



# BULLETIN

of

*The North American Paul Tillich Society*

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### ON THE CALENDAR

#### THE SPRING 2005 PAUL TILLICH LECTURE

Monday, May 9, 2005  
Emerson Hall 105  
Harvard University

"AFTER 'THE DEATH OF GOD':  
FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE AND PAUL TILLICH"

RICHARD SCHACT  
Professor of Philosophy

Jubilee Professor of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Professor Schact, Harvard '63 and a student of Paul Tillich, is an internationally distinguished scholar of Nietzsche and European philosophy. He serves as Executive Director of the North American Nietzsche Society and is a member of the editorial board of *Nietzsche-Studien*. He has taught and published widely, especially in existential philosophy, the philosophy of literature and art, phenomenology, and philosophy. Among his major books are *Alienation*

(1970), *Hegel and After* (1975), *Nietzsche* (1983), *Making Sense of Nietzsche* (1983), *Classical Modern Philosophy: Descartes to Kant* (1984), and *The Future of Alienation* (1994). Professor Schact's lecture will consider the religious thought of Nietzsche and of Tillich as constructive religious responses to what Nietzsche called "the Death of God."

**CALL FOR PAPERS**

Dear Colleagues:

There seems to be strong support for contributions under the folio wing broad themes:

- The Early Tillich
- Tillich on Theology/Philosophy of History
- Tillich on Classical Theologians
- Tillich on Symbols
- Tillich and the Human Experience of the Divine

Please send me proposals for contributions under any of these broad themes and we will try to shape the sessions appropriately. You should also be aware that a number of proposals presented to the AAR sessions that were not selected are still "live," unless the individual has withdrawn. I would be grateful if proposals were emailed to me as Word attachments, if possible.

Cordially,  
Terry O'Keeffe  
<T.OKeeffe@ulster.ac.uk>

**NEW PUBLICATIONS**

Danz, Christian, ed./Hg. *Theologie als Religionsphilosophie. Studien zu den problemgeschichtlichen und systematischen Voraussetzungen der Theologie Paul Tillich*. Tillich Studien, Band 9. Vienna: Lit Verlag, 2004.

Dourley, John P. "Toward a Salvageable Tillich: The Implications of His Late Confession of Provincialism," *Studies in Religion* 35, 1, (2004): 3-26.

*Please send notices of new publications on Tillich or by members of the NAPTS as well as item for "On the Calendar" to the editor. Thank you.*

**REPORT ON THE XVI<sup>E</sup> COLLOQUE INTERNATIONAL DE L'ASSOCIATION PAUL**

**TILlich D'EXPRESSION FRANÇAISE**

The XVI<sup>e</sup> Colloque International de l'Association Paul Tillich d'Expression Française was held at the Faculté de Théologie Protestante, Montpellier, France, from 15 to 17 April 2005. The theme of this year's meeting was "Paul Tillich: Preacher and Practical Theologian." Tillich scholars from Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Switzerland, and the United States were in attendance. Representing the North American Paul Tillich Society and presenting papers in English were Young Ho Chun, Doris Lax, Frederick Parrella, Robison James, and Mary Ann Stenger. Terrence O'Keeffe from the NAPTS was also present.

At the general assembly of the APTEF, Anne Marie Reijnen was elected president, replacing Marc Boss. Greetings to the French Society from the NAPTS were presented by Terry O'Keeffe, President Elect of the Society. The next meeting of the l'Association Paul Tillich d'Expression Française will be held from 4 to 6 May 2007 in Fribourg, Switzerland.

**LANGDON GILKEY: A REMINISCENCE**

JOHN M. PAGE

In May 2002, I wrote to Professor Gilkey to tell him how helpful his book, *Gilkey on Tillich*, had been to me in gaining a better understanding of Paul Tillich's thought. I also wrote to request a copy of his Paul Tillich Lecture at Harvard University on April 30, 2002. The note he sent back included a copy of his typed manuscript with his hand written changes. From his book and Harvard lecture, I remember Professor Gilkey for his courage to write and speak about the political debate in American life where religion is understood as only one element of culture rather than its essence or ultimate concern. Like his mentor, Paul Tillich, I believe Langdon Gilkey, in his life and work, demonstrated the "Courage To Be."

