on the Question of Truth in the Philosophy of Religion.", n. 5, 70.

[55] "I am unique. I am not defined by my parents, my family, my nation, my class, my creed, my profession. I am a destiny beyond all these things." Moore, *Let This Mind Be in You: The Quest for Identity through Oedipus to Christ*, 113.

[56] Ernest Becker credits Otto Rank with this term. Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 178.

[57] Ibid, 4.

[58] As the anonymous author of The Cloud of Unknowing—to which Centering prayer owes a great debt—asserted, "The best methods depend upon God's activity, but God's activity depends on nothing." *The Cloud of Unknowing*, trans. Bernard Bangley (Brewseter, Mass.: Paraclete Press, 2012), 48.

[59] This idea, again, enshrined in The Cloud of Unknowing. "Be passive as contemplation becomes active, an observer rather than a participant. You can do nothing to help, and your interference will spoil everything." ibid, 48.

[60] "The false self is the idealized image of ourselves developed from early childhood to cope with emotional trauma due to the frustration of our instinctual needs for survival/security, affection/esteem, and power/control. The false self also seeks happiness through identification with a particular group from whom it can find acceptance and thus build feelings of self-worth. On the social level, it gives rise to violence, war, and institutional injustice." Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart: The Contemplative Dimension of the Gospel*, 2.

[61] "To say I was born in sin is to say I came into the world with a false self. I was born in a mask." Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 2007), 33-4.

[62] Though it goes by other names in other contexts. Becker's "Character Armor" seems to be a particularly insightful rendering of the basic idea.

[63] Cynthia Bourgeault, *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening* (Lanham, MD: Cowley Publications, 2004), 88.

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Tillich's *Systematic Theology* as a Template for the Encounter of Christian Theology and Religious Naturalism

Wesley J. Wildman

Abstract: The encounter between Christian theology and religious naturalism has already begun and is set to intensify through the current century. There are at least three notable and strategically distinguishable pathways in this encounter that have arisen since Paul Tillich's time. The first is process theology when framed as a form of naturalism, as it is in David Ray Griffin's work. Another is panentheism more generally, which has also been framed as a form of naturalism, perhaps most explicitly by Arthur Peacocke. Yet, another is the bending of Chicago-School religious naturalism in a Christian direction by theologically voiced conceptions such as Gordon Kaufman's *Creativity Itself*. This paper argues that Paul Tillich's *Systematic Theology* offers a template for a synthesis of Christian theology and religious naturalism that is at least as theologically profound as these later alternatives, more consistent with the central commitment of naturalism to reject disembodied agency and awareness, and deeply resonant with longstanding Christian traditions. Tillich rejected the label "naturalism" for the reason that it reductively fails to acknowledge the ontological conditions necessary for grounding the depth dimension of existence. But if he had witnessed the development of forms of religious naturalism that refuse such reductionist tendencies, it is likely that Tillich would have been more open to the name, or at least to the views it has come to express. In fact, *Systematic Theology* points the way to an intriguing reconciliation between Christianity and religious naturalism by means of its existentially potent ontology, its non-agential conception of ultimate reality, its emerging theology of nature, its recognition of authentic spirituality beyond the boundaries of organized religion, and its intimation of a way past the impasse of religious pluralism. These promising theoretical virtues suggest that Tillich's *Systematic Theology* will enjoy resurgent attention in the decades to come as religious naturalism grows in importance as an intellectual movement.

Introduction

Paul Tillich seems to have been aware of affinities between the early parts of his *Systematic Theology* (ST) and naturalistic worldviews. We know this especially because he entertained the question of the ST's relation to naturalism in the front matter of ST II (1957). In that context, he expresses approval of naturalism's rejection of the ontotheological idea of God as a being, regardless of how lofty. He also distances his view from anything he was prepared to call "naturalism" on the grounds that naturalism was incapable of achieving appropriate recognition of the depths and existential potency of reality.

By "naturalism," Tillich appears to have included something akin to what William James had earlier called "medical materialism"—a worldview in which nature is essentially matter, human beings essentially bodies, the natural world essentially a closed network of physical causes, and reality as a whole a self-sustaining system in no need of infinite ontological grounding. Such a worldview always struggles to hit the deepest and most resonant notes of Tillich's ontological music; especially difficult challenges are the ontological place of value and questions about ultimate ontological dependence. By contrast, Tillich was relentless in trying to name the elusive aspects of reality on the grounds that they are most important—not just for professedly religious people but for all people.

If that is all there was to say about naturalistic worldviews, then their encounter with Tillich's *Systematic Theology* would require little more analysis and comment—no more than Tillich himself offered. But Tillich's understanding of naturalism does not reflect the way naturalism has developed in philosophical and theological circles. Ironically, Tillich's ST turns out to be much closer to religious forms of naturalism than he seems to have thought possible in the middle of the twentieth century. In fact, given developments in religious naturalism since Tillich took stock of it, the *Systematic Theology* turns out to be an almost ideal illustration of one way in which the dialogue between Christian theology and religious naturalism might unfold.

Tillich's *Systematic Theology* is not the only illustration of a rapprochement between Christian theology and religious naturalism. But Tillich's *Systematic Theology* offers a template for a synthesis of Christian theology and religious naturalism that is at least as theologically profound as the alternatives, more clearly consistent with the central commitment

of naturalism to reject disembodied agency and awareness, and deeply resonant with longstanding Christian traditions. If he had witnessed the development of forms of specifically *religious* naturalism that refuse the reductionist tendencies that so troubled him, it is likely that Tillich would have been more open to the name, or at least to the views it has come to express.

In my view, *Systematic Theology* points the way to an intriguing reconciliation between Christianity and religious naturalism by means of its existentially potent ontology, its non-agential conception of ultimate reality, its emerging theology of nature, its recognition of authentic spirituality beyond the boundaries of organized religion, and its intimation of a way past the impasse of religious pluralism. These promising theoretical virtues suggest that Tillich's *Systematic Theology* will enjoy resurgent attention in the decades to come as religious naturalism grows in importance as an intellectual movement.

To explain how this is so, I begin here by indicating the shapes that religious naturalism takes today, and the senses in which religious naturalism satisfies some of the criteria of theological adequacy that Tillich valued so highly. I shall then show how the ST fulfills many of the aspirational goals of religious naturalism. To be sure, this is not the most common form of Christian theology, which remains in thrall to supernaturalism and supranaturalism in precisely the ways that Tillich so energetically protested. Nevertheless, and partly because religious naturalism makes the same protest, a Tillichian type of religious naturalism can be a hearty and authentic form of Christian theological worldview.

A Tillichian Appraisal of Today's Religious Naturalism

To some, joining the words religious and naturalism seems oxymoronic. For such people, naturalism is necessarily atheistic and anti-supernaturalist, and probably materialist, while anything religious is often theistic, definitely supernaturalist, and probably ontologically dualist. Such are the common assumptions about these terms. But there are now so many thinkers who have claimed the phrase "religious naturalism" as descriptive of their worldviews and intellectual projects that it has become obvious that these common assumptions do not express the way the words are actually being used, individually or conjoined.

Since the seventeenth century, the English word "naturalism" has been used to refer to a view of the world in which action and causation is wholly in accord with the ways of nature, with no spiritual influences. Since the eighteenth century, naturalism has also connoted a worldview in which nature develops in accord with its own internal principles as a closed causal network, with no guidance from a spiritual or intellectual force outside of nature. Philosophers gradually took the natural sciences to be the arbiter of what counts as the closed causal network of nature, and of what actions and processes are possible within it. This makes the scope of the natural slightly difficult to discern in advance, since science might eventually make sense of phenomena that presently seem ontologically beyond the borders of the natural. But the natural certainly seems to rule out forms of awareness, intentionality, and agency that are not mediated by physical bodies. The rejection of disembodied intentionality is the main criterion I employ in my own working definition of naturalism because it is conceptually non-circular, unlike definitions of naturalism that reject supernatural entities; and because it is epistemically straightforward and ontologically non-reductive, unlike definitions of naturalism that limit the real to what science can comprehend on its own terms (see Wildman, 2009, 2011).

However the definition of naturalism is formalized, its theological import is reasonably clear. If there is a God, on the naturalistic view, it is the deep principles of nature understood as the conditions for the possibility of the natural world that we experience—Spinoza's *natura naturans*, perhaps, or Kaufman's Creativity Itself (neither of which is pantheistic, by the way, a point that Tillich was careful to make in regard to Spinoza; see ST II: 6). The Spinozistic idea of God is not much like the God of the Bible and of Christian doctrine, or of most other theistic traditions, where we see the characteristics of awareness, intentionality, and agency in an infinite being immanently involved in the world for the sake of divine providential purposes. Moreover, reality's causal network is closed in naturalism, with neither miraculous nor non-miraculous divine action, whereas theistic traditions posit a natural reality that in its very character is open to divine influence—after all, God supposedly creates nature in part to make providential ends expressible in natural processes.

