



BULLETIN

The North American Paul Tillich Society

Volume XLIV, Number 1

Winter 2018

Editor: Frederick J. Parrella, Secretary-Treasurer

Religious Studies Department, Santa Clara University

Kenna Hall, Suite 300, Room H, Santa Clara, California 95053

Associate Editor: Jonathan Rothchild, Loyola Marymount University

Assistant to the Editor: Vicky Gonzalez, Santa Clara University

Telephone: 408.554.4714 or 408.554.4547

FAX: 408.554.2387

Email: fparrella@scu.edu

Web: www.NAPTS.org/Webmeister: Michael Burch, San Rafael, California

In this issue:

- A Note from the Editor
- Renewal of NAPTS RSO Status
- Call for Papers NAPS 2018 November 16-17, 2018, Denver, Colorado
- "State Philosophy, Micro-Fascism, and New Materiality; Paul Tillich's contribution to Recent Political Philosophy" by Jari Ristiniemi
- "'A Tender Care That Nothing Be Lost': Whitehead, Tillich, and the Eternal Life of the Ecosystem" by Janna Gonwa
- "The Tillichian Dispensability of the World to God" by Kirk R. MacGregor
- "Bernard Loomer as a Bridge Between Whitehead and Tillich: Towards a Ground-of-Being Process Theology" by Demian Wheeler

A PERSONAL NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

My sincere apologies for the lateness of the Winter Bulletin. Due to illness in December and January as well as a very busy academic schedule, I was unable

to complete work on the bulletin until this time I sincerely promise, if my health continues stable and solid, to have the spring bulletin to you at the end of June. Thank you for your understanding.

RENEWAL OF NAPTS RSO STATUS

[Editor's Note: *This is very good news for the future of the NAPTS. Many thanks to the Officers who worked on the proposal.*]

I am pleased to report that the Board of Directors of the American Academy of Religion has voted unanimously to renew the North American Paul

Tillich Society as a Related Scholarly Organization. Congratulations!

The AAR expects all of our partners- including RSO's, Program Unit Committees, Working Groups, and Regional entities- to abide by our non-discrimination policy that can be found on our website at the following address:

<https://www.aarweb.org/about/non-discrimination>.

As a Related Scholarly Organization, we ask that you abide by this policy. If your organization currently has a non-discrimination policy, please send it to us for our records.

We look forward to working with you in the coming years and are confident that our relationship will continue to be mutually beneficial. I am

delighted that the Board approved your renewal and I look forward to seeing you in Denver. If you have questions about this matter, please feel free to contact me.

Best, Amy

Amy Yandell, Director of Project Development
ayandell@aarweb.org

**CALL FOR PAPERS
NAPTS 2018
NOVEMBER 16-17, 2018,
DENVER, COLORADO**

Please send abstracts to vehret@mercyhurst.edu by April 30, 2018. Abstracts should be no more than 300 words and submitted in an email attachment either in Microsoft Word or PDF format.

(1) Veterans Visioning Panel

This panel will be by special invitation. Please send Verna any recommendations you have for people to serve on this panel.

(2) Book Panel *Paul Tillich and Asian Religions*

This panel will be by special invitation. Please

CALL FOR PAPERS

The North American Paul Tillich Society seeks paper proposals from junior scholars (ABD or Ph.D. completed no earlier than 2015) for a workshop to be held at its annual meeting in Denver, Colorado, Nov. 16-17, 2018.

send Verna any recommendations you have for people to serve on this panel.

(3) Tillich Fellows Panel

There is a separate CFP for this panel with an earlier submission date.

(4) Thinking with Tillich about Contemporary Society

The NAPTS seeks to promote contemporary scholarship on the work of Paul Tillich. In this year's meeting we are looking at the past, present, and future of Tillich studies. This open call for papers focuses on the ways current scholarship thinks through and with Tillich. We invite proposals that engage Tillich's work and intellectual tools in the study of nationalism, quasi-religion, trans-religious theology, or social and creative justice.

Proposals should develop an aspect of Tillich's thought (i.e., a theme, trajectory, or method) or constructively employ Tillich's method within the applicant's work.

Materials should be submitted to Brother Lawrence A. Whitney, LC, vice president of NAPTS, at lwhitney@bu.edu by March 15, 2018.

AAR Members:

*Sign up now for the meeting
in Denver!*

*The Mile-High City
is waiting for us.*

**STATE PHILOSOPHY, MICRO-FASCISM,
AND NEW MATERIALITY; PAUL
TILlich'S CONTRIBUTION TO RECENT
POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY**

JARI RISTINIEMI

"My spirit will rise from the grave, and the whole world will know that I was right."

—Adolf Hitler, April 1945

"Hitler must now be removed from the German people, not only outwardly but also inwardly."

"His spirit must be banished from the German spirit."

—Paul Tillich, September 1943"

If we were to characterize recent political philosophy, we see a move from dualistic patterns of understanding to more holistic patterns. It is understood that we live in societal and cultural holarchies: life in society is understood in terms of interdependence, collaboration, and co-creation, not only from the individual-perspective but also from the relational/interactional perspective. There is also a move from seeing power as "power over" to understanding power as "power for." On the individual, societal, and cultural level power might be understood as power for empowerment, as supportive action. To talk about the relational/interactional view gives space to the individual to individual relationship: it is only in relation to the Other that we become what we are; in interaction with each other we realize ourselves. The individual as a moral subject comes into being in relation to the Other; it is the Other who offers us the world with consciousness of human nature, culture, justice, and life.²

Speaking about the holarchy of individual/societal/cultural interaction helps us to lift up those societal, cultural, and environmental phenomena that influence, affect, and effectuate us. There is the insight of seeing and feeling, or emotion, as an essential part of thinking and understanding; there is "the politics of affect" in the wake of Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari.³ The holistic understanding is not only about the individual/societal/culture interaction, but it is also

about the individual as a whole: as a thinking, feeling, and willing person; about the potentials we are invested with. In this, there is the new materiality of understanding human beings as material beings in physical reality, not materialism as an ontological reductive category, but materiality as open-ended, emphasizing the human and the more-than-human potentials.

I think Paul Tillich, during the last two decades of his life, become more and more interested in this new materiality. While moving into a monistic view of reality, Tillich pointed that this view, grounded in the self-transcending process of life, could be characterized as naturalism or materialism: "I have no trouble with this labeling," he said.⁴ In Tillich's monistic and holistic view, there is "the unity of the rational with the vital, the bodily with the mental, the unconscious with self-consciousness, the intellectual with the emotional; this unity is the creative process in human beings. It is human beings as spirit, or a realm of life under the predominance of spirit[s]."⁵ One purpose of this paper is to try to meet some of the holistic demands of recent human and cultural sciences.

Fascism as a Mentality Issue

Since the Renaissance and times before, the understanding of power as "power over" has been one of the dominating features of Western cultural understanding. The other way of understanding power, as the "power for," which we also find in Renaissance, has been passed over and left behind. This other way of relating became a form of subjugated knowledge. Tillich points out that Nazi Germany's domestic and foreign policy was based on the "power over a nation (and) over continents and the earth itself."⁶ In National Socialism, "the powers of the most ancient past triumphed when Hitler gained power," he said.⁷ In Tillich's view, "Hitler was long seen coming" before this particular person took hold of the power over Germany and over Europe.⁸ What is fascism and neo-fascism other than this: totalitarian colonial dominating power over the other, set within the hierarchical pattern of understanding: as mentality in the individual; as mentality-structure in groups and societies; as a culture that glorifies the past and sees the past as the paradigmatic model for the present and for the future? Fascism gets its tools for the future

from the past. It would be wrong to say that it is only backward looking, but it likes to construe future out of the past. Fascism is an absolute loyalty to the absolute ruler; the demonic collective uplifting of a finite person to infinite significance. As Daniel Guérin, Deleuze & Guattari writes: Hitler not only took power “over the German State administration,” but “it was because from the beginning he had at his disposal micro-organizations giving him “an unequaled, irreplaceable ability to penetrate every cell of society.”⁹ If we understood fascism as a mentality issue, as micro-fascism and as macro-fascism, as “power over,” we might start to deal with the fascist in our own culturally formed mentality.¹⁰ If we identified the trajectory of denial upon which it is based we might find another mentality based on mutual understanding and common humanity with justice and love. Instead of excluding the others, we might welcome the Other.¹¹

Fascism is an historical product; if we get its order of production clear, where it comes from, what it is, and how it functions, we might be able to turn the tide. Philip Roth in his *The Plot against America* has said much about micro-fascism; so did Paul Tillich in his *Wartime Radio Broadcasts into Nazi Germany*. In Roth’s book, it is the micro-fascism in the closest neighborhood that is one of the central driving forces. “What makes fascism dangerous,” Deleuze and Guattari write, “is its molecular or micro-political power, for it is a mass movement: a cancerous body rather than a totalitarian organism.”¹² “Molecular” is their characterization of the unconscious, of the synthetic level of mind where things link together and build *phantasma* and figures of thought, infused with desire and passion. In cancer, biological/physical powers of the body turn against the body. In fascism, desire turns upon itself and starts to “desire its own repression”; why this is so, “only micro-fascism provides an answer to the global question,” Deleuze & Guattari write.¹³ When desire starts to repress itself, we are no longer content with life but we are agitated in many known and unknown ways. The surplus-feeling of repressed desire arises at the outer horizon of the conscious I. Micro-fascism gets its power from the surplus-feeling; it builds on the agitation of this very feeling. In one of his wartime sermons, Tillich pointed to micro-fascism in Germany: “The desire for life, which is natural for every person, is bent back into the desire for death, first the death of

one’s opponent and then one’s own death.”¹⁴ People were educated for death. National Socialists, Tillich said, “turned death into the object of desire.”¹⁵ As an answer to the challenge of micro-fascism and fascism in general, Tillich points into the direction of life: life instead of death. As an answer to the challenge of fascism we could say that the knot of the bent desire is to be opened. Perhaps the longing for the lost past is also a surplus-feeling, explaining why fascism will build future on the past? “Today,” Tillich said in one of the wartime sermons, “people in Germany know what death is. But do they also know what life is?”¹⁶ Fascism and Nazism are not only a German phenomenon; what is happening today shows that, but they have long cultural chains of production behind them. I think the question, “Do we know what life is,” is to be directed to all of us.

What I try to do is to give a picture of our historical, societal, and cultural situation and to discuss and to propose alternatives or alternative ways of action in that situation. Today we live in a local/global holarchy. Political philosophers write that “the modern political system is a global whole, unified and unifying.”¹⁷ If we live in a political/economical holarchy, then we have to look for holistic ways of meeting the situation. I think that Paul Tillich’s political thinking, as well as his thinking in general, is to be brought in dialogue with recent political philosophy. He had important ideas about the state of things, about the human/society/culture interaction in the modern world; about the formation of individuals and societies by cultural patterns of understanding; and about the possible ways of action. His thinking on politics and culture is highly relevant for trying to understand what is happening in the world today. In Tillich’s view, life as we know, is ambiguous, a mixture of existential and essential elements. This does not mean that all things in human life are a mess, even if that seems to be the case when taking a look around; it means that we move with both elements in our interpretation.

What is Going On?

Today’s Nazi movement is an international movement. Recently, the Nordic neo-Nazi movement had a meeting in Finland. One purpose of this meeting was to discuss what symbols and

narratives could be used in recruiting children and young people for the movement. What we see today is that Nazis target children, trying to win them for their cause. In some Baltic countries, forest camps are established for young people in order to introduce them into Nazi rituals and ideology: camp fires are made to glow not only in the woods but in the minds of young people. In Sweden, Nazis openly march on the streets and anti-Semitic propaganda and anti-Semitic deeds are common. Synagogues are attacked and Jewish people are violated. In October in Gothenburg, about 400 or 500 neo-Nazis demonstrated, planning to march past the town synagogue where the Jewish congregation was celebrating Yom Kippur. The neo-Nazis were met by 10,000 citizens demonstrating against them. In Charlottesville, North Carolina Nazis marched with torches, fire in hands and hatred in minds. Some leaders of the Swedish neo-Nazi movement were present in Charlottesville. In November 2017, 60,000 right-wing nationalists, people from ultra-right and from different countries, were demonstrating in Warsaw, shouting: "God, honor, the land," also "We want God" and "For a pure Poland, for a white Poland." Polish Minister of the Interior from the Law and Justice party, called the demonstration "beautiful."¹⁸ The Third Reich knew the power of symbols, and so do today's neo-Nazis: the Swedish Nazis do not use swastika but they use the "Tyr rune," a symbol that was carried by those who were educated in the Nazi movement's leadership schools.¹⁹ It is the power of the fascist and Nazi-symbols that is to be broken; the investment of desire into that world of symbols is to be exposed as it is: its purpose is to give the feeling of superiority for the adherents. One affective modulation of the surplus-feeling, anger and hatred, is canalized by another affective modulation: that of exclusive superiority.²⁰ In the surplus-feeling of the repressed desire, there is now the feeling of superiority. This affective modulation is a group phenomenon; the modulation has become a collective and a political force.