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**TILlich'S SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY:**

**AN ASSESSMENT OF MAJOR SUCCESSES  
AND FAILURES ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF ITS  
COMPLETION (11/16/04)**

OWEN C. THOMAS

On the first page of his *Systematic Theology*, Paul Tillich states that a theological system should interpret the truth of the Christian message “for every new generation,” which implies that it will need to be reformulated for each new generation. The main reason is that the situation to which theology must respond is constantly changing, namely, the “totality of creative human self-interpretation” which includes “the scientific and artistic, the economic, political and ethical forms” in which this interpretation is expressed (ST 1:3f). Since he completed the system in 1963, more than a generation has passed and it is time to assess it as a whole to determine what can be affirmed and what needs to be revised for the new generation. I began to think about this a year ago when I was invited to give a lecture at Claremont on just this topic when it was in fact the fortieth anniversary. Tillich was my main theological teacher. I took a course with him in the summer of 1946 shortly after I got out of the Navy, then studied with him from 1949 to 1952 when I was a graduate student at Columbia, and finally attended his two year course on Religion and Culture at Harvard in 1955-56. During my forty-two years of teaching I have offered a course on the *Systematic Theology* about twenty times, including once at the Gregorian University in Rome.

Now the easiest way to start an argument among Tillich scholars is to begin to discuss the successes and failures in his system. That is just what I hope will happen. I suppose that there are two ways to do this. One way is to summarize the innumerable assessments that have been made over the past forty years. I have read many of these, and this would be a very useful exercise. The other way is to offer my own assessment, and I have chosen this latter way. In my judgment, there are many more successes than failures. I will limit myself to the major ones. Of course, even in these there are some ambiguities. I will also offer brief indication for the reasons for each assessment. A complete assessment would require a book. I will begin with some general ones that apply to the whole system, and then take up the rest in the order that they appear in the system.

The first major success of Tillich’s system is its comprehensiveness. He treats all the main topics of Christian faith and theology and relates them to every area of human experience and culture. Furthermore he brings in most of the resources of the classical and modern theological and philosophical traditions along with all of the modern critical disciplines, including history, depth psychology, sociology, and political philosophy.

A second major success is the systematic character of the system that is indicated in Tillich’s attempt to relate all his statements in a consistent and coherent whole. He has been largely successful in this, but I will suggest that among the failures are some cases where he has not been able to do this.

A third success is Tillich’s doctrine of the theological circle that is quite fundamental but could be stated more clearly. It is the basis of his interpretation of theology as neither inductive nor deductive and involving a faith commitment like every other worldview. It also means that, “every part [of theology] is dependent on every other part” and that “the arrangement is only a matter of expediency” (1:11).

A fourth success is Tillich’s definition of religion and faith as ultimate concern, which has become quite influential in the philosophy of religion and religious studies generally. It implies that everyone lives by some ultimate concern, and I believe that in this way it is illuminating, liberating, and apologetically useful. It is also the basis of his two formal criteria of theology.

A fifth is Tillich’s theory of the relation of theology and science that asserts their independence and frees each of them from interference from the other. He states, “Theology has no right and no obligation to prejudice a physical or historical, sociological or psychological, inquiry. And no result of such an inquiry can be directly productive or disastrous for theology” (1:18). As a former physicist, this issue has always been of great importance to me and for several years I have worked on it with the Center for Theology and Natural Science in Berkeley. To be sure, Tillich states their independence rather sharply and his view has been challenged recently, but I believe it is basically correct. Furthermore, Tillich implies the different issues involved in the relation of theology to the human sciences but he does not pursue it explicitly in the system.

A sixth success is Tillich’s view of the place of experience in theology, namely, that experience is not the source of the contents of theology but rather

the medium through which they are received. It is very carefully worked out and is the best interpretation of this issue in modern theology. Because we are in the midst of a new Romantic movement that arose in the 1960's, there has been a widespread hunger for experience and a widespread emphasis on the primacy of experience in recent systematic theology, especially in Tracy, Ogden, and Gilkey, as well as in feminist and liberation theology. But, I am persuaded that Tillich is the only one who has it right. I have argued this at length in an article entitled "Theology and Experience" (*Harvard Theological Review* 78:1-2 [1985]).