When naturalism is so understood, there is a clear non-religious option, and it is common among

some philosophers. It has problems, as Tillich pointed out at the beginning of *Systematic Theology* II in the preliminary section entitled, "Beyond Naturalism and Supranaturalism." His main criticism is compelling:

> The main argument against naturalism in whatever form is that it denies the infinite distance between the whole of finite things and their infinite ground, with the consequence that the term "God" becomes interchangeable with the term "universe" and therefore is semantically superfluous. This situation reveals a failure of naturalism to understand a decisive element in the experience of the holy, namely, the distance between finite man, on the one hand, and the holy in its numerous manifestations, on the other. For this, naturalism cannot account. (ST II: 7)

The cogency of this critique of naturalism forces non-religious naturalists either to admit that they have failed to explain a vital aspect of reality or else to argue that the human experience of the holy is not as Tillich says—either because it does not require an infinite ground after all, or because it is cognitively unreliable so we can't infer anything from it whatsoever. Of course, both of the latter two paths are taken routinely.

Tillich's critique of naturalism also helps to map out the major options for religious naturalism, as well as the kinds of religious naturalism that have actually developed in recent years. Some of these do not meet Tillich's requirements for an adequate Christian understanding of God while others do meet it, contrary to Tillich's expectations as of the mid-twentieth century. I mention several classes of religious naturalism, all produced by self-described Christian theologians, to illustrate the different ways that they relate to Tillich's insistence on conceiving God as the infinitely self-transcending ground of nature.

First, philosopher-theologian David Ray Griffin frames his Hartshornian process theology explicitly as a form of naturalism, distinguishing its prehensive, panentheistic, and panpsychic character from the sensationist, atheist, and materialist versions of naturalism (see Griffin 2004). While Tillich would heartily endorse the critique of what Griffin calls naturalism, Tillich would also insist that the process deity is a being and not the ground of being, and thus does not meet the requirement of being the infinitely self-transcending ground of nature. Griffin would reply that Tillich's requirement is based on a misconstrual of the experience of the human encounter with the holy, leading to an irrelevant and incomprehensible criterion. However that debate unfolds, it is clear that process theism in both its Hartshornian and Whiteheadian varieties (see Whitehead 1978) is a type of religious naturalism that does not conform to Tillich's criteria for theological adequacy.

Second, biologist-priest Arthur Peacocke attempted to articulate what he called a Christian naturalism with a variant of panentheism (see Peacocke 1993, and especially Peacocke 2007). Peacocke's theology retains an infinite divine being in panentheistic relation to the created world, with focal awareness, intentionality, and agency, though Peacocke would call this deity supra-personal rather than personal as such. In Tillich's analysis, and indeed in the view of virtually all of today's religious naturalists, this is not naturalism proper because it includes a divine being—it is still an instance of what Tillich called supranaturalism. Consider that other theologians, such as philosopher-theologian Philip Clayton, hold views quite similar to Peacocke's but decline the name religious naturalism because of their intention to preserve focal awareness and agency in the divine life (see Clayton 2000, 2008).

Third, theologian Gordon Kaufman ported the older Chicago School's religious naturalism to a conception of Christianity's God as Creativity Itself (see Kaufman 1993, and especially Kaufman 2004). This is getting closer to Tillich's viewpoint, though decisive judgment is complicated by the fact that Kaufman equivocates in his usage of the God idea. In one usage, Creativity Itself is focused on the parts of reality that make for human wellbeing and flourishing. In another usage, Creativity Itself is creativity in all its forms, regardless of their import for human life. The first kind of Creativity Itself is more amenable to human religious interests while the second kind is intensively impartial. The first kind seems difficult to distinguish from Whitehead's idea of the divine process, and fails to meet Tillich's criterion for the same reason. The second kind, however, is the processive equivalent of Being Itself, and seems very close to Tillich's conception of God and the God-world relation.

It seems, then, that Tillich's leading criterion for evaluating naturalisms, including variants of religious naturalism, leads us away from some usages—namely, those that reject a theory of ultimate reality and those that retain traces of supranaturalism—and towards others—namely, those that eliminate supranaturalism while preserving an infinite qualitative

distinction between nature and its self-transcending ground. There are such versions of religious naturalism put forward by self-identified Christian theologians. For example, Catherine Keller, somewhat ambiguously because of affiliations with process theism, and Robert Neville, quite unambiguously, have produced more clear-cut instances of Christian religious naturalism in this sense than Gordon Kaufman did (see Keller 2003, 2008; Neville 2013). Thus, it appears that Tillich's rejection of naturalism, and with it religious naturalism, may have been premature.

A Religious Naturalist Appraisal of Tillich's Systematic Theology

If my claim that Tillich's *Systematic Theology* can serve as a template for the encounter of Christian theology and religious naturalism is to be upheld, it is necessary to show not only that there are versions of religious naturalism that can meet Tillich's stated criterion for an adequate Christian doctrine of God and the God-world relation, but also that Tillich's theology can be rendered amenable to at least some types of religious naturalism. To that end, I venture a religious-naturalist appraisal of Tillich's *Systematic Theology*.

To cut to the chase here, in my view the key issue is providence. The central Christian narrative in all its variants presumes a providential deity who creates the world and intervenes within it to bring about salvation. Christian theologians, to the extent that they regard themselves as operating on behalf of ecclesial tradition, as Tillich did, are required to give an account of providential divine creation and agency. The ineliminable emphasis on divine providence in gospel narratives leaves such Christian theologians little room to move. This is why great Christian theologians such as Augustine, Thomas, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and Schleiermacher all retained some element of focal awareness, intentionality, and agency in the divine life despite embracing the fundamental idea of God as being itself. Tillich says of precisely these greats that they "grasped" the "third way" between "the supranaturalistic and the naturalistic interpretations of the meaning of 'God'" but that they did so "in a restricted form" (ST II: 7). In my reading of Tillich, this restriction consists in their holding together supranatural characteristics with being itself. For Tillich, this is an incoherent combination, blending categories of being (i.e. focal intentionality, awareness, and agency) with categories that are beyond the distinction between being and non-being (i.e. ground of being, or more abstractly, being itself). In the ST, Tillich aims for a clearer and cleaner version of the third way: he eliminates focal awareness, intentionality, and agency in the ontology of divinity and retains God as the infinite ground of nature.

This seems extremely promising to religious naturalists, who tend to be painfully aware of the incoherence associated with blending categories of being with the category of being itself—the so-called Jerusalem-Athens synthesis. Where other theologians believe that the divine mystery permits such a blend of categories, and really lose sensitivity to the problem, Tillich is refreshingly clear about this incoherence and refuses to allow his theology to go there. The question religious naturalists would put to Tillich, therefore, is how he manages to pursue this cleaner, clearer version of his third way while still interpreting divine providence in such a way as to make rational sense of the Christian narrative. In other words, is Tillich's ST really as promising a template for the encounter between Christian theology and religious naturalism as his rejection of supranaturalism and supernaturalism makes it seem?

The answer here is complex, I believe. Religious naturalists are drawn to those moments within the ST when providence rears its head like the phoenix from the ashes of Tillich's anti-supranaturalism. The two most prominent moments are Tillich's interpretation of New Being (ST Part III) and his understanding of the shape of history (ST Part IV). Moreover, because Tillich's philosophy of history rules out externally determined directionality or goal, and emphasizes the central point of history at which essential being is manifested under the conditions of existence, the question about history really reduces to the question about New Being. The religious naturalist wants to know whether and how there can be New Being and its historical manifestation without reintroducing providentially ordered focal awareness, intentionality, and agency.

Now, Tillich felt no obligation to keep religious naturalists happy! Nor should any Christian theologian laboring on behalf of Christian churches bend their work to the will of religious naturalists whose relationship to ecclesiastical institutions is dubious at best. Indeed, one of the most bracing aspects of Tillich's *Systematic Theology* for me, as with Schleiermacher's *Glaubenslehre* much earlier, is the frank assertion of some version of the Christian gospel narrative at the heart of the system, despite its

otherwise seemingly thoroughgoing naturalism. For Schleiermacher and Tillich alike, Christology is the point at which the naturalist feels least at home. But while Schleiermacher says relatively little about the divine nature, and derives what he does say from the conceptuality of God as the Whence of our experience of absolute dependence, Tillich specifies an ontology that tells us quite a lot about what it means to be the ground of being. Because of this difference, it is easier to picture the singular miracle of the incarnation in Schleiermacher's otherwise non-miraculous interpretation of the Christian faith than it is for us to picture the miracle of the historical manifestation of New Being in Tillich's otherwise more clearly naturalistic system.