Fascism is not only on the level of macro-politics; it is not only run by corporations and institutions in search of prosperity, but it also gets its power from desire-investments, from micro-fascism. Charlie Chaplin writes in his autobiography that fascism is an international, global network with cells around the globe; in times of unrest the

cells are activated, the global cell-system is set in motion.²¹ It is the political, social, and economic unrest, the international/national unrest, we should say, that sets the global underground network in motion, after a while it is filled with anger, hate, and reactive affects. Manipulating people, with the help of like-minded media and social media, canalize the hatred-filled movement for their own benefits. Through agitation, the movement becomes a collective force. Manipulating symbols, which are intended as attracting symbols, are introduced in media, social media, and public places like highway viaducts leading to central airports. Tremendous political and mental powers are in motion today in all countries. We simply cannot ignore the power of symbols. But there is more than the symbol-world: there are the images of the other and the underlying pattern of understanding set on the trajectory of denial. It is always the other or others that is to be blamed: "I have no part in this. You say it, not me." I think there is a desperate longing for a lost world in fascism; there is a longing for wholeness. If fascism is a mentality and a symbol-world, only the holistic way of meeting it will do. If it is a local/global phenomenon, one state or one nation cannot deal with it alone; it must be met with global means through a global mental or spiritual change: the mentality or the spirit that makes the position of the absolute ruler possible, the sovereign despotic authority in whatever form—political, religious, cultural, societal—it comes, is to be banished from the local/global mentality so that it will not rise from its grave anymore.

Binary Segmentation and the Trajectory of Denial

Basic for Deleuze and Guattari is desire-production; materiality of life is run by desire-production, or the material side. On the formal side of life, the patterns or constellations of understanding, assemblages as they call them, set the order of desire. Deleuze and Guattari coined the conception of "rhizome unconscious." Instead of speaking about the root-system, they preferred so speak about the rhizome. Root-system is under the plant at a particular spot; a rhizome is all over and it is spreading itself all over. The individual and the collective unconscious have rhizome character. Micro-fascism gets its power from the rhizome. "Desire," they

write, “is never undifferentiated instinctual energy, but itself results from a highly developed, engineered set up rich in interactions: a whole supple segmentarity that processes molecular energies and potentially gives desire a fascist determination.”²² To process molecular energies is to make use of the underground unconscious rhizome connections. It is, among other things, to let the blaming gossip, this societal disaster, to have its way both among individuals and in media. Bullying is a micro-fascist strategy: the blaming gossip living from the surplus-feeling. It is those feelings and the patterns that make it possible that are to be caught up, if the change is to come.

“A whole supple segmentarity,” when interpreted in a binary way, is the split between the conscious and the unconscious mind, between the rationalized consciousness and the forgotten sensing body. The split segmentarity is run from the top down by the “power over.” The fascist determination of desire in individuals, in groups, and in societies is the power over the other, nature, animals, plants; it is power over the earth itself; it is the power over the body. Both sides of the binary segmentation are still there—the one side triumphant, the other side repressed. In fascism, the surplus-feeling of repressed desire does not only get the modulation of superiority, but the repressed body is identified as the bearer of degeneration and filth, as something to be attacked in degenerate art. It is essential to fascism that superiority and filth are found together: they are brought together by the binary segmentation and, ultimately, by the fascist determination of desire. Shadows—surplus-feelings—are chased, but the worst thing is that these shadows become political powers in the collective paranoia, as the repressed elements are seen in certain groups of people. The human dignity is taken away from these people and they are made into numbers. They become, what Agamben calls, “bearers of bare life,” where their only property is that they are still alive.²³ It is the nomadic people, camp people, and refugees, that the institutional powers, build on the “power over,” attack in fascism, in Nazism, and in bio-politics. In the proclamation of a ban and in camps, they are allowed to be killed. Agamben identifies a pattern of understanding behind the excluding strategy: the juridical/political model with the binary structure between the sovereign power of the ruler or state and

the state of exception. The bearers of bare life are placed in the state of exception. In Agamben’s view, the juridical/political model has regulated the civil society since the times of the Roman law.²⁴ To attack the bearers of bare life is to deny our common humanity. It is to go over the boundary of humanity, and the crimes against humanity are to be met by the international law and its retributive/proportional justice. This is one side of the situation; the other side concerns the victims and their fate. How about the victims in the past and in the present? How to restore their dignity? Is this possible at all?

Deleuze and Guattari speak about the binary segmentations as characterizing the world we live in: adults/children, men/women, normal/different, native people/foreigners, consciousness/unconscious, striated space/smooth space, high rationality/low desire. In a binary, split segmentation only one pole is preferred at the cost of the other pole. The other side of the constellation does not disappear: it sinks into the unconscious, arises as the surplus-feeling, and becomes a political force making use of rhizome connections. We might say that Western cultural patterns have been fashioned in a dualistic, binary way. Keeping us within a pole, the trajectory of denial is there; for example, we rational, uplifted and cultivated people deny the low desires of the masses. In Tillich’s view, the rationalized consciousness—“empty intellect” he called it—was one of the factors behind the rise of fascism and Nazism in Germany. “Faith in the intellect,” he said, “had been lost... because the intellect that was found in oneself and in others did not issue from life.”²⁵ People with rationalized consciousness and rationalized reason (technical reason) could not resist the power of the collective unconscious, and “that which is contrary to intellectual life has won power over them,” Tillich said.²⁶ We should use the power of reason to integrate those powers that are against reason; otherwise “the aspects of life that are not shaped by the mind rebel against the mind and destroy it,” Tillich said.²⁷ In Tillich’s view, we should find “the passion that overcomes hatred, which does not avenge... National Socialism can fear nothing more than such a victory. Only if its force of hatred is conquered is itself conquered.”²⁸ If the force of hatred is from and through the rhizome unconscious, arising as a surplus-feeling, it is only at the level that it is to be

conquered. How to manage with that? If we identify the surplus-feeling and the trajectory of denial, this identification is a step away from the fascist-determination of desire. We are meant to be wholes, with the rational and the vital intact, aren't we?

Patterns of Understanding or Underlying Wholes

The work of philosophy is to offer wholes. Kant did this, Hegel did this, and feminist thought does this by offering new societal structures and patterns of understanding instead of patriarchal structures.²⁹ Adherents claim that even the Alt-Right movement likes to offer wholes: patterns and structures of white supremacy instead of the leftist/feminist structures.³⁰ In the Alt-Right movement we find the trajectory of denial: people or races are not to be blended with each other: "We, better white persons, know better and we are not to be blended with inferior races." Fascism, Nazism, Neo-Nazism and the Alt-Right movement seem to live from the same mentality-structure; it is at the structural level they are to be met. It is not only the symbol-world that is to be exposed, but the underlying binary pattern or model with its trajectory of denial has to be exposed as well. And more than this, the dimension of potentiality, the root of our common humanity, has to be lifted up.

An alternative holistic pattern to the binary patterns could be sketched in the following way: The rationalized consciousness is congruent with reflection, abstraction, general concepts, and ideology. We might say that informative knowledge, when we construe concepts and theories in abstraction, is the *knowledge of first degree*. Facts, as far as they are referential, belong to this class of knowledge. Fake news and many alternative facts seem to lack the referential object, which is the necessary condition for facts. In State Philosophy, if it operates with general concepts only, getting its power from an ideology, we find in the knowledge of first, general order. Knowledge in terms of patterns of understanding—as formations of desire—we might call the *knowledge of second degree*. In holistic patterns of understanding, the rational and the vital meet each other; that we sense things, have cognitive value.³¹ Desire-production, while in touch with the potential dimension, we might call the *knowledge*

of third degree. We have a whole in the light of which we are able to discuss things in an holistic way. For example, we are able to point out that potentials are driving forces behind the desire-production, but as such they are not from desire; they have a deeper ontological significance than that. The model makes it possible to identify that stratum of being in which potentials are to be found.

Potentialities Are in Life

Tillich drew attention to Aristotle and to Aristotle's talk of potentiality. He said that Aristotle's doctrine of potentiality and actuality has followed him throughout his life.³² During the anti-ontological era in philosophy, an era which today is passed, Tillich was accused of being an ontologist. Today ontology has entered into political philosophy. Giorgio Agamben claims that things will not change before we think through the relation between potentiality and actuality. We should think of the relation in a new way, compared with the way it was understood in traditional metaphysics. For the second, he claimed that we should seek the potentials in life; we should start from them in our philosophy of life.³³ Tillich grounded his late differential monism in life.

The traditional way of interpreting potentiality and actuality is to see actuality as higher than potentiality; potentiality is dependent on the preceding actuality or the act. In this interpretation, all potentialities need some kind of actuality so that the potential powers are drawn into realization; first comes the actuality and after that the potentiality; potentialities are, given this interpretation, mere passivities. In traditional metaphysics, God is pure act: the sum of all positive actual powers, drawing the finite, created powers in human beings, animals, and plants to realization. In traditional metaphysics, when interpreted in terms of Finalism, it seems that the actuality of God rules over potentiality; God has the power over the potentialities of things. When this translates into history, history is no place for the creation of the genuinely new. When this translates into the societal order, those with the authority of God have the power over the others and those in their nature closest to God: men having power over women. When this translates into the political life, those in power, for example, the absolute rulers, have power over those

who have a lower degree of realization and actuality, the lesser people. When this translates into the domain of knowledge and education, those with the expertise have the power over those who do not know yet. Agamben proposes another way than the traditional way in his interpretation of potentiality and actuality. Agamben writes,

One must think the existence of potentiality without any relation to Being in the form of actuality.... This, however, implies nothing less than thinking ontology and politics beyond every figure of relation, beyond even the limit of relation that is the sovereign ban. Yet it is this very task that many, today, refuse to assume at any cost.³⁴

Thinking ontology and politics, beyond every figure of relation, is to let potentiality to stand there on its own without letting any power over to rule over it or run from it. Agamben differentiates between two kinds of potentialities in Aristotle: generic potentiality and existing potentiality or potentiality as such.³⁵ The generic potentiality is exemplified in that a child grows up to become an adult. The existing potentiality is there on its own whether we realize it and actualize it or not. We might be capable of realizing it but we do not have to do this. It is “potential to not-do, potential not to pass into actuality.”³⁶ It is potentiality as such, not potentiality that waits for some actuality to put it on, which is the ground of potentiality. We might say that the natural and empirical sciences deal with the generic potentiality, as they seek for the causes of things. The humanity of humans, however, is linked with the existing potentiality.

Agamben sees the new understanding of potentiality in existing potentiality. Existing potentiality has its own darkness from which it steps out. This potentiality or “the originary figure of potentiality” contains its own passivity, darkness, and impotentiality. Agamben writes:

Human beings are the animals who are capable of their own impotentiality. The greatness of human potentiality is measured by the abyss of human impotentiality.... The root of freedom is to be found in the abyss of potentiality. To be free is... *to be capable of one's own impotentiality*, to be in relation to one's privation. This is why freedom is freedom for both good and evil.³⁷

What Tillich thought about human freedom and of potentiality is similar to Agamben's understanding:

freedom is freedom for good and evil. What does this have to do with political philosophy, one might wonder? In Agamben's interpretation, the privation in potentiality, “its own non-Being...constitutes the essence of potentiality.”³⁸ Agamben continues: “Beings that exist in the mode of potentiality *are capable of their impotentiality*; and only in this way do they become potential. They *can be* because they are in relation to their own non-Being.”³⁹ It is, then, the existing potentiality that makes us into what we are, gives us our nature or essence, and not the generic potentiality only. Identity is, so to speak, an inner matter, given to us by our existing potentiality. There is the coming into being from the non-being of existing potentiality: “can be” overcomes non-being, constantly, we might say; there is the non-being and the positive “can be” in the existing potentiality. This means that the political existence is to be found in the ontological/political horizon of becoming human, not only in that what we are able to become in the power of something else outside ourselves, but what we “can be” or can become in the power of our inner existing potentiality. Politics, and with it ethics, is congruent with the roots of our existence: in being human or not, there is no other choice in this context. When this translates into political action, empowerment or supportive action is there. The supportive action is to create conditions for that which we can be. I do not think that the existing potentiality is an exclusive individual property: the existing potentiality in the individual links him or her with our common humanity; what happens in one, happens in all. Following the line of interpretation that we have given of Agamben, the line could be given an extremely individualistic interpretation, but I think that Tillich's way of understanding the potential field as something common to all living things is truer to the matter in hand.

Considering potentiality, Tillich writes: “*Potential being* is the *power of being* which has not used its power but which might use it in every moment. It is not *non-being*; it is more than *non-being*.”⁴⁰ It is more than non-being, as it makes existence in time and place possible, making that we can be. That we can be is, in Tillich's language, our power of being, and all things have their own power of being in the power of their potentiality. Our power of being is dependent on that how much of non-being we are able to overcome and so for all things. In Tillich's

view, the positive in life is the continuous overcoming of the negative, of non-being. We might say that the way Tillich understands the power of being in a thing is dependent on how much of the potential non-being it has been able to overcome; so for all things. In the end of his Systematic Theology, Tillich speaks about “the self in self-creativity,” which finds itself in the universal life.⁴¹ I think this is the self that in self-transcendence has found itself: the self is given to itself. In Agamben’s view, this is the act that characterizes the self in the existing potentiality.