A seventh is the two formal criteria of theology and the later distinction of formal and material norms in theology. The formal criteria distinguish theological questions from all others and thus are essential in the work of theology. The distinction of formal and material norms, which refers to the Bible and an interpretation of its central theme respectively, is also extremely important, but Tillich's presentation is somewhat confusing because he often uses the term "norm" without indicating whether he means formal or material, although these are easily supplied by the context.

An eighth success is the method of correlation that Tillich states is the one which systematic theology has always used. I believe that Tillich is the only theologian in the past century that has spelled out a specific theological method and carried it out in detail. It has led me in my teaching of theology to work out a variation of Tillich's method for the analysis, clarification, and resolution of specific theological questions. (See *Theological Questions: Analysis and Argument* [Morehouse, 1983]).

A ninth is Tillich's doctrine of reason, which again is unique in the systematic theology of the last century. Others have treated reason but not in the context of a systematic theology. Tillich treats the structure of reason and the conflicts of reason in existence leading to a quest for revelation. It is the basis of his elaboration of the rational character of systematic theology in terms of semantic, logical, and methodological rationality. This is extremely important today because of the current Romantic Movement in which rationality is generally disparaged. Also this is the section in which Tillich introduces the concepts of autonomy, heteronomy, and theonomy and applies them creatively to Western history.

A tenth is Tillich's ontology that has been at the center of debates about his theology. It is a restatement

of the tradition from Neo-Platonism to Schelling, and Tillich uses it creatively in all parts of the system. In particular, one aspect, namely, the ontological polarity of individualization and participation, offers a way to interpret the relation of the two main ways of experiencing and understanding the human relation to the divine as personal and as impersonal or suprapersonal. Shortly, however, I will refer to one aspect of his ontology as a major failure.

Eleventh is Tillich's analysis of the various types of polytheism and monotheism and their transformation into types of philosophy.

Twelfth is the concept of Spirit which Tillich describes as "the most embracing, direct, and unrestricted symbol for the divine life" (1:249). Here he makes the very important point about the unusual narrowness of the English term in comparison with its equivalents in the Germanic and Romance languages. I have argued that this helps to explain how the current spirituality movement has gotten so seriously off the track. (See my essay "Some Problems in Contemporary Christian Spirituality," *Anglican Theological Review* [Spring 2000])

Thirteenth in Part 3 of the system is the concepts of estrangement and sin and of salvation as healing and reunion. Here Tillich describes existentialism as "the natural ally of Christianity" and as "the good luck of Christian theology" (2:27). I believe that it is the one of the best analysis of these topics in modern theology, although I agree with Judith Plaskow's critique of it in her book *Sex, Sin and Grace: Women's Experience and the Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich*, in which she defines sin largely in terms of men's experience and describing as virtues what are in fact women's sins.

Fourteenth is Tillich's analysis of the relation of historical criticism of the Bible to theology and faith. He summarizes it this way: "Historical research can neither give nor take away the foundation of Christian faith" (2:113), but it must inform theology. This is highly debatable and has been criticized by historians and defended by theologians, but I think it is basically sound.

Fifteenth in Part 4 of the system is the interpretation of the ontological concept of life including the elements of morality, religion, and culture and their ambiguity. This is a comprehensive and most illuminating analysis that is unique in modern theology.

Sixteenth is Tillich's Spirit Christology, which is overly brief but to me the best approach to Chris-

tology for the present. It is summarized in his statement, “[Jesus’] human spirit was entirely grasped by the Spiritual Presence” (3:144). Tillich refers to this as an “addition” to the Christology of Part 3 but he does not explain how they are coherent.

Seventeenth is what amounts to a complete outline of the disciplines of practical and ascetical theology in the interpretations of the functions of the church and the participation of the individual in the Spiritual Presence. These topics are not always taken up in a systematic theology, but they should be, and if they are not, they are not approached theologically and thus are subject to distortion.

Eighteenth is the systematic outline of the theology of culture with its analysis of the concepts of autonomy, heteronomy, and theonomy. This is one of Tillich’s major and unparalleled contributions to modern theology, the details of which are spelled out in other volumes. His basic thesis is summed up in his statement that “religion is the substance of culture and culture is the form of religion” (3:248). He applies this in a most illuminating way to the history of Western culture.