The religious naturalist may be drawn to Tillich because of his anti-supranaturalism, therefore, but Tillich's frankly Christian approach to New Being seems to be a definite stumbling block. The Christian religious naturalist would happily regard New Being as an *ideal* that appears in history and culture and works itself out in spiritual quests and complex religious traditions. This is a thoroughly naturalistic approach to Christology that presumes nothing in the way of divine providence in the sense of focal awareness, intentionality, and agency, and only calls for the idea of New Being to live within the axiological landscape of possibilities that is the primal and most profound manifestation of the infinite ground of existence. But Tillich does not go this way. Rather, the power of the New Being crucially depends on its historical manifestation in the concrete-absolute—a bracingly Christian affirmation of the centrality for all reality of Jesus as the Christ! And the ontological framing of New Being clearly entails that the one-for-allness of the manifestation of New Being is not merely a cultural perception, nor significant only for Christian history, but springs from the very meaning of the dynamic unfolding of being in history and nature.

At this point, then, we have corralled the question before us into a smaller area. The religious naturalist wants to know whether it is possible to support the singular manifestation of the concrete-absolute in history and culture without indirectly reconstituting the very forms of focal awareness, intentionality, and agency that the protest against supranaturalism is supposed to exclude. This is a difficult question, not least for Tillich himself, who seems to have slightly generalized his Christo-centric approach to New Being by means of ideas such as the Spiritual Presence in Part V of ST. We are led to believe that, at the very end of his life, Tillich would have gone further in this direction had time and energy afforded the opportunity. As the ST stands, though, especially in the ontology of Part II and the Christological material of Part III, the religious naturalist struggles to picture a naturalist framework for the singular historical manifestation of New Being in a human life without at the same time reconstituting supranaturalism. The fact that this potential inconsistency evidently bothered Tillich himself, however, is intriguing to the Christian religious naturalist. It is arguably evidence of Tillich's intention to move more completely in the direction of the kind of religious naturalism that treats new being as a *potent ideal* rather than as a singular historical manifestation organizing the structure of history, thereby more completely and consistently rejecting supranaturalism while at the same time retaining an infinite ground of nature. That kind of intriguing disagreement is perfect for framing the dialogue in question.

Conclusion

Here is where this brief argument must come to an end. From the Tillichian side of the dialogical encounter between Christian theology and religious naturalism, the emphasis must be laid on what Tillich himself said about the indispensability of an infinite ontological ground for self-transcending nature. I argued that there are indeed some forms of religious naturalism that Tillich could acknowledge as overcoming the limitations of naturalism that he adumbrates at the beginning of *Systematic Theology,* vol. II. Tillich did not know about those forms of religious naturalism, and we might argue about whether he was correct to say that there is no infinite self-transcendence in Spinoza's *natura naturans*, but it does seem clear that they now do exist.

From the religious-naturalist side of the same dialogical encounter, the question is whether Tillich's emphasis on the singular manifestation of essential being under the conditions of existence in the life of Jesus the Christ does not after all reconstitute the very supranaturalism that Tillich was so determined to eliminate from Christian theology. My conclusion was that religious naturalists would worry about this point in the very same way that Tillich himself appears to have, and that they would see great promise in Tillich's weakening of the definitiveness of the manifestation of New Being toward the end of the ST by means of the idea of the Spiritual Presence.

As the encounter between Christian theology and religious naturalism unfolds with ever greater intensity over the next few decades, Tillich's ST will prove influential both because of his insistence on the need for an infinite ground of self-transcending nature and because of his partial rethinking of the idea of New Being and its singular, definitive manifestation as the concrete-absolute in history and nature. In Tillich's hints about the spiritual presence more than in the Christology of *Systematic Theology*, Part III, we see a promising albeit incipient form of Christian religious naturalism. This is a vision of theology without a definitive historic center and with New Being treated as an ideal that suffuses nature while cultures develop to the point that they can register it in a host of diverse styles. In this way, Tillich's ST points the way to an intriguing reconciliation between Christianity and religious naturalism, one that offers an existentially potent ontology, a non-agential conception of ultimate reality, a profound theology of nature, the recognition of authentic spirituality beyond the boundaries of any and all forms of organized religion, and an intimation of a way past the impasse of religious pluralism.

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Cultural Transformation as Ultimate Concern: Tillich's Theological Project of Cultural Embeddedness in Conversation with the Black Liberation Theology of James Cone

Zachary W. Royal

The cultural embeddedness of religion enables theologians to examine/critique both cultural theology of Paul Tillich and the contextual theology of James Cone. My presentation will show that when cultural theology is placed side by side with contextual theology, through the theological lens of the cultural embeddedness of religion, the notion of the transformation of culture as ultimate concern comes to the forefront. The notion of cultural embeddedness does not merely illumine cultural and contextual theology. It unites the two as well, revealing the critical social factors that drove Tillich and Cone to their constructive commitment that resulted in the synthetic proposal to wed Christianity to the social movements of their day.

In the following pages I trace Tillich's notion of cultural synthesis from its origins in Troeltsch's synthetic proposal for twentieth century theology to its high point in conversation with Schleiermacher's attempt to construct a mediating theology of culture, to Tillich's appropriation of the synthetic notion with the construction of his famous essay, "On the Idea of a Theology of Culture." I then show how Cone appropriated Tillich's cultural theology, theological method and systematic proposal for the cultural embedded of Christianity in his principle works, *Black Theology and Black Power, A Black*

Theology of Liberation and the God of the Oppressed. The correlation of the cultural theology in Tillich and contextual theology in Cone does not merely bring the notion of cultural transformation to light, it places Tillich and Cone in conversation. Most important, it brings them together on the one goal of theology that is common to both; a conversation on the transformation of culture that resides at the core of any serious theology of mediation. My goal is threefold; first to reveal how their revolutionary theological method, a method of mediation that can be traced from Augustine to Schleiermacher and Troeltsch, enabled both to conclude that Christian revelation must be correlated, with and most important, experienced *within* the human situation; that the experience of revelation within the human predicament provides humanity with the fundamental criteria for being prophetically self- critical and finally, this critical prophetic perspective can help theology and the church to redefine the various mass-movements for justice, dignity and freedom occurring within secular culture. The union of cultural and contextual theology, through the theological lens of cultural embeddedness, shows that, although their historical periods were different, their theological goals were the same; for both, the "freedom movement," what Tillich defined, in his famous book, *Theology of Culture* (p. 28), as the "prophetic–political demands for social justice,"[1] became the theological blueprint for the construction of a new humanity, and "ultimate concern," regarding cultural transformation; Tillich and Cone demand the reformation of the church and the transformation of society.

I. Troeltsch, Tillich, and the Quest for a Public Political Theology

Tillich's proposal owes its greatest debt to the much-maligned giant of late 19th and early 20th century theology, the cultural theologian Ernst Troeltsch. Troeltsch not only crafted the notion of the cultural embeddedness, his work stands behind Tillich's pioneering synthetic proposal for a mediating theology in his famous essay, "On the Idea of a Theology of Culture." I not only argue that Troeltsch's work stands behind Tillich, I assert, with renowned scholar Russell Re Manning, that, "Tillich's project is in many ways a development of the central themes of Troeltsch's life's work as the systematician of the history of religions school."[2]

Most important, Troeltsch taught Tillich how the construction of a culturally embedded theology that brings Christianity into dialogue with contemporary culture requires a revolution in theological method. In his groundbreaking work, *Religion in History*, Troeltsch sketched the outlines of a radically new approach to theological method.

According to Troeltsch, the rise of the historical critical method has destroyed or exploded the theological method of 19th century theology. For him, another theological method is necessary. This new method for constructing theology, the critical historical method, is like "leaven," he claims. It not only changes the old method, it detonates or "explodes" every theological method that came before it. Thus, the radical, transformative power of the new historical method in theology makes it impossible for theology to lean upon its dogmatic (neo-orthodox) assumptions, assumptions that forced such theology to divorce its Christianity from contemporary culture. For Troeltsch, a new theological method is necessary, a method that takes its theological cue from history.