In Tillich’s view, there is the “universal essentialization.”⁴² In this essentialization, all things have their “can be,” but they become in interaction with each other. Life in Tillich’s view is interaction. Tillich writes: “in the essence of the least actualized individual, the essences of other individuals, and indirectly, of all beings are present.”⁴³ Essences are potentials. Creation, Tillich said, “means the whole of potentialities.”⁴⁴ When God created the first atom, as Tillich affirms, God created the potentiality of all that today is a part of the universe, including human beings.⁴⁵ God did not plant a piece here and another there, as if the universe was a potting soil, but God created all of the potentials at the same time. In Tillich’s view, if we are to believe his claim about essentialization, the potentials are connected with each other: in the potentiality of the individual, the potentialities of other individuals, of all beings are present. What happens in one individual realization has consequences for other individuals. It is here in essentialization as the eschatological event, that the restoration of human dignity is to be searched.

What we see in democracies today is an overtaking by experts, by people who believe they know better in the power of their position, knowledge, and rationalized consciousness; the authoritarian personality is there. We are not free from this. A new dictatorship is growing as the society grows

more complex, impenetrable and diverse: the dictatorship of those who believe they know how to manage the local/global society, its politics, its economics, and its morals in the power of their knowledge. Voices are raised in America and in Europe for and against this dictatorship. If this knowledge is that of the knowledge of first degree, build on abstraction and representation, we should be cautious: a general theory is used to mold the earth. I think that an allowance of the impotentiality of potentiality, this knowledge of the third degree, might give us a more enjoyable future than the expert-dictatorship is capable of offering. If we said that we do not have anything to do with the expert-dictatorship, then we also made ourselves into the victims of the trajectory of denial. If we said that the expert-dictatorship is built on the same mentality and mentality-structure as those movements we have spoken of here, we might have exposed a central phenomenon in our cultural heritage: the power over the earth itself, including all its beings through knowledge and authority. The trajectory of denial is to deny our common humanity and those potentials we have a share into. The strategy of empowerment is to admit that all beings, not just human beings, have the potentials that they long to realize in interaction with other potentials. Love, in Tillich’s view, is the deepest driving power in life, conquering the negative in us, in our society and in our local/global holarchy. Love, Tillich writes, “is the movement of life itself, power is that which gives reality to life, and justice is that which gives structure to life.”⁴⁶ Love, power, and justice come here from life. We are capable of political action: to change the affective modulation through anger and hatred for the affective modulation through love, the power of “can be,” and justice. Agamben in his writings points to love as the ontological foundation of life as well.

¹ Tillich, P. (1998). *Against the Third Reich*. Paul Tillich’s Wartime Radio Broadcasts into Nazi Germany. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, p. 191.

² “But with this self-transcendence in the moral act, the dignity of person, the seriousness of culture, and the justice of life are made possible.” Tillich, P. (1960). “Questions and answers,” *bMS* 649/39 (2), March 10, p. 15.

³ Massumi, B. (2015). *The Politics of Affect*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

⁴ “If naturalism is ecstatic i. e. going beyond itself, getting out of itself into the direction of the eternal, then I have no trouble with that labeling.” Tillich, P. (1960). “Questions and answers,” *bMS* 649/39 (2), March 10, 1960, p. 14).

⁵ Tillich, P. (nd). “The Doctrine of the Spirit.” *bMS* 649/53 (1). 1. Lecture, p. 3.

⁶ Tillich, (1998), p. 71.

⁷ Ibid., p. 101.

⁸ Ibid., p. 181.

⁹ Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1998). *A Thousand Plateaus*. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press. p. 214.

¹⁰ Considering the use of words Tillich writes: “I avoid the word mental, but when I say spiritual this is more or less the same. It’s only more embracing. It doesn’t leave out what mental often does, the element of power in everything which the individual does in his or her spiritual functions.” Tillich, P. (1959). “Religion in Higher Education.” *bMS* 649/42 (8), p. 8.

¹¹ Levinas, E. (2007). *Totality and Infinity. An Essay on Exteriority*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

¹² Deleuze & Guattari, p. 215.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Tillich, (1998), p. 18.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 92.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁷ Deleuze & Guattari, (1998), p. 210.

¹⁸ Svenska Dagbladet 20171113.

¹⁹<https://www.adl.org/education/references/hate-symbols/tyr-runet> 20171031.

²⁰ Considering affective modulation, see Massumi (2015).

²¹ Chaplin, C (1964). *Min självbiografi/My Autobiography*. Stockholm: Norstedt.

²² Deleuze & Guattari, (1998), p. 215.

²³ Agamben, G. (1998). *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Tillich, (1998), p. 58.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 58.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 65.

²⁹ Butler, J. *Bodies that Matter. On the discursive Limits of “Sex.”* New York: Routledge, 2011.

³⁰ Svenska Dagbladet, 20171106.

³¹ Damasio, A. (2012). *Self Comes to Mind. Constructing the Conscious Brain*. London: Vintage Books.

³² Tillich received “from Aristotle, for my theological thinking, the distinction between the two main ways of being, namely, *potential being* and *actual being*. And this permeates all my thinking.” Tillich, P. (1960). “Philosophical Background of My Theology.” *bMS* 649/68 (17), p. 7.

³³ Agamben, (1998).

³⁴ Agamben, (1998), p. 47.

³⁵ Agamben, G. (1999). *Potentialities*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. p. 179.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 180.

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 182f.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 182.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ P. Tillich, (1960). “Philosophical Background of my Theology,” pp. 7f.

⁴¹ P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1974 (1963), p. 402.

⁴² Ibid., p. 408.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 409.

⁴⁴ P. Tillich, “Ambiguities of life.” *bMS* 649/45 (7). March, 1, 1958, Lecture, p. 6.

⁴⁵ There is “the immanence of the dimensions and the “creation of human being with the atom and of atom with human being.”” Tillich, P. (1958). “Ambiguities of life.” March, 1. Lecture, p. 6.

⁴⁶ Tillich, P. (1954). “Love, Power and Justice.” *bMS* 649/69 (8), p. 7.

**“A TENDER CARE THAT NOTHING
BE LOST”:
WHITEHEAD, TILlich, AND THE ETERNAL
LIFE OF THE ECOSYSTEM**

JANNA GONWA

Does God want the world? Does God need the world? Does God want or need the world so much that God will prevent us from destroying it with nuclear war or climate change? Should we just stop worrying about whose finger is on the button or which coastal communities have recently become flood zones? If using divine sovereignty as an argument against eco-protective policies seems bizarre to you, you may not be reassured to know

that this has occurred at least once in an official meeting of the U.S. House Subcommittee on Energy and Environment. On March 25, 2009, Illinois Representative and coal advocate John Shimkus read aloud from Matthew 24 on the rapture of the elect and from Genesis 8:21-22 (“Never again will I destroy all living creatures as I have done”).¹ Based on his belief that the Bible reveals the infallible will of God and shows us the way that things will be for God’s creation (as he put it), he concluded, “The earth will end only when God declares its time to be over. Man will not destroy this earth; this earth will not be destroyed by a flood.”² Shimkus believes, apparently, that God grants legislators enough power over the world to destroy the lives of the coal miners who are put out of work

by clean-energy regulations but not enough power to flood the coastlines by voting against those same regulations. Flooding is too apocalyptic, too epic, to be a human activity. Go down the path of disaster as far as we want, Shimkus seems to say, and God will intervene before we reach the end. It is not for us creatures to determine what happens to our planet on a macro level. At the same time, Shimkus' allusion to the rapture suggests that he does believe that God will one day bring about the end of the world. He does not consider whether God might use human shortsightedness to do it.³ I could spend a long time unpacking the theological assumptions behind this two-minute piece of policy-making, but I will forbear. For the record, I do not mean to take cheap shots against the mixing of religion and politics. That mixing is ubiquitous and inevitable, if not always so blatant. Every politician has beliefs about ultimate reality that affect her assumptions about the possible futures open to the world, the ideal goods of human communities, and the kinds of things that we owe to one another. I also do not want to frame this as a question about power plays. I am not asking about the nature of God's control over the world or whether God's will works in cooperation with human willing or in the spaces in between. What I want to explore here with all of you, as I turn to Whitehead and Tillich, is the question of God's relation of concern to the cosmos that God has created, especially this one particular planet and the particular creatures that are on it. Does God need us or want us? Do we add something to God? And if so, does this give us reason for activity or passivity with regard to the ecological future of the planet?

Whitehead and Tillich are fascinating voices to bring into this discussion precisely because they do not advocate a classical Christian apocalyptic eschatology like those found in Irenaeus, Augustine, or Calvin.⁴ You see, there can be a kind of planetary fatalism whether one assumes that God will certainly not allow us to destroy the world or whether one assumes, conversely, that God will certainly allot us roles to play in its end-time destruction, on a date that has already been written in God's calendar. If we want to move beyond environmental complacency, then answering either "yes" or "no" to the question "Do we have a role to play in the end of the world?" will not help us. However, there is another question that will help, and Whitehead

and Tillich both point us toward it. The question that I propose to lead us out of the apocalyptic impasse is this: "In what form will my individual life will be taken up into the life of God?" In other words, which of my actions on this earth contribute to eternity, and in what way?

Whitehead and Tillich eschew any kind of certainties about the temporal outcome of the planet. However, while both their metaphysics and their doctrines of God differ substantively—if you'll permit me to apply a label like "doctrine" to Whitehead's process philosophy—both writers imagine that the life of the world and its people becomes internal to the life of God in some sense. In deference to my fellow panel member Kirk MacGregor, who will be arguing that Tillich maintains a very sharp distinction between the being of God and the becoming of the world, I will concede now that this may be a highly qualified sense. Nevertheless, in different but related ways, both Tillich and Whitehead challenge the classical theological assumption that the history of the world is not God's own history.⁵

There are significant similarities in the accounts that Tillich and Whitehead give of the way in which the finite goods of a human life are taken up into the divine life and integrated into divine goodness and the goodness of creation as a whole. This divine internalization of finite goods changes the stakes of the conversation. For if the question isn't whether we will destroy the world, the stakes are no longer all-or-nothing. If the question is whether the goodness of our lives within the world is taken up into eternity, in whole or in part, then even our non-apocalyptic actions within the world may gain eternal significance. Ultimately, I will argue that, for both Tillich and Whitehead, the human person who values the goodness of her individual life has strong reason to work for the good of creation as a system. That remains true whether or not we achieve subjective immortality in the eternal life of God, a matter that is not straightforward in the reception of either writer.

I will look first at Whitehead. Not even ten pages into *Process and Reality*, Whitehead criticizes monistic religious and philosophical systems for "illegitimately" postulating an ultimate being with a final reality beyond any of its accidents.⁶ Whitehead's God is primordial, preceding the existence of any temporal actual entities, yet it

“yearns” for concrete fact, albeit no facts in particular. Whitehead refers to this as a “deficiency” in God’s primordial nature that needs to be filled up with actuality, the actuality of temporal existents.⁷ Though primordially God has cognizance of the “eternal objects”—the multiplicity of Platonic forms that provide potentiality for all the diverse things that will ever exist in the history of the world—something remains lacking. God’s ideas do not have the concrete unity of actuality that actual entities will have. Their concreteness comes from their total specificity: being this, not that, in this place, with these relations. The concrescence of an actual entity has its own kind of beauty, a beauty that comes from its irrevocable decision to be just what it is, to the exclusion of everything else that it might have been. Its absolute ontological commitment to its limited specificity has no parallel within God’s primordially.⁸ The danger, the risk, the betting of all the stakes in an instant of loving choice that accompany every moment of finite becoming are values added to the universe and to God’s own relationality. In God’s consequent nature, God experiences every moment of creation’s love and pain. God cherishes this awareness. God is—to borrow a phrase from Charles Hartshorne—“supreme yet indebted to all.”⁹

If, as process theology suggests, God is indebted to all—if God needs the world, in the minimal sense that God’s consequent nature is enriched by the world’s perdurance—would this guarantee the world’s continued survival (regardless of the doubt I have already expressed that such an assurance would inspire us toward more conscious policy-making)? The continued enrichment of God’s consequent nature requires, at most, the survival of something finite.¹⁰ As our own collective experience tells us, it certainly does not require the perpetual survival of any particular person, regime, or civilization. Given the vast breadth of the universe, it does not even require the perpetual survival of this one small planet or any of its creatures. God’s debt to the world would not guarantee our planet’s continuation. On the contrary, it is a central tenet of process philosophy that everything that is not God is in perpetual flux, given a bare moment on the stage of existence and then dissolving, leaving behind only the echoes that subsist after it is gone. The actual entity’s total specificity, the supreme source of its beauty and value in the

process universe, is also one supreme source of the tragedy of finite existence. The moment of specificity can never recur again. We are all, from the tiniest mote to the largest mountain, caught in a series of instants that cannot return. As Marjorie Suchocki remarks in *The End of Evil*, her exploration of the problem of evil from a process perspective, the same conditions that make finite value possible ensure suffering. Whitehead’s world is the domain of “perpetual perishing.”¹¹

Why, then, from a Whiteheadian perspective, should it matter to you how you act in this fragile instant? I assume, for the purpose of this conversation, that your eternal destiny does not hang in the balance and that neither rewards nor punishments await you based on how you choose. I make this assumption because the possibility of a subjective afterlife is a controversial question for process theologians, not to mention process philosophers more broadly.¹² Assume with me that Whitehead’s metaphysics is broadly correct and that, furthermore, you have no clear reason to hope that you will awake after death to a reckoning of your deeds. How should you act if, at every perishing instant, that instant is all you have? Well, is it all you have? Whitehead believes, after all, that each passing instant is taken up into the consequent nature of God as an everlasting fact, preserved in its distinctness yet integrated within God’s awareness of the whole vast multiplicity of perishing entities in the astonishing complexity of their interrelation. Your instants, each of them, are preserved there and valued for what they have contributed to the whole. Each of the decisions in the whole society of moments that is you has worked to increase the brilliant complexity-within-unity that is the world, or else it has worked to decrease it. In these terms, I propose that caring for ecological diversity is a way of working on behalf of complexity-within-unity, while ecological indifference is a way of working against it. The preservation of the nexus of created beauty within the consequent nature of God is Whitehead’s version of the “kingdom of heaven.” God uses the goodness that develops in our moments of decision, returning that goodness to the world as inspiration or “lure” calling future entities to decide for further goodness: “The kingdom of heaven is with us today.”¹³ None of the good that you do in this world is ever ultimately lost.