Nineteenth in Part 5 of the system is Tillich’s interpretation of history and of the various historical and non-historical interpretations. Of the three forms of the latter, namely, the tragic, the mystical, and the mechanistic, he describes the mystical as “the most widespread of all within historical mankind” (3:351).

Twentieth and last is Tillich’s doctrine of the kingdom of God, which was central in Jesus’ teaching, largely absent in the tradition, prominent in the liberal theology of the nineteenth century, and largely ignored in the neo-orthodox revival of the last century as well as in recent theology. It represents the social and political character of the fulfillment.

Now I turn to what I judge to be the failures in Tillich’s *Systematic Theology*, and there are fewer of them. And first is the relation of theology and philosophy, which is very surprising, because Tillich seems to contradict himself here. His main point is that theology and philosophy differ in cognitive attitude, the nature of their sources, and their content. Thus they are quite distinct with the result that there can be no conflict or synthesis between them nor any such thing as a Christian philosophy or a Christian theological ethic, since ethics is a part of philosophy. This seems to contradict his statements that every philosopher “has his implicit theology,” that “every

creative philosopher is a hidden theologian,” that “[t]he ethical element is a necessary and often predominant element in every theological statement” (1:24, 25, 31), the statements I mentioned earlier about existentialist philosophy, and the assertion that the first step in the method of correlation, the analysis of the human situation, is a philosophical task. Furthermore, he seems to have taken this back, since in the Kegley-Bretall volume in response to criticism he affirms “a basic identity of theology and philosophy” (Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall, *The Theology of Paul Tillich* [New York, Macmillan, 1952] 336). I argued in my dissertation that theology is a species of the genus philosophy, and that therefore that conflict and synthesis between them is always possible, as has been illustrated regularly in the history of Western thought and also in Tillich’s system itself (See *William Temple’s Philosophy of Religion* [London and New York: S.P.C.K. and Seabury, 1967], chapter 16).

A second failure, and it is big one, is Tillich’s doctrine of God as being-itself. I believe that it is contradictory and obscure. For example and minimally, if God as being-itself is equivalent to God as the ground of being and the power of being, then God is not identical with being but rather its ground and power, and then the term “being” refers to the creation. He states, “If God is not being-itself, he is subordinate to it” (1:236). Wrong. As one standing in the Neo-Platonist tradition, Tillich should have joined what I believe to be the majority of that tradition beginning with Plato and Plotinus in asserting that God is beyond being. (In the *Republic* 509b, Plato states that the Good transcends or is beyond being, *epekeina tys ousias*. In *Enneads* 6.8.14.42, Plotinus states that the One is beyond being, *hyper-ontos*; see also 1.3.5.7). And the majority of the Platonist church authors follow them in this. Then the concept of being can be applied to the creation and analogously to God as the ground and power of the being of the creation. In an essay in 1977, I examined this issue in the theology of the last century including Gilson, Lonergan, Rahner, Tillich, Macquarrie, and Neville and concluded that none of them succeeded in formulating a consistent doctrine of God as being-itself. (See “Being and Some Theologians,” *Harvard Theological Review* 70: 1-2 [1977]). Furthermore, to adopt a concept that is obscure, and which, according to Tillich, one cannot understand unless one undergoes a conversion, is, to say the least, making a strategic error in an apolo-

getic theology. Incidentally, I have read Robert Scharlemann's book *Being and God* a couple of times and although it contains many references to Tillich, I am still not clear as to whether or not he affirms that God is being itself. But I think not, since he states at one point that "'God is being' will prove to be no more true than 'God is not being'" (16).