The second reason Tillich surpasses Troeltsch by revising his method is, as John R. Stumme keenly observes, not just methodological; it was sociopolitical and theological. By 1919, because of the War and the Revolution, Tillich had taken a theological stance more radical than his famous teacher Ernst Troeltsch. By the Revolution of 1918, Germany was divided theologically between radical religious socialists and the authorities of the conservative church. Between the radical religious socialists and the conservative church authorities stood the liberal Evangelical Social Congress, to which belonged the theological "superstars" of the early 20th century; William Bousset, Otto Dibelius, Karl Heim, Rudolf Otto, Martin Rade and Ernst Troeltsch. These thinkers and scripture scholars were part of the venerable History of Religions School and the vanguard of theology at the dawn of the 20th century. They were, most particularly, the most progressive and radical Christian thinkers of the day, and Tillich broke with them! Moreover, Tillich broke with the theologian of the History of Religious School, Ernst Troeltsch!

In his first book review of an anthology of writings by the Liberal Evangelical Social Congress entitled *Revolution and the Church*, Tillich reveals why he parted company with the most radical theologians of his day. Tillich surpasses Troeltsch because, the earth had begun to shake, i.e., liberal reform could not do justice to the theological revolu-

tion that was underway. Christianity for Tillich had reached a turning point and it echoed A. James Reimer's earlier elaboration of Tillich's critique of Troeltsch. Troeltsch's method failed because it judged history, from within history. This was the reason, Tillich felt, that the student must now surpass the teacher. For Tillich, the paradoxical breakthrough of the unconditioned—a breakthrough that was causing the earth to shake—was more radical and revolutionary than the liberal reformist spirit of the Evangelical Social Congress. For him, reformism, i.e., progressive liberal Christianity, did not take the present period—the revolutionary significance of that historical moment—seriously. Tillich's religious socialism affected the breakthrough of the unconditioned that Troeltsch's theology (and method) never did. And this is why Tillich felt it was necessary to surpass Troeltsch's method. Tillich said that Troeltsch's method could only serve as the "negative presupposition for every future construction."

Tillich offers a devastating critique why Troeltsch's theology and method failed, a critique even more subtle than Barth's. Troeltsch's theology failed for two reasons: he was unable to see what was happening in the trenches of WWI and he could not see what was happening in the *streets* of Berlin. In the trenches of the First World War, Tillich had come face to face, as Stumme said, with the "everyday people" the Kaiser seems to have forgotten—the Proletariat. Tillich came into personal contact with them and experienced their bitterness about having to fight and die in a meaningless war. He found out how the Proletariat considered the church nothing but a pawn of the ruling class. It was here that Tillich became alive to the political situation; and it was here that he affirmed the revolution.

II. Tillich, Schleiermacher, and the Crisis of Cultural Embeddedness

Tillich's project for the cultural embeddedness of theology is indebted to one man, the father of modern theology, Friedrich Schleiermacher. Russell Re Manning is correct when he writes, "If it is Kant who set the framework within which the questions for 'modern theology' were posed it was largely Schleiermacher who determined the form of the answers."[3] Russell then cites Ninian Smart's evaluation of Schleiermacher as, 'arguably the greatest theologian of the nineteenth century, if not the entire modern age,' because in him, "the nineteenth century found…for at least a while, its most effective answer to the strictures of religious thought imposed by Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*."[4] Ironically, for Tillich, it was Schleiermacher's theological answers to Kant's devastating *Critique of Pure Reason* that formulated the real crisis for mediating theology both in the 19th and in the 20th century. This motif became the foundation both for Schleiermacher's address to Jacobi, the core of Tillich's struggle with Barth's neo-orthodox theology, and the substance of Tillich's feud with his good friend Emanuel Hirsch. Most important, it framed the structure of the modern debate regarding the relationship of philosophy and religion. Russell Manning is correct, Schleiermacher stands at the forefront of a theological tradition to which Tillich belongs—the Schleiermacher-Troeltsch line of mediating theology—that is dedicated to the notion of cultural embeddedness. Moreover, it is interesting to see how Tillich used one, Schleiermacher, to transcend the other, Troeltsch, and, by doing so, Tillich surpassed his own teacher, overcame the crisis in his own theological method, and succeeded in embedding the Christian religion in the new socio-political cultural setting of the 20th century.

It was Schleiermacher that framed the dilemma regarding modern theologies of mediation, as John Clayton explores in his compelling work, *The Concept of Correlation*; "Is it possible," Schleiermacher says, "to conceive, let alone establish a relationship between Christianity and culture in which there is a genuine and thorough-going reciprocity that threatens the autonomy neither of religion nor of culture?" In his previously unpublished work from 1923 or 1924, entitled, "Schleiermacher und die Erfassung des Gottlichen im Gefühl" (Schleiermacher and the Inclusion of the Divine within Feeling), Tillich reveals how his theology of culture is his attempt to surpass Troeltsch and resolve "Schleiermacher's dilemma." The text, Tillich's earliest and most systematic treatment of Schleiermacher's thought has three sections. Incredibly, it was Tillich's interpretation of Schleiermacher's classic text, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, in the third section of Tillich's Schleiermacher critique, that reveals the true reason Tillich ultimately rejected even Schleiermacher's attempt to wed religion and culture. Re Manning is correct; Tillich does embrace yet reject Schleiermacher. The true irony of Tillich's critique is the *reason* why, after embracing so much with regard to Schleiermacher's theological project and theological method, Tillich ultimately rejected

the most important part of Schleiermacher's project. A. James Reimer shows why. Tillich, Reimer suggests, rejected Schleiermacher's *Kulturprotestantismus* for the same reason he rejected Troeltsch's. For Tillich, Troeltsch and Schleiermacher failed because both sought to correlate Christianity with German bourgeois culture. For Tillich, WWI and the Revolution of 1918 made Schleiermacher and even Troeltsch's theological project for the cultural embeddedness of Christianity obsolete, making a synthesis of this type impossible. The War and the Revolution—the democratic movement for social change in Germany—demanded that Christianity be correlated neither with the German bourgeoisie nor the cultural elite, but with the Proletariat! And this was why Tillich's project for cultural embeddedness was so shocking and revolutionary. Tillich, anticipating James Cone forty years later, demanded that theology in the 20th century be constructed with the common person in mind! For him, theology must align itself with the movement for freedom, democracy, and social change in Germany. And by 1923, Tillich had not simply advocated that theology and the conservative and even liberal sections of the German Lutheran church embrace the freedom movement, Tillich himself *joined* the movement, becoming a religious socialist and a committed member of the Berlin Circle, a group of political, economic and theological scholars that situated themselves at the forefront for the cultural and religious transformation of Germany.

Most important, Tillich rejected Schleiermacher because, in anticipating Cone almost half a century later, Tillich realized that, when constructing theology for common, everyday people, *cultural theology* must never be separated from *contextual theology*. This was at the heart of the battle for the future of theology waged between Barth, Hirsch, and Tillich in the 1920s and 1930s in Germany. By 1923, Tillich was in the thick of the battle with Hirsch and Barth over which version of theology, dialectical or cultural, would lead Germany into the 20th century. Barth's theology wanted very little to do with culture, and Hirsch thought that contextual political theology was more important than cultural theology; but Tillich demanded that both cultural and contextual theology be placed side-by-side. Tillich's debates with Barth in 1923-1924 do not simply turn on Robert Scharlemann's succinct analysis regarding "the no to nothing" (Barth) and "the nothing to know" (Tillich). They turn on whether or not 20th century theology should be constructed with relation to culture and, most important, whether every cultural theology takes its particular context seriously. Most important, Tillich combines the two in the 1920's because his analysis was even more astute than Hirsch and Barth, two giants of theology. After the war and the Revolution, Tillich knew that only when cultural theology is united with contextual theology that modern theology is able to address the needs of those who suffer—the victims of both liberal and conservative Christianity.

Now the reason for Tillich's notion of the cultural embeddedness of Christianity is clear to see; by 1923, Hirsch, Tillich, and Barth were contending for the right to form the emerging face of modern theology. And Tillich used the notion of cultural embeddedness to not just critique and transcend Schleiermacher and Troeltsch; he then used *both* Troeltsch and Schleiermacher to critique and transcend Hirsh, Bruner, Bultmann, and Barth! Because of the war and the Revolution, "The self-assured period of 'scientific theology' was over, and the profession of theology was in a concrete identity crisis."[5] The question asked by the dialectal theologians in the 1920's, "how can we speak of God if we are human?" was not enough for Tillich. He went even further, daring to ask the question, how can we relate our speech about God to the Proletariat—the victims of those who have used Christian speech to oppress and annihilate others?