But is that “tender care that nothing be lost” sufficient to preserve you in a meaningful way?¹⁴ That is, is your contribution to this eternal kingdom sufficient enough for you to care about it and to curate it the way that you probably care for your own temporal future? Could it motivate you to sacrifice short-term pleasure (or carbon tax dollars) for the sake of long-term complexity, the way that you often find yourself motivated to sacrifice the pleasure of your present self for the good of future you? If you are one of the minority of philosophers who doesn’t think that present you and future you are sufficiently the same person for such sacrifice to be motivated past a certain limit point, then the argument that’s about to follow probably will not convince you.¹⁵ If, on the other hand, you do think you have good reason to sacrifice now for the sake of improving the state of your future self, then consider that Whitehead makes an analogy between the unity of the stages of a person’s lifetime and the unity of an actual entity with its eternal place in God’s consequent nature. He says,

Each actuality in the temporal world has its reception into God’s nature. The corresponding element in God’s nature is not temporal actuality, but is the transmutation of that temporal actuality into a living, ever-present fact. An enduring personality in the temporal world is a route of occasions in which the successors with some peculiar completeness sum up their predecessors. The correlate fact in God’s nature is an even more complete unity of life in a chain of elements for which succession does not mean loss of immediate unison. This element in God’s nature inherits from the temporal counterpart according to the same principle as in the temporal world the future inherits from the past. Thus in the sense in which the present occasion is the person now, and yet with his own past, so the counterpart in God is that person in God.¹⁶

If, then, we think we have present reason to curate the possibilities of our future selves, Whitehead thinks we have reason to care for our reception into the immediate life of God.

Granted, in Whitehead’s own work—though not necessarily in that of other process thinkers after him—we will not be taken up consciously. Still, I would argue that the situation is still not too different from the case of historical legacy, which motivates many of us. If history were to remember us

after our consciousness has ceased, would it remember us as a creators or destroyers? The everlasting “memory” of God’s consequent nature is, in fact, far more permanent than historical legacy, which fades with the centuries (if not before). And the “memory” of God’s consequent nature considers all momentary actual occasions in their interrelation, as a function of what they have contributed to the totality of the perfected system, with all its occasions, great and small. In such a system, which places strong positive value on complexity within unity and the harmonious interconnection of manifold diverse centers of agency, surely our regard or disdain for the non-human parts of the world will not be trivial.

Now, to Tillich. On the question of whether God has given human beings epic powers of destruction, Tillich makes my job easy. He asserts plainly in his *Systematic Theology*, “It is not impossible that the self-destructive power of humankind will prevail and bring historical mankind to an end.”¹⁷ Now that that’s out of the way, what can we say about the world’s contribution to the life of God and how that might motivate us to preserve it? First, Tillich distinguishes between historical and eschatological “futura.”¹⁸ These two modes are distinct, so it’s possible that historical humankind will wane and disappear, but that would not be the cessation of our existence from an eschatological standpoint. History serves a transhistorical aim established by God, and that aim is “not the extinction but the fulfillment of humanity in every human individual.”¹⁹ We might extinguish our race historically, but that will not prevent God from working to fulfil the humanity of each person in the eschaton. This fulfillment, as I will explain in a second, is dependent upon what has occurred inner-historically. It is not an isolated work of God apart from history.²⁰ As Tillich says, “One cannot reach the transcendent Kingdom of God without participating in the struggle of the inner-historical Kingdom of God.”²¹

This leads to a second point. For Tillich, the fulfillment of humanity in a human individual is communal and—being communal—is also historical. The human creature is the highest among creation because she alone possesses the dimension of spirit, which provides the capacity for personhood. But persons can only develop as persons within communal encounter. And communities are by

their nature bearers of history.²² This means that our history is implicated in our personhood and remains implicated as that personhood passes, in some form, into the eschaton. We cannot be persons apart from the communities where we work together to build a society and shape the world around us. Therefore, there can be no dualistic salvation that preserves an inner soul while cutting off all its contextual realities.

As readers of Tillich will recognize, human persons and historical communities are only ever actuated within conditions of ambiguity and estrangement. The great gift of the eschaton as Tillich imagines it is the possibility of actualization without ambiguity. This means, for one, that history will overcome its fragmentation. What we have now, properly speaking, are histories, the scattered stories of separated peoples.²³ We would be remiss, as well, not to observe that the history of a community often unfolds itself at the expense of many of the individuals within the community. The fulfillment of the human individual must involve her own personal integration into communal history and the integration of her community's history into the universal history of humankind. The aim of history, as we have seen, lies beyond history.

Now that I have laid down these preliminaries, let me return to the claim I made at the beginning: the claim that for all their metaphysical differences, Whitehead and Tillich share surprising similarities in their views about how finite goods, especially human ones, are incorporated into the life of God. For Tillich has asserted that all individual participation in history, no matter how stunted or fragmented, will be eschatologically fulfilled, and he can only make good on this assertion by imagining the Kingdom of God as something like Whitehead's divine consequent nature. Tillich is careful to say that he can only imagine the eschaton in symbols, but imagine he does, and the symbol that he chooses for the eternal fulfillment of the inner-historical Kingdom is "the Eternal Life."²⁴ Notice that I said "the Eternal Life," not "eternal life." Tillich makes it absolutely clear that he does not have in mind what many theologians mean by the phrase "eternal life," that is, a sort of everlasting version of daily life with all the negative bits removed. He believes that this would amount to a kind of idealized cosmic do-over. Earthly history becomes Level 1 of the game, and if you're fortunate enough

to level up, all the other moves you made in Level 1 disappear. Temporal decisions have no other lasting repercussions. But that would render history meaningless.²⁵

Instead, Tillich imagines that the "positive content of history"—the earthly history that we will have already lived together—is revealed for what it is in God's true judgment, stripped of its negative elements, and "elevated" into eternity.²⁶ In this translation, which Tillich calls "essentialization," Tillich's God excludes as well as elevates. Unlike in Whitehead's consequent nature of God, where the negative moments are preserved yet integrated in a way that relativizes their import, Tillich's Eternal Life excludes any element that is contrary to life.²⁷ What remains is not precisely what went before but rather is its ontological essence as that essence has been shaped positively by passing through history. Tillich means for all dimensions of life to be included in this picture, but since each element is included only insofar as it has a historical dimension, humans end up being the prime candidates for essentialization.²⁸ What happens for us, then, is a kind of progression: we are conceived as ontological essences, the product of God's creative imagination; we pass through an existential history, where we make choices under conditions of ambiguity; and then the positive aspects of those choices are taken up into an eternal participation in the life of God. Tillich says,

What happens in time and space, in the smallest particle of matter as well as in the greatest personality, is significant for the eternal life. And since eternal life is participation in the divine life, every finite happening is significant for God.²⁹

Every finite happening is significant for God! Here we see another similarity with Whitehead. For it turns out that God is not precisely the same at the end of history, either. The existence of the world contributes to God something that is new, though not entirely new. While always grounded in God, the world's freedom returns something to God's life that was not there before. Essential being is united to the existential positive, and what results is a real contribution to God's life. Divine life, too, is more than static identity of Being.³⁰ Tillich will say that human creativity and divine self-manifestation are one in the fulfilled Kingdom.³¹ Does God need us? God is not ontologically dependent upon us. Nevertheless, we add something

to God: the blessedness of fulfilment, as God's gift of love to the world returns to God. Tillich's formulation is daring: "For the eternal dimension of what happens in the universe is the Divine Life itself."³²

Finally, what does this mean for the subsistence of personal identity, and what does it mean for our stance toward the rest of creation, especially given Tillich's admittedly androcentric eschatology? Tillich has a bullet left to bite, since not every life gets the chance to add much of the positive through its existence, and many people freely choose not to do so. Essentialization proceeds by degrees. This means that many persons have very little to add to the divine life aside from the created essence with which they started. They participate in communal fulfilment, but any satisfaction they receive from humanity's positive contribution is vicarious.³³ This is not an entirely satisfying picture, and I think it raises some ethical concerns, but that is fodder for a different conversation. For this conversation, I will say only this: given the way that Tillich has set up his terms, the blessedness of returning a contribution to God—of not being one of the servants who buries her talents in the ground, so to speak—depends on making a positive contribution to the communal history of the human species and to the rest of creation insofar as it strains towards spirit and history. Whatever this means, it cannot mean blatant disregard for the life and development of other species. And since we have no divine guarantees about the future of our own species, we must protect the physical conditions that allow our history to continue. Individual essentialization means that what matters is not simply all or nothing—do we succeed or fail communally on the ecological front?—but how much and in which ways each one of us has acted at any time for life and spirit or against it.

Whitehead and Tillich lead us to the same conclusion, then. God does not need the endurance of our planet with its ecosystem and its many species, but God loves and desires it. God gives us the opportunity and the freedom to love and desire it too, or else to reject the lure of the Spirit. And whether or not we are consciously around for the divine reckoning, when the sum of all that matters is made, we will have put each one of our life's works on one side of the balance or the other. There is,

perhaps, great grace for our failures. But how much greater is the blessedness of contributing to God's joy.

Sources Cited

- Bracken, Joseph A. "Subjective Immortality in a Neo-Whiteheadian Context." In *World without End: Christian Eschatology from a Process Perspective*, edited by Joseph A. Bracken, 72–90. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.
- Clayton, Philip. *Adventures in the Spirit: God, World, Divine Action*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008.
- Faber, Roland. "A Tender Care That Nothing Be Lost—Universal Salvation and Eternal Loss in Butler and Whitehead?" In *Butler on Whitehead: On the Occasion*, edited by Roland Faber, Michael Halewood, and Deena M. Lin, 239–48. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012.
- Gilkey, Langdon. "God." In *Christian Theology: An Introduction to Its Traditions and Tasks*, edited by Peter C. Hodgson and Robert H. King, Newly Updated Edition., 88–113. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994.
- Hartshorne, Charles. "Events, Individuals and Predication: Defence of Event Pluralism." In *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method*, 173–204. London: SCM Press Ltd., 1970.
- . "God as Supreme, Yet Indebted to All." In *Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God*, 1–59. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948.
- Neville, Robert Cummings. "Eschatological Visions." In *World without End: Christian Eschatology from a Process Perspective*, edited by Joseph A. Bracken, 28–45. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.
- Suchocki, Marjorie Hewitt. *The End of Evil: Process Eschatology in Historical Context*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988.
- Tillich, Paul. *Systematic Theology*. Vol. 3. 3 vols. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963.
- Whitehead, Alfred North. *Process and Reality*. Edited by David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne. Corrected Edition. New York: The Free Press, 1978.

¹ NIV.

² From a video clip recorded during the March 25, 2009 meeting of the U. S. House Subcommittee on Energy and Environment and accessed on 18 October 2017 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7h08RDYA5E>.

³ Shimkus is the current chairman of the Environment Subcommittee of the House Energy and Commerce committee, according to Shimkus' congressional website, www.shimkus.house.gov/about/full-biography. Accessed 16 November 2017.

⁴ Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies* V.31-36; Augustine, *City of God*, Book 20; Calvin, *Institutes*, Book III, Chapter 25.

⁵ Langdon Gilkey sees an emphasis on the relatedness of God to the world, including some form of sharing in temporality and dependence, as a characteristic trend of all modern theology since the Enlightenment (Langdon Gilkey, "God," in *Christian Theology: An Introduction to Its Traditions and Tasks*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson and Robert H. King, Newly Updated Edition [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994], 98). Whitehead is a particularly influential expositor of a dynamic conception of God, but he is by no means in the minority: "There is hardly a conception of God from Hegel onward that is not dynamic, changing, and in some manner intrinsically related to the world of change" (105). At the same time, Gilkey thinks that Whitehead goes further in this direction than Gilkey himself is willing to go in making "creativity," not God, the principle of ultimate reality; this is a theological innovation (104). See Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne, Corrected Edition (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 7, where Whitehead defines God as the primordial, non-temporal accident of creativity. I am not the first to note a similarity between Whitehead and Tillich on the subject of God's historicity. See, for instance, Philip Clayton, *Adventures in the Spirit: God, World, Divine Action* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 156: "There is something deeply right about the distinction between God as the Ground of being and the personal side of God that develops in the process of God's interaction with the universe, a distinction developed in different but complementary ways by Whitehead and Tillich."