A third failure is Tillich's assertion of the identity, or a point of identity, between creation and fall, and also his strange statement that the transition from essence to existence, that is, creation, is made possible by finite freedom, that is, by humanity. In the German translation, all three instances of this latter assertion are omitted indicating that Tillich had second thoughts about it. (In fact, this whole chapter has been thoroughly revised in the German translation.) In regard to the identity of creation and fall Tillich states, "Fully developed creatureliness is fallen creatureliness" (1:255). Why "fully developed creatureliness"? Tillich's point is that all creatureliness is fallen. He continues: "The creature has actualized its freedom in so far as it is outside the creative ground of the divine life" (Ibid.). He grants that this is "the most difficult and the most dialectical point in the doctrine of creation" (Ibid.). But what is Tillich referring to in the phrase "actualized freedom"? Is it a reference to the analogy of freedom in the material creation? And on the human level, is it birth or the first act of rudimentary infant freedom? It seems to me to be a reference to the Neo-Platonist doctrine of emanation in which any distinction from the One is a fall away from the reality, value, and power of the divine. The identity of creation and fall is a universal cosmic event for both Tillich and Neo-Platonism. In the Bible, there is a mythological distinction between creation and fall. I believe that this must be maintained in a demythologized form in Christian theology. A great deal more needs to be said about this critical issue, but not now. I have analyzed this and related issues in detail in an essay entitled "Tillich and the Perennial Philosophy" (See *Harvard Theological Review* 89:1 [1996]).

A fourth failure is the Christology of "eternal God-manhood" or "eternal God-man unity." These concepts are dropped on us with very little preparation and are very difficult to grasp. They seem to come from the tradition of Platonism, medieval realism, and German idealism. However, in an earlier essay entitled "A Reinterpretation of the Doctrine of the Incarnation," Tillich gives some of the biblical background for this Christology. Furthermore, Paul

Tavard in his book *Paul Tillich and the Christian Message*, although he describes this Christology as unbiblical, incompatible with Chalcedon, and heretical, goes on to offer a very helpful reconstruction of Tillich that he calls "A Christology of Man." Also Oscar Cullman in his book *The Christology of the New Testament* calls for a similar approach to Christology.

A fifth failure is Tillich's concept of the royal function of the church which is one of three ways in which the relating function of the church is carried out, namely, what he calls "political establishment." This is the church's responsibility to "influence the leaders of other social groups" (3:214), which is an odd definition of political establishment. "Political establishment" sounds dubious to American ears, especially since he goes on to state that the church's "royal function was not taken seriously and was made impotent...by the liberal ideal of separation of church and state" (3:216). I believe that here Tillich seems to have imported a European model of establishment and misunderstood the American principle of the separation of church and state. Perhaps for this reason, Tillich seems to have decided to revise this in the German edition. The phrase "political establishment" occurs three times in the English edition. In the German edition, the first use is translated "*politisches Handeln*," which might be translated "a political matter." The second use is translated "*Jedes politische System*..." or "Each [or every] political system." The third use is translated "*politische Aufbau*" (GW 3:248), which is an odd phrase but is the closest to the English term "establishment." Since such establishment, according to Tillich, must be guided by the principles of belonging to and opposing these social groups, this may be simply a case of a bad choice of a term. However, the criticism of the separation of church and state remains unchanged.

A sixth and final failure is Tillich's ambivalence about any future reference in his eschatology. In regard to the issue of the relation of time to eternity, he offers the image of a curve that "comes from above, moves down as well as...and returns...to that from which it came, going ahead as well as up." This can be seen as "the diagram for temporality as a whole." These references to "ahead" suggest a future fulfillment as well as an eternal now. But Tillich goes on to state that, "the end of time is not conceived in terms of a definite moment...in the future. Beginning from and ending in the eternal are not matters of a determinable moment in physical time but rather

a process going on in every moment" (3:420). This is again his ambivalence between biblical religion and the Neo-Platonist tradition, in which the course of history is irrelevant, which I discussed in the article I mentioned earlier.

As mentioned at the beginning, Tillich implies that the necessity for the continuing work of theology is that the situation to which it is responding is constantly changing. However, I would attribute only one of Tillich's failures to a change in the situation, namely, what he calls the political establish-

**PAUL TILlich, THE MYSTICAL  
OVERCOMING OF THEISM, AND THE  
SPACE FOR THE SECULAR**

MARTIN GALLAGHER

**Introduction: A Theologian of the Boundaries**

In Mark Taylor's collection of essays by Paul Tillich, he suggests that Tillich is a "theologian of the boundaries" in multiple senses.<sup>1</sup> These boundaries include Germany and the United States, the "wood-paneled halls of academe," a variety of ecclesial spaces, socio-political contexts, theology and philosophy, and the border between Protestantism and Catholicism, even between Judaism and Christianity. Taylor understands the appellation "theologian of the boundaries" to encompass both the story of an emigrant traversing new terrain and the thought of a man who attempted to articulate a new understanding of religion "related to the boundaries of human life."<sup>2</sup> It is this second sense of the boundaries that I shall primarily draw upon.