III. The Culmination of the Notion of Cultural Embeddedness, Tillich "On the Idea of a Theology of Culture"

There are stunning parallels between Tillich and Cone regarding not just *how* they constructed their respective theologies, but *why* they chose to become professional theologians that revolutionized the practice of theology, and resulted in the culmination of the notion of the cultural embeddedness of Christianity. The first similarity involves a little-known irony about Tillich and Cone as both began their respective quests for a culturally embedded theology of mediation. Ronald H. Stone reveals the heart of the irony when on page 15 of his magisterial text, *Politics and Faith* he states, regarding Niebuhr and Tillich, that, "the theories of their respective dissertations and theses were neither immediately relevant to the war they found themselves in nor to their developed practical work."[6] Incredibly, neither of Tillich's two dissertations, *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling's Philosophical Devel-*

opment (1910),[7] nor, *The construction of the History of Religion in Schelling's Positive Philosophy (*1912), nor Cone's Ph.D. dissertation on Karl Barth's theological anthropology, *The Doctrine of Man in the Theology of Karl Barth*, prepared them for their future theological vocation. And Tillich's two dissertations are actual proof that, with regard to the practice of theology, he was grossly ill prepared to do the very thing he had been trained to do. Most important, his lack of theological preparation prevented Tillich from resonating with the deepest levels of the thought of the philosophical theologian whose work forms the deep structure of Tillich's theology of culture.

Although the two dissertations form the bedrock of his theological project, and Schelling's ontology is the touchstone of Tillich's political philosophy as well as his theology of culture, the political implications of Schelling's theological writings in Tillich's pre-war theological training were never explored. Ronald H. Stone's provocative book, *Paul Tillich's Radical Social Thought* explains this irony. Tillich's theological naiveté, or as Stone describes it, his political innocence, blinded the promising young theologian to the very theme that, almost half a century later, would form the centerpiece of Cone's contextual theology—the notion of freedom or liberation. It seems as if Tillich's early metaphysical training led him to contradict the very theological tradition that he would later use to revolutionize the field of theology. Tillich's failure to explore the political implications of Schelling's thought seemed to make him more dedicated to the Kierkegaard-Barth line, at least with regard to his theological method, than the Schleiermacher-Troeltsch tradition. It was only after his lecture to the Kant Society, "On the Idea of a Theology of Culture," that Tillich was able to take a political stance on the boundary between theological Liberalism and the emerging Dialectical theology. It seems that, at least regarding his method, that the War and the Revolution forced Tillich to abandon any dialectical approach to theology that stressed metaphysical communion with God which ends in political impartiality and the preoccupation with the individual over a socio-political commitment to Christ that is rooted in social responsibility and takes the needs of the Proletariat, ordinary people, with absolute seriousness.

In the same way, James Cone's theological training left him unprepared for the social revolutions of the 1960s. Cone awakened to the shortcomings of his training after he earned his Ph.D. at Northwestern University. I will say more about Cone later in this paper.

The crucial question that Tillich addresses by the year 1919, the year of his "On the Idea of a Theology of Culture" address, is: if Tillich's early theological training left him ill-prepared to formulate a constructive theology of cultural embeddedness, then what person or event enabled him to break out of his theological lethargy and apply his learning to construct his proposal for a radically new interpretation of modern theology as a theology of culture? By April 16, 1919, the answer was clear: Tillich's use of Marxism enabled him to transcend his political innocence and appropriate the theological training he learned in seminary. Tillich's use of Marx allowed him to apply Schelling to Tillich's socio-political cultural setting, rescue his theological method from the threat of the Kierkegaard-Barth tradition, and placed him squarely back within the Schleiermacher-Troeltsch tradition, allowing him to take his stand firmly along the boundary between theological liberalism and dialectical conservatism. Here is how.

In his introduction to Tillich's seminal work, *Political Expectation*, James Luther Adams shows just how important Marx's thought was in the construction of his theology of culture. Adams claims that, for Tillich, (existential) philosophy was just as important as theology in the construction of his project. Adams held that Tillich distinguished between two traditions of existentialism, one which stemmed from Kierkegaard and proceeding to Heidegger, Sartre, Bultmann, and even Barth. Adams believed Tillich would name Schelling as the originator of this tradition, identifying his own affinities with this line. Tillich, however, saw himself related to a second tradition, a prophetic philosophical line that came from Marx and Nietzsche but stretched back to the prophets of the Old Testament. Incredibly, Tillich claims, this tradition includes religious as well as anti-religious personalities. In an article entitled, "Ideen zur Geisteslage der Gegenwart," Tillich relates himself to the second philosophic tradition.

Tillich's major premise is stunning. Although the article was written in 1926, it is a dazzling theological argument. He suggests, that as my theological advisor, Stephen G. Ray, says, "when the church loses its mind" and closes the mouths of its prophets within its walls, that God raises up prophets for the church who don't even belong to the church, to attack and free the church from the grip of a theology that identifies God with bourgeois society—the most

wealthy and powerful persons within culture that belong to the church!

If this is true, then Tillich's preoccupation with Marx forms the heart of this paper. In choosing what I have named the "Marx-Schelling" tradition over the "Kierkegaard-Heidegger" tradition, Tillich wedded Marx and Schelling not just to unite cultural theology with contextual theology, but because Tillich believed that the notion of cultural embeddedness of Christianity within culture must be placed side by side with the notion of the socio-political transformation of culture. It seems that, for Tillich, cultural embeddedness has one goal; the transformation of culture. And if the transformation of culture is culturally embedded theology's most important project, then for Tillich, and Cone some fifty years later, cultural transformation is (of) ultimate concern because the Proletariat, the domain of the oppressed, becomes the theatre for the contemporary revelation of God.

Tillich's use of Marx enabled Tillich to use Schelling to redefine the notion of theodicy for the 20th century. Tillich could have achieved an even greater theological clarity regarding his early training had he addressed the theological implications of the political ontology that undergirded his interpretation of the potencies in his first dissertation, *The Construction of the History of Religion in Schelling's Positive Religion*. In an unprecedented move, Tillich, like Cone half a century later, shared with persons within the ivory tower of academia, the Kant Society, what constructive theology might look like for ordinary, everyday people who lived beyond those ivory towers, the Proletariat. Tillich, like the later Cone, sought to theologize to both the church and the academy; he submitted his constructive proposal for cultural embeddedness to both religion as well as culture.

Most important, Tillich's 1919, "On the Idea of a Theology of Culture," forms the heart of this presentation. Ironically, the problem Tillich faced then is not as clearly explained in, "On the Idea," as it is in chapter four of his seminal text, *The Protestant Era*.

Incredibly, Tillich, caught between "orthodox-exclusive" and "secular-rejective" approaches to the cultural movement to reconstruct society, rejected both approaches and formulated a theological approach to rebuilding German society that would use both religious conservatives and secular radicals. Tillich formulated this religious or inclusive approach because, as he mentioned in his words quoted above, he had spiritual ties with both sides. As he explains it so eloquently in volume three of his elegant *Systematic Theology*, "Since a split between a faith unacceptable to culture and a culture unacceptable to faith was not possible for me, the only alternative was to attempt to interpret the symbols of faith through the expressions of our own culture."[8]

IV. The Correlation of Cultural Embeddedness and Cultural Transformation: New Horizons in the Theology of Tillich and Cone

A careful analysis of Tillich's notion of cultural embeddedness leads us to the heart of this paper. Tillich has shown how he seemed to be the only theologian at the dawn of the 20th century who was willing and able to wed theology and philosophy, Christianity and cultural movements for social change, and cultural embeddedness and the notion of cultural transformation for the sake of the poor and the downtrodden. In the latter part of the 20th century, only one theologian attempted to culturally embed Christianity and to wed it with the notion of cultural transformation: James Cone. When Cone's black theology is placed in dialogue with Tillich's cultural theology, then the magnitude of Cone's theological achievement can be seen. Most important, we see how, theologically, both theologians developed the *same* theological project; they merely started from opposite sides of the theological spectrum—Tillich from the cultural theology side and Cone from the contextual side. When Tillich's cultural project is placed side-by-side with Cone's project, the contours of Cone's project match Tillich's at almost every historical turn. His black liberation theology was a contextual theological project that wedded North American Protestant Christianity with the freedom movement of the 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement.

For Tillich, it was Marx and Nietzsche's voice that shook him out of his theological lethargy during the war and the start of the revolution. For Cone, it was Martin King and Malcolm X's voice, and Malcolm's devastating critique of North American Christianity that shook Cone from his theological complacency and forced him to an unprecedented theological conclusion: "Christianity…is Black Power."[9] For Cone Christianity *is* Black Power. It was an unprecedented theological move that correlated Malcolm X and Martin King, North American Protestant Christianity with the Freedom Movement/Civil Rights Movement. This was the genius of Cone's first book, a theological masterwork entitled,

Black Theology and Black Power. The stunning theological truth at the core of the work was how, when Cone wedded Martin King and Malcolm X, he was often severely criticized of "reverse racism." However, Cone had simply done the same thing Tillich had done half a century earlier; Cone correlated Christianity with the Freedom Movement. *Black Theology and Black Power* is Cone's plea for the cultural embeddedness of Christianity. Most important, Cone's work was the first attempt since Tillich, to wed cultural theology to contextual theology for the sake of the poor and oppressed.