⁶ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 7.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 31-34.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 43-46.

⁹ Charles Hartshorne, "God as Supreme, Yet Indebted to All," in *Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), 1-59.

¹⁰ See Joseph A. Bracken, "Subjective Immortality in a Neo-Whiteheadian Context," in *World without End:*

Christian Eschatology from a Process Perspective, ed. Joseph A. Bracken (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 76:

"Thus, in order for God to become fully actual and conscious, the divine primordial nature must be integrated with the divine consequent nature. But what is the divine consequent nature but God's ongoing prehension of the ever-increasing community of finite actual entities constituting the cosmic process?" Whitehead implies the perpetuity of the finite by describing God's consequent nature as "everlasting" and denying that either God or world achieve "static completion" (*Process and Reality*, 345-49).

¹¹ Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, *The End of Evil: Process Eschatology in Historical Context* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 63-65. Whitehead co-opted the phrase "perpetual perishing" from Locke (*Process and Reality*, 29).

¹² *The End of Evil* offers a well-known defense of the possibility of subjective immortality within process thought, though it has generally been accepted that this defense can only move forward by making what Robert Cummings Neville has called "creative modifications" to Whitehead's thought (Robert Cummings Neville, "Eschatological Visions," in *World without End: Christian Eschatology from a Process Perspective*, ed. Joseph A. Bracken [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005], 29).

¹³ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 349-351.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 346. Roland Faber argues that finitude is preserved in God's consequent nature precisely as loss, not as any kind of permanence (Roland Faber, "A Tender Care That Nothing Be Lost'--Universal Salvation and Eternal Loss in Butler and Whitehead?," in *Butler on Whitehead: On the Occasion*, ed. Roland Faber, Michael Halewood, and Deena M. Lin [Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012], 243-44). However, the tone of the final pages of *Process and Reality* seems to me to be more optimistic than Faber allows.

¹⁵ For a classic process argument about why future versions of a self have good reason to care about promises made by present versions of a self—even given a Whiteheadian view of a person as a "society" of distinct actual entities—see Charles Hartshorne, "Events, Individuals and Predication: Defence of Event Pluralism," in *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1970), 173-204. As part of this argument, Hartshorne compares the logic of concern in the case of different "momentary selves" to cases of not-purely-self-interested behavior: "Mortality is to be faced by human reason, not explained away. And an obvious implication of mortality is that a rational aim must transcend one's own fortunes altogether, including them only incidentally as constituting one temporary portion of the 'good in the long run,' which is the only truly rational aim" (202).

¹⁶ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 350.

¹⁷ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 308.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 358.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 394.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 392.

²² *Ibid.*, 308.

²³ *Ibid.*, 311.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 396.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 397.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 397.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 400.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 305, 398, 405.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 420.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 403.

³² *Ibid.*, 422.

³³ *Ibid.*, 415.

THE TILlichIAN DISPENSABILITY OF THE WORLD TO GOD

KIRK R. MACGREGOR

A *prima facie* reading of Whitehead makes the world out to be God's body or physical pole, such that the universe is indispensable to God. In Whitehead's words, "It is as true to say that the World creates God as that God creates the World."¹ Although the universe may indeed lack intelligent life on a Whiteheadian metaphysic (so cutting the nerve of any process argument against future climate catastrophe), the universe itself constitutes God's existence and therefore exists necessarily. But this reading raises the question: if, as Tillich pointed out, "to exist" (*existere*) means to stand out of non-being (either *oukontic* or *meontic*),² how can the universe, or indeed anything, exist necessarily? The notion of something necessarily standing out of non-being seems incoherent, as "standing out" of non-being entails simultaneously "standing in" non-being. And "standing in" non-being implies the possibility of returning to the emptiness in which one stands, such that everything that exists does so contingently. As Tillich remarked, it is nonsensical to say that God exists; rather, God transcends the distinction between essence and existence, thus precluding God's having the universe for a body.³ In a Tillichian metaphysic, God's life is qualitatively different from creaturely existence, and the world is a creature of God.

Engaging with the work of Tillich, I will argue that God does not need the world, such that God possesses reality even without the universe. My case is rooted in the analysis of two divine attributes: aseity and transcendence. Accordingly, asserting that God needs the world makes God merely a being alongside of other beings rather than being-

itself. Availing myself of the categories of analytic philosophy, I identify God as necessary being, while I identify the world and humans therein as contingent beings. In support of this observation, I will disclose how the universe's contingency received scientific confirmation with the proof of the Borde-Guth-Vilenkin Theorem in 2003 and the implications of cosmic expansion. Thus, the world and humans therein *are not*, full stop, under several possible descriptions of reality, which humans may unfortunately render actual through climate catastrophe or nuclear war.

The Aseity of God

For Tillich, God's aseity means that God and God alone is self-actualizing being, deriving God's being only from Godself. Further, all that actually or potentially exists derives its existence from God. Such can only be predicated of God if God is the power of being, the ground of being, or being-itself.⁴ As being-itself, God does not participate in non-being, so standing in contrast to every being. It follows from the foregoing that God does not derive God's being from the world; quite the contrary. Were the world indispensable to God, God would participate in non-being. Now from book three of *Systematic Theology*, we know that Tillich did not expect the world or the human race to pass out of biological existence. But Tillich recognized the threat of human self-annihilation and believed that if the threat came to fruition, God would still actualize and essentialize the human race through resurrection. Tillich was careful to note the transformative character of resurrection over against biological continuation: "As the New Being is not another being, but the transformation of the old being, so resurrection is not the creation of another

reality over against the old reality but is the transformation of the old reality, arising out of its death...the participation of bodily being in Eternal Life is not the endless continuation of a constellation of old or new physical particles."⁵ Likewise, if the universe as a whole suffered biological discontinuation, God would elevate the universe into eternity and exclude the negative from participation in it.⁶ So while God would overcome them via eschatological panentheism, these considerations permit the possibility of biological cessation for both humanity and the universe.⁷

As Tillich pointed out, aseity demands that there is no ground prior to God that could condition God's freedom, for neither chaos nor non-being has power to limit or resist God. This observation about God's freedom entails that, as ultimate concern, God is in no way dependent on humanity or any other finite being like the world. Hence Tillich affirmed of God, "In freedom he creates, in freedom he deals with the world and man, in freedom he saves and fulfils. His freedom is freedom from anything prior to him or alongside him."⁸ God's freedom from anything prior to or alongside God logically necessitates the conclusion that the world is ontologically dispensable to God. This is not to deny the fact that God will freely bring about the resurrection of the world, namely, "the actualization and essentialization of everything that has being."⁹ But this constitutes an unconditionally free choice by God, not an ontological necessity for God. So Tillich maintained that "nothing is necessary for God in the sense that he is dependent on a necessity above him. His aseity implies that everything which he is he is through himself."¹⁰ Likewise, only that which is unconditional can be the expression of unconditional concern; a conditioned deity is not God.

Moreover, aseity entails that God alone is infinite, such that Tillich insisted on the finitude of humanity and the universe.¹¹ Significantly, no finite being possesses a space that is definitively its own. Tillich disclosed how this insight subjects every finite being to nonbeing.

No finite being can rely on space, for not only must it face losing this or that space...but eventually it must face losing every place it had or might have had. As the powerful symbol used by Job and the psalmist expresses it: "Its

place knoweth it no more." There is no necessary relationship between any place and the being which has provided this space for itself. Finitude means having no definite place; it means having to lose every place finally and, with it, to lose being itself. This threat of non-being cannot be escaped by means of a flight into time without space. Without space there is neither presence nor a present. And, conversely, the loss of space includes the loss of temporal presence, the loss of the present, the loss of being.¹²

Consequently, that God is free, ultimate concern, and infinite thus disqualifies the world from being necessary to God.

The Transcendence of God

Regarding transcendence, Tillich maintained that God, as the power of being, is not *a* being but is greater than any particular being and greater than any group of beings, including the universe itself. In Tillich's words, "As the power of being, God transcends every being and also the totality of beings—the world."¹³ Whenever one asks the question, "Does any particular being exist?" or "Does the universe exist?", the only way that question can get off the ground is to presuppose the reality of a ground of existence, without which nothing can exist. Apart from the dynamic power of being sustaining and pulsating throughout every subatomic particle comprising its fabric, the universe itself cannot exist in part or in whole. As Tillich described God's preservation of the world, "God is essentially creative, and therefore he is creative in every moment of temporal existence, giving the power of being to everything that has being out of the creative ground of the divine life."¹⁴ God, as being-itself, infinitely transcends the world, for all beings are infinitely transcended by their creative ground. Thus, an absolute break or infinite jump exists between God and the world. For these reasons, an asymmetry obtains in the God-world relationship: God has no ontic need for the world, but the world has every ontic need for God. A defining trait of any being is its ontic need for something else, and God has no such need. Consequently, asserting that God needs the world makes God merely a being alongside of other beings rather than being-itself.

God's being is something unique. It is not just that God does not need the creation for anything; God *could not* need the creation for anything. But the balancing consideration with respect to this notion is the fact that we and the rest of creation can glorify God and bring God joy. Tillich perceived that "the eternal dimension of what happens in the universe...is the content of the divine blessedness."¹⁵ This must be stated in order to guard against any idea that God's transcendence renders the world meaningless. Some might wonder, if God does not need us for anything, then are we important at all? In response, we need to say that we are in fact extremely meaningful because God has determined, by virtue of creating us in the *imago Dei*, that we would be meaningful to God. Such is the final definition of genuine significance. It is the amazing fact of our existence that God chooses to delight in us and to allow us to bring God glory. But Tillich observed that this is God's choice and not God's need: "In creating the world, God is the sole cause of the glory he wishes to secure through his creation. But if he is the sole cause of his glory, he does not need the world to give him glory. He possesses it eternally in himself."¹⁶ Hence, we should not think that God needed more glory than God timelessly possessed, or that God was somehow incomplete without the glory that God would receive from the created order.

God as Necessary Being

Employing the categories of analytic philosophy on Tillich's metaphysic of the divine God is necessary being, or being whose nonreality is logically impossible. Accordingly, God *is*, full stop, under all possible descriptions of reality. Thus, God, as being-itself, does not participate in nonbeing.¹⁷ But the world and humans therein are contingent beings, or beings whose nonreality is logically possible. It is obvious that humans are contingent, as they, individually and collectively, once did not exist and may pass out of existence. However, in keeping with Tillich's reclamation of apologetics for mainline to liberal Christian theology,¹⁸ we may offer a refurbished modal version of the ontological argument that substantiates the actuality of necessary being. Hence, we may argue:

1. It is possible that necessary being is actual.

2. If it is possible that necessary being is actual, then necessary being is actual in some possible description of reality.

3. If necessary being is actual in some possible description of reality, then necessary being is actual in every possible description of reality.

4. If necessary being is actual in every possible description of reality, then necessary being is actual in the accurate description of reality.

5. If necessary being is actual in the accurate description of reality, then necessary being is actual.

Therefore, necessary being is actual.¹⁹

In this argument, it seems that premises two (2) through five (5) are uncontroversial. Two (2) is true by the definition of "possible description of reality," as the possible actuality of something means that it constitutes part of some complete description of the way reality could be. Three (3) is true by the definition of necessary being, as the actuality in some description of reality of being which possesses necessity transitively guarantees its actuality in every description of reality. Four (4) is obviously true since the accurate description of reality is the possible description of the way reality could be that in fact obtains. Five (5) is true by definition of "accurate description of reality," since necessary being's inclusion in the complete description of the way reality is entails the actuality of necessary being.

The arguably controversial premise in our refurbished modal ontological argument is therefore One (1). Here we note that by "possible" we do not mean epistemically possible, or possible so far as we know. Rather, by "possible" we mean broadly logically possible, such that the concept of necessary being violates no law of logic or other metaphysical principle and therefore may be actual. Intuitively, it seems evident that the concept of necessary being is logically coherent and otherwise metaphysically coherent. On this score Tillich declared: "The Anselmian statement that God is a necessary thought and that therefore this idea must have objective as well as subjective reality is valid in so far as thinking, by its very nature, implies an unconditional element which transcends subjectivity and objectivity, that is, a point of identity which makes the idea of truth possible."²⁰ Thus we have good reason to believe One (1), and given the truth

of Two (2) through Five (5), Six (6) follows inescapably.

The Universe as Contingent Being

The contingency of the universe as a whole was scientifically demonstrated in 2003 by three leading cosmologists, Arvin Borde, Alan Guth, and Alexander Vilenkin. They proved a theorem—suitably dubbed the Borde-Guth-Vilenkin Theorem—showing that any universe that is, on average, in a state of cosmic expansion throughout its history cannot be eternal in the past but must have an absolute beginning, namely, a past space-time boundary. Since all astrophysically and mathematically tenable models of the universe to date recognize cosmic expansion among its irreducible features, the evidence is overwhelming that the universe has a beginning, prior to which space, time, matter, and energy simply did not exist.²¹ The Borde-Guth-Vilenkin Theorem shows that even if the observable universe is but a tiny part of a much larger multiverse featuring a potentially infinite number of “baby universes,” the multiverse itself must have a beginning.

At the 2012 Cambridge University conference honoring Stephen Hawking’s seventieth birthday, Vilenkin delivered a paper surveying the various models of the universe in contemporary cosmology; the paper concluded, “All the evidence we have says that the universe had a beginning.”²² Vilenkin is blunt about the implications of his theorem: “It is said that an argument is what convinces reasonable men and a proof is what it takes to convince even an unreasonable man. With the proof now in place, cosmologists can no longer hide behind the possibility of a past-eternal universe. There is no escape, they have to face the problem of a cosmic beginning.”²³ Accordingly, what Arius famously claimed about the Son is thus true of the universe: there was once when it was not. At that moment, God, as being-itself, was actual and alone without the universe. Hence, the universe does not exist necessarily, and Tillich was quite right to reject the concept of meontic matter on the basis of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, insisting that “the *nihil* out of which God creates is *ouk on*, the undialectical negation of being.”²⁴

Even without human modes of self-destruction, the expansion of the universe discloses a

grave eschatological threat. The universe’s density either will or will not exceed a certain critical value, depending on the rate of the expansion. If the density of the universe exceeds the critical value, then the internal pull of the universe’s own gravity will eventually overcome the force of the expansion and the universe will collapse in upon itself in a fiery Big Crunch. The astronomer Beatrice Tinsley points out that “there is no known physical mechanism that could reverse a catastrophic big crunch. Apparently, if the universe becomes dense enough, it is in for a hot death.”²⁵ But if the density of the universe is less than or equal to the critical value, the universe will expand forever at a progressively lower rate, always giving matter and energy more room to spread out. As the universe expands, its available energy is used up and it becomes increasingly cold, dark, dilute, and dead. All the matter in the ever-expanding universe will be reduced to a thin gas of elementary particles and radiation. According to elementary particle physics, space will become filled with a gas so rarefied that the distance between an electron and a positron will be about the size of the present galaxy.²⁶ Thus barring prior resurrection, the universe faces either a heat death or a cold death. While the vast time period until the death of the universe, approximately 10^{30} years, causes most people not to trouble themselves about it, the universe still faces the Tillichian threat of non-being. But being-itself would still possess reality following the heat death or cold death. During any intervening time between the heat or cold death and resurrection in the realm of “transtemporal fulfilment,”²⁷ God, as being-itself, is ontologically unaffected.

Conclusion

As Tillich saw, central to the Christian concept of God is the notion that God is not dependent on any being for God’s reality; rather, God possesses reality independently of everything. Were everything magically to disappear, the reality of God would remain unaffected. God has the property or attribute of self-reality, or aseity. Further, God transcends all created things simply by virtue of the fact that they are created things; no created thing could either possibly or actually exist apart from

the power and ground of being-itself. As being-itself, God is necessary being and cannot experience nonbeing.

By contrast, the world and humans therein *are not*, full stop, under several possible descriptions of reality, which humans may unfortunately render actual through climate catastrophe or nuclear war. Even assuming that humans avert self-destruction, the universe is still dispensable to the reality of God, as verified by contemporary science. Nevertheless, God has freely chosen to love the universe and everything therein, thereby ensuring that any estrangement that humans suffer as a result of self-imposed climate or nuclear disaster is temporal rather than eternal. But while God will eventually accomplish the reconciliation of all creatures with the creative ground of their being, horrible suffering of an indefinite but finite duration is still ghastly and to be avoided at almost all costs. Just because the suffering we could inflict upon ourselves is not eternal death obviously does nothing to trivialize or reduce that suffering. For in the indefinite but finite period between the human race's physical extinction and its ultimate redemption, the human race would genuinely experience meontic nonbeing and remain only in the eternal memory of God. For humanity to succumb for any period to meontic nonbeing, which includes annihilation, is the worst of all possible fates, worse than even the hell of re-

ligious mythology, because, at least in hell, humanity would still exist. But the thought that though we know now that we exist, that someday we will no longer exist, that we will no longer be, is staggering and unspeakably threatening. As Tillich put it, "non-being...is not without effect on that which is eternally remembered...This is the condemning side of what is symbolically called ultimate judgment."²⁸ The existential import of the state of affairs in which the person I call "myself" will cease to exist, in which I will be no more, is literally unimaginable.

Fortunately, the human race need not inflict this apocalyptic death-blow upon itself. Working to manifest the good news of the Kingdom of God, the Christian church *in toto* ought to be leading the vanguard of public persuasion and social activism to avert humanity's plunge into meontic nonbeing. We must recall Tillich's insight that the Kingdom of God "gives an infinite weight to every decision and creation in time and space and confirms the seriousness of what is meant in the symbol 'ultimate judgment.'"²⁹ It remains up to us to determine the character of that judgment, specifically, whether it is praising or condemning of humanity. By working to prevent environmental pollution and nuclear war, we aim to ensure that the biblical affirmation "it was very good" (Gen. 1:31) will in the end be pronounced upon the human race.

¹ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1929), 348.

² Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. in 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 2:20.

³ *Ibid.*, 1:236-7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:196, 236.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 3:414.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 3:397.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 3:421.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:248.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 3:422.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:252.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1:189-91.

¹² *Ibid.*, 1:195.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 1:237.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:262.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3:422.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:264.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:236.

¹⁸ Making apologetics the key to his method of correlation, Tillich contended powerfully that

preached theology and systematic theology need apologetics for their validity and effectiveness: "Kerygmatic theology needs apologetic theology for its completion...Apologetic theology is 'answering theology.' It answers the questions implied in the 'situation' in the power of the eternal message and with the means provided by the situation whose question it answers...Apologetics, therefore, is an omnipresent element and not a special section of systematic theology. The 'method of correlation' applied in the present system pointed expression to the decisive character of the apologetic element in systematic theology...arguments are needed, because they may serve to break through the intellectual walls of skepticism as well as of dogmatism with which the churches' critics protect themselves against the attacks of the Spiritual Presence. And since these walls are constantly being built in all of us and since they have separated masses of people on all levels of education from the churches, apologetics must be cultivated by the churches; otherwise they

will not grow but will diminish in extension and increasingly become a small, ineffective section within a dynamic civilization" (Ibid., 1:5-6, 31; 3:195).

¹⁹ This argument is inspired by Alvin Plantinga's modal ontological argument in *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), 213-6.

²⁰ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1:207.

²¹ Arvin Borde, Alan Guth, and Alexander Vilenkin, "Inflationary Space-Times Are Not Past-Complete," *Physical Review Letters* 90 (2003): 1-4.

²² Alexander Vilenkin, cited by Lisa Grossman, "Why Physicists Can't Avoid a Creation Event," *New Scientist* (January 11, 2012).

²³ Alexander Vilenkin, *Many Worlds in One: The Search for Other Universes* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 176.

²⁴ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1:188.

²⁵ Beatrice Tinsley, "From Big Bang to Eternity?" *Natural History Magazine* (October 1975), 103.

²⁶ Ibid., 105.

²⁷ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3:418.

²⁸ Ibid., 3:400.

²⁹ Ibid., 3:401.

**BERNARD LOOMER AS A BRIDGE
BETWEEN WHITEHEAD AND TILlich:
TOWARDS A GROUND-OF-BEING PROCESS
THEOLOGY**

DEMIAN WHEELER

I. Introduction

The thesis of this paper is fairly straightforward: Bernard Loomer's empirical and thoroughly naturalistic variety of process theology offers a bridge between Alfred North Whitehead's "philosophy of organism" and Paul Tillich's non-anthropomorphic metaphysics of the divine. Loomer, I will argue, reveals that there is, or at least *could be*, such a thing as a ground-of-being process theology. But before turning to Loomer, I need to first identify where the real metaphysical fault line between Whitehead and Tillich lies.

II. Similar Ultimates, Dissimilar Gods: Identifying the Whiteheadian-Tillichian Fault Line

In the second edition of *A Christian Natural Theology*, John Cobb makes an astute and rather striking observation: Whitehead and Tillich developed comparable conceptions of ultimacy. Tillich revitalized Thomas Aquinas' concept of *esse ipsum*, being itself. Both Thomas and Tillich "saw that neither Aristotelian form nor Aristotelian matter accounted for the coming to be of things. Something else was required, the act of being."¹ Alt-

hough there are important differences, Whitehead's ultimate, creativity,² is effectively the organic analogue of this idea of being itself, or the act of being. Cobb explains:

From a Whiteheadian point of view the idea is profound. Apart from an act of being there can be nothing at all. Neither matter nor form can account for this act of being. Also, it cannot be one being among others... It has character only in and through its instantiations. The parallelism of the Thomistic and Tillichian act of being and Whitehead's pure activity is very close.³

Where Whitehead and Tillich parted ways, according to Cobb, was over the question of *God's* relationship to the act of being or pure activity—i.e., to being itself. Like Thomas, Tillich equated being itself with God. But unlike Thomas, Tillich recognized that equating being itself with God meant that the divine could not also be regarded as *a* being, even the Supreme Being. Like Tillich, Whitehead realized that it is metaphysically incoherent to equate being itself with *a* being; Thomas, in this sense, wanted to have his cake and eat it too. But unlike Tillich and Thomas, Whitehead did not equate being itself with God. In Whitehead's metaphysical scheme, being itself is not God, but *creativity*. God, by contrast, is that "actual entity" in the universe luring or goading the creative advance toward ever-greater complexity, novelty, value, order, and aesthetic harmony. Accordingly, the Whiteheadian God is indeed *a* being, the Supreme Being who "with tender patience" leads and saves the world "by his vision of truth, beauty, and goodness."⁴ The implication, of course, is that White-

head's God is not metaphysically ultimate; creativity is. Cobb is quick to point out that creativity, God, and the actual world are interdependent and co-essential, and Whitehead attributes ultimacy to creativity chiefly to indicate that it is "activity" rather than "matter" that is ultimate. Yet, there is no avoiding the fact that "Whitehead never attributes ultimacy to God." Actually, Whitehead, Cobb concedes, concluded that God is the "aboriginal instance" and "primordial creature" of creativity, "one instantiation of creativity alongside others." Arrestingly and perhaps a little amusingly, Whitehead's *Process and Reality* deems creativity an "ultimate notion," while God appears in a chapter entitled "Some Derivative Notions."⁵

In short, what Tillich joined together, Whitehead put asunder. Both thinkers insisted that ultimate reality is not *a* being, but the act of being—in a word, creativity or being itself. But whereas Tillich's God *is* ultimate reality (and, thus, not a being), Whitehead's God is ultimate reality's "primordial, non-temporal accident"⁶ (and, thus, the Supreme Being). In other words, Tillich and Whitehead had similar ultimates but understood God's relation to ultimacy quite dissimilarly.

Another way of clarifying the distinction between Whiteheadianism and Tillichianism is to classify the former as a type of "determinate-entity theism" and the latter as a type of "ground-of-being theology." Determinate-entity theism is roughly synonymous with what Tillich termed "supranaturalism."⁷ The supranaturalist, Tillich elaborated, "separates God as a being, the highest being, from all other beings, alongside and above which he has his existence. In this position he has brought the universe into being at a certain moment (five thousand or five billion years ago), governs it according to a plan, directs it toward an end, interferes with its ordinary processes in order to overcome resistance and to fulfil his purpose, and will bring it to consummation in a final catastrophe."⁸ Certainly, Whiteheadians reject the all-controlling, interventionist, *creatio-ex-nihilo* God of classical theology.⁹ To quote Whitehead himself, the doctrine of a "transcendent creator, at whose fiat the world came into being, and whose imposed will it obeys, is the fallacy which has infused tragedy into the histories of Christianity and of Mahometanism."¹⁰ That being said, Whiteheadian process theism, as Wesley Wildman rightly contends, is still a species

of determinate-entity theism inasmuch as it conceives of God as a consciously aware, personal, and intentional agent, an "actual entity" with purposes, plans, and powers to act.¹¹ Tillich, on the contrary, ardently defended a ground-of-being theology, viewing God as "the creative ground of everything that has being," that is, "the infinite and unconditional power of being or, in the most radical abstraction...being-itself."¹²

Naturally, determinate-entity theism and ground-being-theology have their characteristic strengths and weaknesses. In Tillich's judgment, determinate-entity theism, or supranaturalism, is especially susceptible to idolatry and anthropomorphic distortion,¹³ transforming "the infinity of God into a finiteness which is merely an extension of the categories of finitude."¹⁴ But Whiteheadians have the Bible on their side. As Cobb declares, the Whiteheadian idea of "God as an actuality" presents "a more biblical God" than the Tillichian ground of being.¹⁵ A Tillichian might retort that Whitehead's "primordial, non-temporal accident" is hardly the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob but, at any rate, would opt for metaphysical clarity over biblical literalism, accent the iconoclastic strands of the tradition, and interpret the personalistic and agential imagery of scripture symbolically.¹⁶

In what follows, I will attempt to split the differences between Whiteheadianism and Tillichianism, demonstrating that not all process theologians are determinate-entity theists. I am referring specifically to a small group of theologians associated with the mid-twentieth-century "Chicago school" of theology, who opened up an empirical—and markedly non-supranaturalistic—trajectory of process thought. I will zero in on one of those theologians in particular, Bernard Loomer, whose pantheistic process theology was recognizably Whiteheadian yet was closer to Tillich than Whitehead in his metaphysics of divinity. Without a doubt, Loomer's claim that God *is* the world would make Tillich cringe. Nevertheless, Loomer, I will show, championed a religiously and theologically fecund form of naturalism, which, if properly modified, might point the way to a ground-of-being process theology.