In order to correlate Christianity with the Civil Rights Movement, Cone had to revise his theological method. His methodological revision called for the ultimate rejection of the "Kierkegaard-Barth" tradition in the theological method, the very method Cone had been trained in, and forced him to embrace the "Schleiermacher-Troeltsch" tradition, just as Tillich had done at the dawn of the 20th century. Cone's next book, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, reveals why, even though Cone is unaware of it, his theological project had reached critical mass; in order to construct a black theology of liberation Cone would have to break with Kierkegaard and Barth and embrace Schleiermacher and Troeltsch by revising his theological method.

In *A Black Theology of Liberation*, Cone reveals his theological method; the method of correlation. Cone borrowed this method from Tillich. Cone borrows Tillich's "method of correlation" when he weds Malcolm and Martin and theology with the Civil Rights Movement. It is here that Cone revises his method, breaking with the Kierkegaard-Barth tradition.[10] Cone revised his theological method, moving to Schleiermacher-Troeltsch, the theological tradition to which Tillich belonged. Cone united Malcolm and Martin, theology and the Civil Rights Movement because, "Black people need to see some correlations between divine salvation and black culture."[11] The sheer, unmitigated suffering of the poor made black life a battlefield, the place where the threat and reality of not being was forever in play. For Cone, only a divine "Answer" could address this existential "question" of oppression, suffering, and death. Only "divine salvation" could offer a meaningful answer to the plight of oppressed persons in black culture. A kergymatic theological method that divorced theology from culture was inimical to Cone's theological project. His project, like Tillich's, demanded the cultural embeddedness of Christianity, a Christian theology that was linked to culture. This is the reason Cone revised his theological method.

Most important, Cone, like Tillich half a century earlier, faced the super naturalist interpretation of the Civil rights Movement by conservative churches both black white, coupled with the secular radicalism of black power advocates like Stokley Carmichael and Huey Newton. Caught between an "orthodox-exclusive" and a "secular-rejective" approach to the rise of the freedom movement, Cone revised his method and constructed a contextual theology that took both seriously. By rejecting the Kierkegaard-Barth tradition regarding his theological method, Cone like Tillich fifty years earlier, also rejected the Kierkegaard-Heidegger philosophical tradition in theology, even though Cone seemed unaware of it, and never explored this notion with regard to black theology.

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[1] Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), P. 28

[2] Russell Re Manning, *Theology at the End of Culture: Paul Tillich's Theology of Culture and Art* (Leuven, Belgium, 2005), 9.

[3] Russell Re Manning, *Theology at the End of Culture: Paul Tillich's Theology of Culture and Art* (Leuden, Belgium: , 2005), 5.

[4] John Powell Clayton, *The Concept of Correlation: Paul Tillich and the Possibility of Mediating Theology* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 42

[5] John R Stumme, *Socialism in Sociological Perspective* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1978), 19-29

[6] Ronald Stone, *Politics and Faith* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2012), 28

[7] Paul Tillich, *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling's Philosophical Development Trans. Victor Nuovo* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1974)

[8] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology Volume Three* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 5

[9] James Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Book, 1969), P.3

[10] James Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Book, 1969), P.3

[11] James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 25.

The Irrelevance and Relevance of the Radical, Impure Tillich

Mike Grimshaw

In 1963, Paul Tillich preached a series of lectures that subsequently—and posthumously—were published as *The Irrelevance and Relevance of the Christian Message* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007). In these lectures, Tillich argued for what could be termed a type of Christian existential apologetics into, within, and for and against a society that (as he and I agree) understandably saw and experienced much of what was offered and expressed as Christianity as irrelevant to modern life. Tillich noted that if the Christian message is deemed irrelevant by those in the grip of the structures of modern existence and who have existential questions arising from their situation, then the post-Christian era has started (p.14). Yet, for many, the critiques outlined by Tillich regarding Christianity in modernity, unfortunately, can also be easily applied to Tillich by readers in late modern existence. Does this mean the post-Tillich era has started? For, in undertaking a critical reading of Tillich, Tillich's six points of irrelevance could be expressed as: The irrelevance of (much of) Tillich's language; the irrelevance of the context of Tillich studies and expressions; the irrelevance of traditional attitudes towards Tillich—which rejects his radical, impure edge; the irrelevance and lack of impact on thinking and action of many of those undertaking Tillich studies; the vast irrelevance of much of Tillich studies to the various social classes—especially radical labor, the intelligentsia, and the organizational middle class; and finally the irrelevance of interest and passion in Tillich, especially of what can be termed the radical impure Tillich, by a majority of scholars.

Yet, just as Tillich proclaimed relevance for Christianity, we can claim relevance for the radical, impure Tillich because of his central focus grounded in the human condition that takes modernity very seriously as the praxis of theology today. This enables us to also recover, as Thatamanil (2009) notes—Tillich's "impurity," that is, as a thinker of boundaries and margins, a thinker in which seemingly strong divisions are held in tension: relevance/ irrelevance; secular/ theologian and Christian/ socialist. To do so, this paper reads Tillich as a radical, impure thinker and theologian via two radical, impure texts, from different ends of his career: *The Socialist Decision* (1933) [Hereafter SD] and *Ultimate Concern* (1965) [Hereafter UC]. If *The Socialist Decision* is the culmination of his 15 years engaged in the radical impurity of religious socialism, *Ultimate Concern*, a series of dialogues with students at the University of California in 1963, is a different type of radial impurity, the impurity of a radical series of dialogues, yet one that continues the spirit of the socialist decision into a new context and a new society.

In reading these expressions of the radical, impure Tillich in the 21st century, Tillich's self-identity as "a dangerous man" (UC: 188) is engaged with and developed, arguing for a reading of ultimate concern as *The Socialist Decision* restated and re-imagined for the contemporary world seeking an alternative to neo-liberalism. This, in the words of Tillich, could be argued as being the radial, impure idea of attempting to combine "the inner-historical or fragmentary fulfillment with the supra-historical complete fulfillment" (UC: 123). The claims of Tillich's irrelevance are therefore answered through a reading of these texts. In this, a recovery is made of *Ultimate Concern* read anew via *The Socialist Decision*, arguing for the renewed relevance, or correlation, of the radical, impure Tillich for that large group he defined as "thinking and doubting people"—"those people who are in doubt or opposition to everything ecclesiastical and religious, including, Christianity. My work is with those who ask questions, and for them I am here" (UC:190).

The Socialist Decision was the culmination of Tillich's response to the fall of Weimar Germany and the rise of the Nazi state. Published in 1933, this call to a decision is where Tillich, in what can be termed the countermovement of the flaneur, walks with a critical gaze against Lutheranism as Socialist and against Socialism as a Lutheran, against politics as a theologian and against theology as one centrally committed to politics. In one sense, all of these positions are held to be both irrelevant and relevant as would be later expressed in what became the 1963 lectures *The Irrelevance and Relevance of the Christian Message*. Furthermore, the central concern is what comes to be discussed in *Ultimate Concern* whereby reading these expressions of the radical, impure Tillich from the 21st century, Tillich's self-identity as "a dangerous man" (UC: 188) is engaged with and developed, arguing for a reading of the claim of ultimate concern as the socialist decision restated and re-

imagined for the contemporary world seeking an alternative to neo-liberalism. This, in the words of Tillich, could be argued as being the radial, impure idea of attempting to combine "the inner-historical or fragmentary fulfillment with the supra-historical complete fulfillment" (UC:123).

As noted by John R. Stumme, "…from the beginning, Tillich stood on the critical left wing of democratic socialism, searching for a third way beyond Marxism-Leninism and mere reformism" (SD: xv). In this, Tillich could be said to be identifying with the Frankfurt school of critical theory, itself a type of impure socialism for "thinking and doubting people." *The Socialist Decision*, as impure, dangerous position and text, is indeed influenced by his conversation within a circle of thinkers, including those of the Institute for Social Research that he named his "Frankfurt conversation" (SD: xviii).

What Tillich began to move toward was a separation of God and religion from the explicitly religious sphere of the church. This was the impurity of his religious socialism, an impurity that undertook theology within impure locations and possibilities in the desire to make what could be dismissed as the irrelevance of Christian theology, relevant. To make socialism relevant it must reclaim its religious core, a religious core that will inform the opening question and demand, that of the socialist decision being a decision of and decision for socialism—a demand of socialism for those who are socialists and a decision for socialism by those who may be its opponents today but will need to support it in the future (SD: xxxi).