III. Old Chicago: The Empirical Tradition of Process Thought

In the middle decades of the twentieth century, the University of Chicago became the hotbed of process theology in America. And Loomer, along with Henry Nelson Wieman, Bernard Meland, and a few others, established a distinctively *empirical* tradition of process theology.

In an important article, Bernard Lee contrasts the empirical school of process theology with a more “rational” school, whose most prominent exponents include John Cobb, David Ray Griffin, Schubert Ogden, and Charles Hartshorne. Both schools, says Lee, are authentically Whiteheadian. However, there are several things that distinguish the process empiricists from their rationalistic counterparts. First and foremost, they tend to read Whitehead as more of an empiricist than a rationalist, appreciating his *relentlessly* empirical insistence on concreteness, exemplification, and experiential adequacy and his *radically* empirical accent on the dim, rich, massive, penumbral, and indistinct recesses of experience.¹⁷

But perhaps most crucially for the purposes of this essay, the empirical process theologians denied the reality of a separate divine being with personality, consciousness, agency, and life-enhancing aims for the world. The contemporary process empiricist, David Conner, insists that Whitehead’s God should be interpreted as “an ontological structure,” not as an experiencing subject who endures through time or a unitary divine person with feelings, awareness, intentionality, knowledge, and the like.¹⁸ Although *process theologians* typically attribute person-like qualities, e.g. compassion, and activities, e.g. persuasion, to God, *Whitehead*, on Conner’s reading, spoke *metaphorically* of a divine “poet” and a “great companion,” a “fellow-sufferer who understands.”¹⁹ Robert Neville concurs: “On most interpretations of process theology, God is ascribed the intentions to be just and bear suffering with sympathy. Whitehead himself knew too much of the vast expanse and natural depth of the cosmos to relate God’s cosmic function to the scale of human affairs in any but the most poetic sense.”²⁰

I am not so sure. But, in any case, the empirical process theologians were vigorously non-anthropomorphic and anti-supranaturalist in their metaphysics of divinity. As Nancy Frankenberry notes, two of the issues that divided Chicago-school em-

piricism from more conventional iterations of process theism were (1) the applicability of anthropomorphic or agential models of God, and (2) the evidential warrants of a universe-encompassing deity. The Chicago empiricists pushed process theology away from panentheism, which is a variant of determinate-entity theism, and toward a more full-throated naturalism, collapsing the Whiteheadian distinction between God and creativity. And, reminiscent of Tillich, they laid bare the profound metaphysical limitations of personal theological language.²¹

Wieman is a case in point. In Wieman’s empirical process theology, God *is* “the creative event,” the supra-human activity within the universe that augments “qualitative meaning” or, simply, “the good.”²² As Frankenberry helpfully elaborates, Wieman’s argument is not “that wherever God is manifest, there is creative transformation, but precisely the opposite—wherever one finds creative transformation, *there* one finds what has been meant by ‘God.’”²³ And “if God *is* creativity, God cannot be a person,” since “creativity is ontologically prior to personality.”²⁴ Wieman, like Tillich, allowed that “the mythical symbol of person and personality may be indispensable for the practice of worship and personal devotion to the creative power.”²⁵ However, to proclaim that God *is* a personal being is to make divinity a creature of creativity, for creativity creates personality rather than vice versa.²⁶ Of course, as I indicated earlier, that is exactly what Whitehead believed; as he put it in *Process and Reality*, “God is the primordial creature,” the “outcome of creativity.”²⁷ Wieman countered that “a God who is a creature of an ontologically prior creativity is properly called an idol.”²⁸

But, from a Tillichian perspective, Wieman’s brand of religious naturalism might also be regarded as idolatrous. After all, Wieman’s God is *finite*. Whereas Whiteheadian and Hartshornian panentheists view nature as included within God,²⁹ Wieman viewed God as one kind of process included within nature.³⁰ As a naturalist, Wieman presumed that nature is all there is: there are no transcendental grounds, orders, causes, purposes, or entities beyond natural events and their qualities and relations.³¹ As such, the divine must be identified with a part or with the whole of nature; God is either *within* the world or *is* the world. Wieman took the former path; God is *one aspect* of nature,

specifically, the process that is creative of good, that is generative of value and qualitative meaning.³² His blurring of divinity and creativity notwithstanding, Wieman's God ironically ended up resembling Whitehead's: omnibenevolent but not omnipotent,³³ *religiously* ultimate but not *metaphysically* ultimate.

Loomer's God, in contrast, was omnipotent, in a certain sense, but not omnibenevolent, religiously ultimate, and metaphysically ultimate. Loomer embraced Whitehead's process-relational worldview and Wieman's naturalism, but his doctrine of God, I submit, was more Tillichian in flavor than Whiteheadian or Wiemanian.

IV. God *is* the World: The Pantheistic Process Naturalism of Bernard Loomer

Like Wieman, Loomer was an empirical Whiteheadian, embracing the broad contours and basic principles of a processive and relational cosmology.³⁴ Like Wieman, Loomer was a philosophical naturalist, hazarding that "the one world, the experienceable world with its possibilities, is all the reality accessible to us."³⁵ And like Wieman, Loomer was a sharp critic of anthropomorphic models of God, claiming that "God is not an enduring concrete individual with a sustained subjective life."³⁶ Thus, for Loomer, as for Wieman (and Meland), there is no personal divine agent that is somehow distinct from the creative and interrelational processes of nature itself. All of the empirical process theologians, including Loomer, shared Tillich's anti-supranaturalist intuition that God is not a being or even the Supreme Being.

Loomer, however, also shared Tillich's ground-of-being theology—or at least *approximated* it. Wieman, for his part, directly opposed the Tillichian idea of God as the mysterious power of being,³⁷ maintaining that the divine has a determinate "structure by which it can be known and distinguished from other kinds of being."³⁸ But Loomer's God was effectively the processive and naturalistic equivalent of being itself—becoming itself, as it were. Loomer's final and most influential essay, aptly titled "The Size of God," hypothesizes that the divine symbolizes "the organic restlessness of the whole body of creation." God, he writes, is "the concrete, interconnected totality of this struggling, imperfect, unfinished, and evolving

societal web."³⁹ Loomer, in brief, was a kind of *pantheist*, a position he came to adopt late in life, and a position that Tillich sternly resisted—a point to which I shall return shortly). He agreed with Wieman that God is not a superconsciousness that competes with creativity for metaphysical space or that contains yet surpasses nature (pantheism). But in Loomer's pantheistic version of empirical process theology, God is not a *feature* of nature (e.g., the creative good), but the *entirety* of nature in all its ambiguity and mystery.⁴⁰ God does not *need* the world so much as God *is* the world—or more carefully stated, "the creative advance of the world in its adventure."⁴¹

Loomer knew full well, and so did Whitehead, that the creative advance of the world is not all good, beautiful, life-giving, or interesting; it is an entanglement of good and evil, beauty and revulsion, life and death, novelty and repetition. Nature, he acknowledged, is *utterly ambiguous*, comprising "a diversity of forces, many of which are either non-creative or destructive."⁴² The interrelational and dynamic process of becoming is less an "adventure toward perfection" and more a "struggle toward greater stature" or what he termed "size," namely, the capacity to take in and sustain intense relationships, contrasts, tensions, and ambiguities.⁴³

In contradistinction to Whitehead, Hartsorne, Wieman, and virtually every process theologian who ever lived, Loomer saw fit to equate God with the ambiguous totality of nature's processes—and fully accepted the radical theological implications of doing so. If God is "the world in all the dimensions of its being," then the divine life necessarily includes all the ambiguity found therein, "all the evil, wastes, destructiveness, regressions, ugliness, horror, disorder, complacency, dullness, and meaninglessness, as well as their opposites." Moreover, God's activities in the world are "not wholly or even primarily identified with the persuasive and permissive lure of a final cause or a relevant and novel idea," according to Loomer. "God is also [a] physical, efficient cause that may be either creative or inertial in its effects."⁴⁴

Loomer took issue with Whiteheadian efforts to dissociate the divine from evil. Whitehead himself did this by "ontologically separating God and creativity" and imagining "an aesthetic form of persuasiveness that is pitted against the coercive and inertial powers of the world." Loomer harshly

judged that this “unambiguous structure or character can be derived only by a complex abstractive process, the end result of which has no counterpart in reality.”⁴⁵ Wieman improved upon Whitehead by urging that “the being of God is not other than the being of the world.” But Wieman identified God with only one kind of process, i.e., the creative event, which is “absolutely good” and “entirely trustworthy.”⁴⁶ Therefore, no less than Whitehead’s deity, Wieman’s deity is defined by pure goodness and, as such, is too “clean” and “perfect,” too “unsullied” and “orderly,” to be concretely actual; it is a bloodless, unempirical abstraction from a world that is inescapably, metaphysically, ambiguous. An ambiguous God, in Loomer’s mind, is more concrete and of greater stature and size than an unambiguous God.⁴⁷

This emphasis on the ambiguity of the sacred is yet another thing Loomer had in common with Tillich (as well as with later ground-of-being theologians like Richard Rubenstein and Wesley Wildman⁴⁸). In *Dynamics of Faith*, Tillich discussed the mysterious and unapproachable, terrifying and fascinating, shaking and consuming character of the holy, which “produces an ambiguity in man’s ways of experiencing it.” To reduce holiness to “moral perfection” is to limit the ultimate to a finite and conditional category. As the ground and abyss of all being,⁴⁹ “the holy,” Tillich boldly claimed, “originally lies below the alternative of the good and the evil.” Thus, it “can appear as creative and as destructive,” as “both divine and demonic.”⁵⁰

Even so, despite his recognition of the “divine demonic” and his staunch anti-supranaturalism, Tillich also hailed the singular manifestation of “New Being” in Jesus the Christ as both the point of history and the power of salvation,⁵¹ leaving Wesley Wildman to wonder whether Tillich ended up inadvertently reconstituting “providentially ordered focal awareness, intentionality, and agency.”⁵² Loomer, in my view, was more unequivocal, uncompromising, and unflinching than Tillich in his non-anthropomorphic metaphysics of divinity and in his stress on the ambiguous nature of God. He contended that history, at best, manifests a “movement toward greater stature,” a movement that “does not involve either the gradual or the immediate elimination of ambiguity” and

that “may exemplify itself as an expansive urge toward greater good” or as a “passion for greater evil.”⁵³

We may summarize the preceding argument as follows: Loomer (1) followed Tillich in identifying the metaphysical ultimate, being itself, with the religious ultimate, God; (2) interpreted being itself in roughly Whiteheadian terms, namely, as the creative advance of the world in its adventure; (3) promoted the creative advance of the world to the status of divinity and dropped the personal, and penultimate, deity of the Whiteheadians, thereby steering process theology away from determinate-entity theism and toward a religious naturalism; and (4) put forward a pantheistic variety of religious naturalism, associating divine creativity not only with the increase of human and cosmic good (à la Wieman) but also with the “organic restlessness of the *whole* body of creation,” with nature in all its stature, mystery, and terrifying ambiguity. What we are left with is a kind of Whiteheadian-Tillichian synthesis, a synthesis that is more anti-supranaturalistic than Whitehead and more naturalistic than Tillich.

And it is a synthesis that is way less obsessed with divine perfection and omnibenevolence than conventional process theologies—and even empirical process theologies such as Wieman’s. Like Reinhold Niebuhr, Loomer was a thoroughgoing *realist* in regards to the ineradicably ambiguous character of historical existence. But unlike Niebuhr, Loomer denied both the reality of and the need for “the unambiguous,” for that which is “beyond tragedy.”⁵⁴ In Loomer’s theological outlook, the world is devoid of an all-powerful God who can prevent climate catastrophe or even an all-good God who is actively and intentionally trying to persuade us not to destroy the planet. What the world *does* evince are purposes and passions that aim at cooperation and mutual enhancement; there even exists what Whitehead referred to as “a tropism not only to live, but to live well and to live better.”⁵⁵ But such purposes and passions intermingle with other purposes and passions, some of which are destructive, catastrophic, and indifferent to human flourishing, and these, too, are somehow a part of the divine life. Loomer’s intent here is not to undermine ethics, much less to undercut our ecological efforts, but to magnify the holy, to radically expand “the size of God.” For Loomer, as for

Tillich, God truly transcends our moral ideals, our anthropocentric interests, and our limited visions of the good, human and otherwise.

V. God is the *Creative Advance* of the World: Towards a Ground-of-Being Process Theology

Of course, for Tillich, the divine also transcends nature. In the second volume of his *Systematic Theology*, Tillich dissociates himself from supranaturalism and naturalism. Naturalists, in Tillich's mind, discount the depth dimension of reality and deny the infinite distance between the whole of finite things and their ontological ground, "with the consequence that the term 'God' becomes interchangeable with the term 'universe' and therefore is semantically superfluous."⁵⁶ Loomer's pantheistic conflation of God and the world, it would seem, is just the sort of naturalism Tillich sought to move beyond.

As a naturalistic pantheist and a critical admirer of Loomer,⁵⁷ I find Tillich's objections chastening, to say the least. And so, by way of conclusion, let me offer up three preliminary and provisional responses.

First, Wildman ventures that Tillich might have been more open to religious naturalism—and even to describing his own ground-of-being theology as a species of it—if he had encountered the non-reductionistic and theologically and axiologically fecund naturalisms that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century.⁵⁸ Loomer's process pantheism, I would argue, belongs to this family of non-reductionistic and theologically and axiologically fecund naturalisms. Loomer exhibited deep piety and apophatic humility with respect to the ontological grounding of reality. Nature, he confessed, "contains and yet enshrouds the ultimate mystery inherent within existence itself," and God "symbolizes this incredible mystery," this "transcendent and inexhaustible meaning that forever eludes our grasp." In fact, this is the principal justification for divinizing the world in the first place! Loomer declared that "the world is holy ground" and "the basis for all our wonder, awe, and inquiry," while the divine "connotes an absolute claim on our loyalty" and "signifies a richness of resources for the living of life at its depths."⁵⁹ Clearly, this is not the reductive, mechanistic materialism that vexed Tillich.

Second, it is crucial to remember that Loomer is operating within a Whiteheadian cosmological framework, and in Whitehead's cosmology, "the world" refers not simply to the earth or even the cosmos, but to an infinite succession of "cosmic epochs." Indeed, Whitehead anticipated more recent speculations within contemporary cosmology concerning a "multiverse."⁶⁰ And so, in that sense, Loomer's neo-Whiteheadian pantheism does not make God interchangeable with *this* universe, which is surely finite, contingent, and dispensable, but with any possible universe whatsoever, with a beginningless and endless multitude of universes. Admittedly, from a Tillichian standpoint, this might be a distinction without a difference, since God and nature are still identified. Regardless, it at least illustrates that both Loomer and Whitehead were working with a much more robust concept of nature than Tillich imagined.

Third, and finally, a Loomerian pantheism can be nudged even closer to a ground-of-being theology if it took a cue from the pantheistic philosophies of Baruch Spinoza and Robert Corrington and carefully differentiated between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*.⁶¹ *Natura naturata* denotes "nature natured"—i.e. any cosmic epoch, including but not limited to our present cosmos; *natura naturans* denotes "nature naturing"—i.e. the creative-destructive processes that everlastingly bring new realities (and even new universes) into and out of being. Although typically branded a pantheist, Spinoza refused to divinize everything, reserving the word "God" for nature naturing. As Tillich appreciatively recognized, "Spinoza ... does not say that God is identical with nature but that he is identical with the *natura naturans*, the creative nature, the creative ground of all natural objects."⁶² But Tillich suggested that Spinoza still somehow disregarded the ultimate ontological dependence of the world. I disagree. Spinoza's *natura naturans* and Tillich's "ground of being" are virtually indistinguishable, in my judgment. Both of these notions point to being itself, to the mysterious and creative power churning in the depths of nature, to the infinite ontological conditions for the possibility of a natural world.

Tillich's critique of Spinoza is probably applicable to Loomer, though. While collapsing the Whiteheadian dichotomy between creativity and *God*, Loomer failed to make a subtle enough distinction between creativity and *the world*. To be fair,

Loomer did assert that “the supreme cause to be served” is not the world itself but *the creative advance of the world in its adventure*.⁶³ This is a good processive way of distinguishing nature natured from nature naturing. However, the central affirmation of Loomer’s pantheism still needs tweaking, in my view. I wish to inch a little closer to Tillich and affirm not that God is the sum total of the world, but that God is *the creative advance of the world in its ambig-*

uous and mysterious totality—i.e. *natura naturans*, creativity-destructivity, becoming itself. To do so is to gesture toward a *ground-of-being process theology*, a process theology that preserves *yet naturalizes* the infinite qualitative distinction between the world and its creative and self-transcendent ground—or, to use more classical theological language, between God and the idols.

¹ John B. Cobb, *A Christian Natural Theology: Based on the Thought of Alfred North Whitehead*, Second ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 117.

² To quote Whitehead: “‘Creativity’ is the universal of universals characterizing ultimate matter of fact. It is that ultimate principle by which the many, which are the universe disjunctively, become the one actual occasion, which is the universe conjunctively. It lies in the nature of things that the many enter into complex unity . . . The many become one, and are increased by one.” Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne, Corrected ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 21.

³ Cobb, 117.

⁴ Whitehead, 346.

⁵ Cobb, 115-20.

⁶ Whitehead, 7.

⁷ See Wesley J. Wildman, *Science and Religious Anthropology: A Spiritually Evocative Naturalist Interpretation of Human Life* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2009), 19-25.

⁸ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols., vol. 2 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 6.

⁹ See Cobb, 113-14.

¹⁰ Whitehead, 342.

¹¹ Wesley J. Wildman, “Ground-of-Being Theologies,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, ed. Philip Clayton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 617, n. 6.

¹² Tillich, 2, 7.

¹³ Wildman, “Ground-of-Being Theologies,” 613; *Science and Religious Anthropology: A Spiritually Evocative Naturalist Interpretation of Human Life*, 20-21.

¹⁴ Tillich, 2, 6.

¹⁵ Cobb, 118.

¹⁶ Wildman, “Ground-of-Being Theologies,” 612-13, 23. See also Tillich, 2, 9, 11-12.

¹⁷ Bernard J. Lee, “The Two Process Theologies,” *Theological Studies* 45, no. 2 (1984).

¹⁸ David Emory Conner, “Whitehead the Naturalist,” *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy* 30, no. 2 (2009): 170-72, 74-76; “The Plight of a Theoretical Deity: A Response to Suchocki’s ‘The

Dynamic God,’” *Process Studies* 41, no. 1 (2012): 111-23.

¹⁹ See Whitehead, 346, 51.

²⁰ Robert Cummings Neville, *Ultimates: Philosophical Theology*, 3 vols., vol. 1 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013), 279.

²¹ Nancy Frankenberry, “Major Themes of Empirical Theology,” in *Empirical Theology: A Handbook*, ed. Randolph Crump Miller (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1992), 52.

²² Henry Nelson Wieman, *The Source of Human Good* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995). The creative event, Wieman expounds, is comprised of four subevents. “The four subevents are: emerging awareness of qualitative meaning derived from other persons through communication; integrating these new meanings with others previously acquired; expanding the richness of quality in the appreciable world by enlarging its meaning; deepening the community among those who participate in this total event of intercommunication” (58).

²³ Nancy Frankenberry, *Religion and Radical Empiricism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 124.

²⁴ Henry Nelson Wieman, “Reply to Cherbonnier,” in *The Empirical Theology of Henry Nelson Wieman*, ed. Robert W. Bretall (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 281.

²⁵ Wieman, *The Source of Human Good*, 267.

²⁶ Wieman, “Reply to Cherbonnier,” 282.

²⁷ Whitehead, 31, 88.

²⁸ Henry Nelson Wieman, *Intellectual Foundation of Faith* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1961), 66.

²⁹ For example, Catherine Keller states that process theology does not *identify* God with the cosmos, “as in pantheism (‘all is divine’),” but takes the panentheistic view that “all is *in* God.” Catherine Keller, *On the Mystery: Discerning God in Process* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 53.

³⁰ Frankenberry, “Major Themes of Empirical Theology,” 52.

³¹ Wieman, *The Source of Human Good*, 6-7.

³² *Ibid.*, 54-83.

³³ The creative good, Wieman averred, is “absolute good” but not “all-powerful good.” See *ibid.*, 79-82.

³⁴ See Bernard Loomer, “The Size of God,” in *The Size of God: The Theology of Bernard Loomer in Context*, ed. William Dean and Larry E. Axel (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1987), 24-31. See also “Empirical Theology within Process Thought,” in *The Future of Empirical Theology*, ed. Bernard E. Meland (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969).

³⁵ “The Size of God,” 20.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 42.

³⁷ See James C. Livingston and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, *Modern Christian Thought*, Second ed., 2 vols., vol. 2: The Twentieth Century (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 51.

³⁸ Henry Nelson Wieman, “Intellectual Autobiography,” in *The Empirical Theology of Henry Nelson Wieman*, ed. Robert W. Bretall (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 14.

³⁹ Loomer, “The Size of God,” 41.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 35-43.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 40.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 21, 42, 51; “S-I-Z-E,” *Criterion* 13 (1974): 6. See also Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Crisis, Irony, and Postmodernity, 1950-2005*, 3 vols., vol. 3 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 129.

⁴⁴ Loomer, “The Size of God,” 42, 41.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 50, 38.

⁴⁶ See Wieman, *The Source of Human Good*, 79-82.

⁴⁷ Loomer, “The Size of God,” 21, 40, 43, 48-50.

⁴⁸ See Richard L. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz: History, Theology, and Contemporary Judaism*, Second ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Wildman, “Ground-of-Being Theologies,” 618, 625.

⁴⁹ See Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols., vol. 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), 79-83, 250-51.

⁵⁰ Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: HarperOne, 1957), 14-18. See William Dean, *The American Spiritual Culture: And the Invention of Jazz, Football, and the Movies* (New York and London: Continuum, 2002), 166.

⁵¹ See Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 2, 97-180.

⁵² Wesley J. Wildman, “Tillich’s *Systematic Theology* as a Template for the Encounter of Christian Theology and Religious Naturalism,” *Bulletin of the North American Paul Tillich Society* 40, no. 2 (2014): 16-17.

⁵³ Loomer, “The Size of God,” 51, 41.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 43. See Reinhold Niebuhr, *Beyond Tragedy: Essays on the Christian Interpretation of History* (New York: Scribner, 1937).

⁵⁵ Loomer, “The Size of God,” 42-43.

⁵⁶ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 2, 5-10, quote on 7.

⁵⁷ See two of my forthcoming essays: Demian Wheeler, “*Deus sive Natura*: Pantheism as a Variety of Religious Naturalism,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Naturalism*, ed. Donald A. Crosby and Jerome A. Stone (New York: Routledge, 2018); “Seizing a Whiteheadian Alternative: A Retrieval of the Empirical Option in Process Thought,” in *Conceiving an Alternative: Philosophical Resources for an Ecological Civilization*, ed. Demian Wheeler and David E. Conner (Claremont: Process Century Press, 2018).

⁵⁸ Wildman, “Tillich’s *Systematic Theology* as a Template for the Encounter of Christian Theology and Religious Naturalism,” 13-14.

⁵⁹ Loomer, “The Size of God,” 42.

⁶⁰ See Leemon McHenry, “The Multiverse Conjecture: Whitehead’s Cosmic Epochs and Contemporary Cosmology,” *Process Studies* 40, no. 1 (2011); Donald A. Crosby, *A Religion of Nature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 39-42.

⁶¹ See Benedict Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. Edwin Curley (London: Penguin Books, 1996); Robert S. Corrington, *Deep Pantheism: Toward a New Transcendentalism* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016).

⁶² Reading well beyond this propaedeutic and allowing Tillich himself to determine what he means reveals that Tillich’s distinctions between symbolic and literal language cannot be pressed into service to question the sincerity of his talk of the dynamics of the Divine Life and how the world matters for God. A careful examination of Tillich’s vivid descriptions of the dynamics of the Divine Life in relation to the world reveal an intention to affirm something real about God, which his qualifications about symbolic language are not designed to obviate. Tillich is earnest. For Tillich, the world does “really matter” for God in the robust sense that Tillich’s critics deny him. If we leave it to Tillich himself to determine what he means then we must conclude that, far from being disingenuous, Tillich quite really and quite “literally” means what he says.

⁶² Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 2, 6.

⁶³ Loomer, “The Size of God,” 42.

OFFICERS
THE NORTH AMERICAN
PAUL TILLICH SOCIETY

President

Devan Stahl, College of Human Medicine, Michigan State University

President Elect

Verna Ehret, Mercyhurst University

Vice President

Lawrence A. Whitney, LC† Vice President

Secretary Treasurer

Frederick J. Parrella, Santa Clara University

Past President

Adam Pryor, Bethany College, Lindsborg, Kansas

Board of Directors ^

Term Expiring 2018

Jawanza Clark, Manhattan College

Johanne Stebbe Teglbærg Kristensen, University of Copenhagen

Jari Ristiniemi, University of Gävle

Term Expiring 2019

Ted Farris, New York City

Charles Fox, SUNY Empire State College

Ronald Stone, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

Term Expiring 2020

Hannah Hofheinz

Bin Song

Benjamin Chicka