Therefore, the socialist decision is also a manifesto of what is actually true and what could be, against how socialism presents itself and how it expresses the socialist principle. The manifesto, as Mary Ann Caws observes, "makes an art of excess" (Caws: xx), being "a document of an ideology, crafted to convince and convert" (Caws: xvii). Central to the manifesto is what Caws terms "the manifesto moment" which is its positioning "between what has been done and what will be done, between the accomplished and the potential, in a radical and energizing division" (Caws: xxi), a moment of crisis expressing "what it wants to oppose, to leave, to defend, to change"(Caws: xxiii).

Central to his manifesto is socialism as a countermovement against both bourgeois society and, with bourgeois society, against feudal-patriarchal forms of society (SD: 1). This double countermovement positions the socialism of *The Socialist Decision* as the expression of a critical modernity: an impurity within and yet against, against yet within. There must be a break with a myth of origin, a break driven by the unconditional demand that adds wither to the question of whence (SD: 4). The unconditional demand is, in effect, the manifesto moment, a moment that is unconditional because what ought to be is not to be experienced in the unfolding of what is; because, as Tillich notes "The demand calls for something that does not yet exist but should exist, should come to fulfillment" (SD: 4). At the centre of the call, of the demand of wither, is the demand for justice, justice that is "the true power of being" (SD: 6) wherein the wither finds true and proper expression is the realization of the wither.

For Tillich, this is to be found in the decision arising as the socialist principle, a principle that is descriptive of reality, "the power of a historical reality, grasped in concepts" (SD: 10).

The socialist decision is, for Tillich, linked to the prophetic tradition, a tradition wherein the break with myths of origin occurs (SD: 20-21). Prophecy is the turn to history, the history of the relationship of God to Israel. The turn versus origin is a turn versus any claims of "the powers of soil, blood, group or status" (SD: 21). For Tillich, Christianity and the church become irrelevant when they identify with the myths of origins, when they become the expression of such claims, when Christianity and the church become the realization and expression of priests and not of prophets—or, to put it another way, when there is the retreat from the manifesto moment. Such an abandonment of its prophetic foundation, most often expressed in an alliance with political romantics, means that any such Christianity has lost its identity (SD: 22) and relevance. For political romanticism becomes "the attempt to restore the broken myth of origin, both spiritually and socially" (SD: 23). Therefore what political romanticism does is retreat from the universal in preference for the particular, a retreat from emancipation for all to emancipation for a select group, a retreat from society in preference for a distinct community. As noted by Tillich, this countermovement can be either conservative or revolutionary (SD: 24), but both move against the socialist decision and the prophetic foundation.

A danger, especially for Protestantism, arises because, in comparison to Catholicism, it does not contain "a socially independent group" (SD: 35)

that can preserve the religious tradition from the influence of historical movements. Protestantism has no explicit myth of itself and most centrally, as Tillich emphasizes, "The 'Scriptures' have no fixed sociological expression"(SD: 35). I would argue that it is this issue that makes Protestantism open to the siren claims of community that sit at the heart of political romanticism. Unless Protestantism has a strongly self-critical, prophetic focus, the reduction to a contextual gospel, a contextual reading and application of the scriptures opens the possibility for the retreat from society to the interest group and conservative romanticism of a community that is politically romantic.

Tillich positions a way forward in which the prophetic break with the bond of origin achieved by Protestantism in the rejection of the priesthood, and the humanistic break with the bond of origin as achieved in the Enlightenment come together in the bourgeois principle that universally attacks both the myth of origin and the bond of origin (SD: 47). This means, Tillich observes, that "Wherever technology and capital are at work, the spirit of western bourgeois society is active" (SD: 47-48).

For the socialist decision to occur, firstly bourgeois society itself must be overcome to ensure that bourgeois society, despite its basic immanence, does not attempt to "give itself the sanctity and power of transcendence" (SD: 55). For socialism to occur, the bourgeois principle must be overcome on the basis of the bourgeois principle, that is by the overcoming of origin and all related to it by rational mastery of the elements of origin and "the rational assemblage of these elements into structures serving the aims of thought and action" (SD: 48). What socialism calls for is the bourgeois principle applied to itself, that is, the bourgeois principle must not be allowed to become its own myth of origin that seeks transcendent and mythic expression. The socialist decision is therefore a work of prophecy against, and yet within, the bourgeois principle; the attempt to make the bourgeois principle relevant is what it allows to occur. This occurs from position that arises from the proletariat, in this expressing the particular aspect of the proletariat and universal impact of society (SD: 61). Therefore, socialism must overcome itself to fulfill socialism; in this it mirrors the bourgeois principle, but for different ends. Here it further mirrors the tensions of relevance and irrelevance. For what is relevant for the proletariat is not necessarily seen or experienced as relevant for society and vice versa. Socialism must therefore always exist in a manifesto moment, as much to itself as it does to bourgeois society; otherwise it is total reality reduced to the false consciousness of either a conservative or revolutionary socialism that creates and sustains its own myth of origin. Furthermore, as Tillich warns in reference to political romanticism, "apocalyptic, which is ecstatic and revolutionary in nature, has proved at present to be the most effective cultural expression of political romanticism" (SD: 37).

So, who are the proletariat for Tillich? They are what could be termed an impure group, in that they are not a closed group but rather both "an ideal type" and "an existential concept" (SD: 62), wherein "socialism is the self-consciousness of the proletariat" (SD: 62). Here Tillich prophetically notes the problem for the left in the West since 1989 when he states: "if the connection between socialism and the proletariat is broken, they both cease to be what they are" (SD: 63), and in such a situation both socialism and the proletariat becomes irrelevant to the bourgeois principle which can then proceed without the its self-critique. Furthermore, central to this connection of socialism and the proletariat is the legacy and history of Christian humanism with its inherent tensions of Christianity, Greek humanism and Jewish propheticism" (SD: 62-63). This is where the irrelevance becomes relevant in its claims of and for the universality of socialism. The irrelevance can occur when, as we do today, we have intellectual socialism separated from the proletariat.

Socialism, derived from the bourgeois principle, therefore always encounters an inner conflict and contradiction that it must drive to overcome. The centrality and radical nature of Tillich's view is that this cannot occur unless socialism remembers its central Christian humanism. This position is doubly impure and is emphasized by the need for the proletariat to deny the power of origin by which it attacks the bourgeois principle and for socialism to affirm the bourgeois principle that it seeks to overcome (SD: 68). This results in what Tillich has named "the socialist decision" wherein "socialism must direct its faith towards a future that stands in complete contradiction to the present" (SD: 69), and operate in an "eschatological expectation" (SD: 69), therefore a self-overcoming of any expression of societal harmony that is not eschatological. This is the breakthrough of the bourgeois principle, the challenge to any presupposition that there exists a rational world order that as such is implicit in real-

ity; yet, any prophetic proclamation occurs in a manner defined by the bourgeois principle, that is "as purely immanent expectation" (69).

Religious socialism uncovers the element of faith in socialism, makes it explicit, and overcomes the inner conflict of a self-consuming contradiction in which the universal participates in human reason, but occurs in being formed by consciousness.

The tension is how to stop socialism from becoming bourgeois and so in seeking to overcome the state the aim must always be the abolition of state, power, and class. In short, the revolution must be eschatological and not sink into bourgeois replication of what was; central to this is that those who have overthrown then voluntarily give up the power they have won, to give up a belief in rational bourgeois harmony.

Tillich also notes that socialism is, in the time he was writing, as much a struggle for the socialist idea of culture as it was for the socialist idea of economics. I wish to raise the possibility that today the struggle for socialism is now also a struggle for the socialist idea of theology and religion and that this constitutes the great impurity of our present age—an impurity versus both religion and theology and also socialism, as many would want them to be. For the traditional substitution of the science of bourgeois positivism for religion has failed socialism and so we now see the return of religion into socialism as the overcoming of the limits of a false harmony sought on the back of bourgeois positivism. For when science has become the bourgeois harmony it must be overcome, in and by the eschatological expectation of the socialist decision for and from religious socialism. And this is its great impurity. For the irrelevance of bourgeois socialism founded and focused upon bourgeois positivism can only be overcome by the prophetic challenge of the impurity of religious socialism, for sitting at the heart of religious socialism is a universal ultimate concern.

The problem is identified by Tillich this way: "A rational, analytical principle can never become the basis for individual or social life" (98), and it is this that has necessitated the turn of the radical left back to theology, a remade and re-theorized theology, an immanent, radical theology. In short, theology recovers the human in communism and socialism and, for this reason, in its recovering of the universal human, we see the return to theology by the left in the twenty first century. For from the universal claim of theology we retain the prophetic call that the proletarian being has not been, and cannot be, reduced to the status of a thing (SD: 99). It is by the recovery of theology that socialism overcomes its irrelevance and by the recovery of socialism, that theology overcomes its irrelevance. In both acts of recovery, socialism and theology become and remain impure, and impurity that sits at the heart of the relevance of ultimate concern.

The ultimate concern, re-read through the socialist decision is one of expectation, of expectation that is prophetic, prophetic not only in the tradition of prophecy and therefore of theology but prophetic in an immanent, socialist sense of a promised future that transcends this one, and as such socialism reclaims a relevance of ultimate concern. Here in 1933, we have the impure Tillich laying the ground for what would become the radical left's re-engagement with and turn to religion, or more specifically Paul and theology, post-1989 signaled by Tillich's statement of radical impurity: "socialism is propheticism on the side of an autonomous, self-sufficient world" (SD: 101). This moment is the manifesto moment, the stating of a newly relevant ultimate concern that explicitly identifies the prophetic core arising from primitive Christianity, the Christianity of Paul. This is an ultimate concern that is of and for humanity and not the individual, an ultimate concern of history of eschatological hopes, or as Tillich expresses it, "as tension towards the unconditionally new" (SD: 102). In this, Tillich reminds us that any retraction of ultimate concern from that of humanity towards an individual or a particular community is the focus of a conservative romanticism.

This becomes part of what I term the beginnings of the "dangerous Tillich" for his call for socialism, linked with propheticism "places every power, 'high or low' under its scrutiny" (SD: 105) in its deep demand for equality, a demand that makes everyone equal without the destruction of one's humanity that occurs when one is not allowed to enjoy the fullness of being. In this, he aligns himself with Marx's fight for a genuine humanism. Tillich's call is for a non-utopian socialism, a prophetical socialism. But even more so, in proclaiming that "Being comes to fulfillment only by transcending its immediate power" and further "that is the heart of the prophetic and socialist demand" (SD: 107), Tillich offers something new. My reading is that here Tillich is, in effect offering a form of correlational socialism that can be read back as a correlational ultimate concern with the socialist

decision. We could put this as the ultimate concern of the socialist decision, and the socialist decision of ultimate concern for "the origin that bears us guarantees the realization of that which transcends it and yet in which it reaches its fulfillment" (SD: 108).

Yet, the question remains as to whether ultimate concern is never realized. The promise remains, as is the promise of the prophetic in the socialist decision, but if either are to be realized, does that raise the issue of falling guilty to the Hegelian problem—that of the fulfilled character of being that Tillich notes Marx experienced and proclaimed as actually being unfulfilled (SD: 108-09).

This does set up a tension that can be expressed as the impurity of Tillich whereby if we take seriously his claim that "Human expectation is always transcendent and immanent at the same time. More precisely, this opposition does not exist for expectation" (SD: 110), then a type of impurity exists between transcendent and immanent, and between socialist decision and ultimate concern. The impurity is Tillich's overcoming in the radical claim of what can be termed the transcendent immanent and the immanent transcendent that he holds as the core of both propheticism and socialism, can be read at the centre of ultimate concern (SD: 112), and what I would, perhaps in claiming an impure Tillich, state is the core of Tillichian correlation.

This becomes the radical transformation effected via the prophetic call, whereby the irrelevance of socialism becomes relevant via prophetism, and the irrelevance of prophetism becomes relevant via socialism. The nub of what I have come to view as impure correlationism is the central claim of the socialist decision that "social being apart from social consciousness is a meaningless concept" (SD116), and here further is where ultimate concern can be positioned against religion experienced as false consciousness, against the institutions of religion experienced as social structures for "a false consciousness is nothing other than the willful self-affirmation of old social structures that are being threatened and destroyed by new ones" (SD: 117). Ultimate concern as the prophetic call is therefore directed against the irrelevance of Christianity in the context of new social structures. Wherein the socialist decision becomes understood as "the prophetic movement of our time; it is the movement that places itself under the demand of justice" (SD: 122). This is the stating of the irrelevance of Christianity as project unless it aligns itself with the socialist decision. However, Christianity can become relevant if, as expression of ultimate concern, it aligns with socialist expectation wherein the new identity overcomes the existing one and in doing so, aligned with the socialist principle, demands the fulfillment of the origin of justice (SD: 130). In this, the impurity is an impurity of relevance and hope that challenges both conservative pessimism and the optimism of a "bourgeois principle that believes in an authentic harmony" (SD: 132). The socialist decision is therefore ultimate concern and ultimate concern is therefore religious socialism, each as expression of radical, relevant impurity. The challenge is therefore expressed, reading backwards from today, as to why twenty-first century leftist thought has to turn and re/turn to the type of impure theology as articulated by Tillich. For as he notes:

> It is not the most enlightened, the so-called 'most progressive' consciousness that influences history. It is the consciousness whose energies follow from the fullness and depth of being, which brings it to light. Such energies are often lacking among socialist intellectuals (SD: 137).

Therefore, socialism, for Tillich, has to rethink its attitude toward religion and science, education and culture. Central to this is the possibility, for Protestantism, "of taking the socialist principle into itself under the aspect of the New Testament concept of the *kairos*" (SD: 145).

A new relevance is therefore possible out of this impure Christianity and socialism, out of a socialist decision of ultimate concern, a relevant Christianity "in which the opposition between the religious and the profane, the churchly and the secular, no longer has any meaning" (SD: 146). For without the prophetic element both religion and Marxism are doomed to irrelevance, for without the prophetic element both lack ultimate concern. And yet, what makes the prophetic always at once both relevant and irrelevant is that "the prophetic is always addressed to all humanity, but it always proceeds from amongst a people" (SD: 151).

To think further, from within the pages of the text of *Ultimate Concern* [UC], it appears that here, some thirty years on, and in America, Tillich now consigns socialism to a "quasi-religion" (UC: 5). And yet, if we consider Tillich's definition of ultimate concern as "taking something with ultimate seriousness, unconditional seriousness" (UC: 7), then we can see it is not socialism but the socialist decision, of the prophetical coming together of

Christianity and the socialist principle that is indeed the expression of ultimate concern, that is, religious socialism as the expression of ultimate concern; an ultimate concern that I would term the impurity of making the irrelevant relevant. As Tillich states, looking back, socialism became distorted as a secularization that profaned socialism because it gave up an ultimate concern, arising from the prophetic (UC: 31), and in being profaned it became empty (UC: 34). Therefore, only in recovery of the prophetic can meaning be put back into socialism and by prophetic is meant by an adequate criterion for judgment and self-criticism (UC: 77); this judgment, this self-criticism occurs out of interpretation, continuous interpretation.

This is what makes Tillich answer "yes" to the question "are you a dangerous man?" (UC: 188). He is the one who speaks for that large group he defined as "thinking and doubting people"—"those people who are in doubt or opposition to everything ecclesiastical and religious, including, Christianity. My work is with those who ask questions, and for them I am here" (UC: 190). This, in the words of Tillich, could be argued as being the radial, impure idea of attempting to combine " the inner-historical or fragmentary fulfillment with the supra-historical complete fulfillment" (UC: 123). That is of attempting the expression, via the socialist decision, of the coming together of the prophetic with ultimate concern in an age of the irrelevance of the Christian message.

Reading both texts from the perspective of a twenty-first century seeking the basis of an alternative to neo-liberalism, we must therefore read and think via a call for relevance, a relevance of ultimate concern and the socialist decision as answering "the existential questions of the humanity of today" (IRR: 13). That is, "those human beings who exist fully in the structures of the life of our time" and, engaged in self-criticism, undertake existential questions (IRR: 14), questions that situate themselves against "the attempt to transform persons into controllable objects" (IRR: 15). What Tillich, via his Critical Theory links reminds us is that modernity is itself an unfinished project that sits over and yet within the unfinished project of Christianity. Just as Christianity is necessarily radically impure in that that it is this worldly and enculturated so is modernity likewise radically impure. The rupture, impurity, and brokenness of modernity, theology, religion, and religious socialism are a reminder and expression of not just the modern condition, but also that of humanity itself—yet a rupture that is in turn broken and renewed by God. The theology I am arguing for out of the radical, impure Tillich is not theology as commonly understood, but rather a self-reflexive, critical, secular theology that stands as "argumentative discourse" regarding all that we take to be normative. The Tillich I am arguing for is not Tillich as commonly understood, but rather a self-reflexive, critical, secular, socialist, radically impure Tillich, a Tillich newly relevant for today's "thinking and doubting people" and an ultimate concern expressed as "the ultimate that grasps us…demanding a decision of our whole personality" (UC: 10); that is the radical impurity, the irrelevance and relevance of the radical prophecy of the socialist decision.