But what does it mean for theology in general, and for Tillich in particular to talk about religion within the boundaries of experience? Still further, what is it about these boundaries that renders the old discourse about religious matters problematic and requires of the honest thinker a new line of inquiry? The beginnings of the answers to these questions lie in the consideration of the monumental achievements of Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Nietzsche, and the Martin Heidegger of *Being and Time*. The work of the greatest thinkers is such that no one can move forward in thought without looking back to and working in light of their accomplishments. The

ment of the church. I would attribute three others to a failure in systematicity, namely, the relation of theology and philosophy, God as being-itself, and the Christology of eternal God-manhood. The other two, namely, the identity of creation and fall and ambivalence about the future in eschatology, I would attribute to the influence of the Neo-Platonist tradition. I suppose, however, that some of these latter five might be attributed to a change in the situation.

theme of looking back in order to move forward should be familiar to anyone versed in the language of Jewish and Christian theology and the role memory plays therein. Christian theology moves forward in the memory of the passion, introducing a double movement in Tillich's project: back to these three German philosophers in order to understand the possibility of Christian revelation in the present, and back to the memory of the passion to articulate a Christianity faithful to this memory. Of these two, the philosophical movement is fundamental, since it asks about the grounds of the theological movement.

Paul Tillich was a theologian who worked in the aftermath of Kant's delimitation of the possibility of experience, the pronouncement of the "death of God" by Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, and Heidegger's discovery of time as the key to revealing the structure of Being. It was not possible for Tillich to understand God as another being among beings, even if this meant that God was the highest being. Such a God could never be the object of possible experience or thought. Nor was he interested in continuing to view God as a divine authority seeing everything from afar controlling human being as objects of a divine master plan. He viewed the so-called "death of God" as a rightful rebellion against this understanding and a preliminary step toward the uncovering of true religion. Heidegger's contribution meant that Being-itself, Tillich's favored name for God, could not serve as a static, unchanging foundation.

Any of these alone would have been enough to demand a radical reconceptualization of religious understanding, but Tillich's thought advances in light of all three. Tillichian theology gains new momentum for spiritual life on the other side of the objectification of God or human beings, which is to say, on the other side of theism. We have the decisive word on this from Tillich himself, when he claims that God does not exist and that "to argue that God exists is to deny him."<sup>3</sup> For Tillich, it seems,

orthodoxy and atheism are metaphysically the same. Both deny the possibility of God as the creative ground of Being. The title of this paper, which refers to the “overcoming of theism,” can be misleading if it is taken to imply that Tillich himself overcame theism by means of mysticism. The argument is rather that the exigencies attending to his thought impelled it to move beyond the borders of religious orthodoxy, posing a problem about how to think of religion *after* Kant, the death of God, and *Being and Time*. On account of the boundaries appropriate to finite thinking, Tillich had to move outside of the boundaries of Christian theism.

I shall begin this investigation by noting the problems posed to Tillich by his three German predecessors<sup>4</sup> and Tillich’s response to them. The next step is to see the sense in which Tillich accepts the power of a mystical element that moves him beyond the limits of theism. Here it will be important to consider how Tillich then transgresses the mystical interpretation of this element. My argument will be twofold: (1) Tillich’s mysticism remains within the Kantian limitation of experience to phenomena. (2) Tillich’s mysticism is unlike any other in that it does not rely on the mystical experience to provide the content of the God-relation. It rather serves to open the question of God and does not amount only to a mystical identity with God. There is certainly a mystical identity, a certain nearness, but also a differential space opened up in the midst of that identity.

The best way to think about this, it seems to me, is in terms of Heidegger’s articulation of “ontological difference.” What Tillich rejects in his famous “two types” essay is metaphysical difference, the difference between two beings: namely, the god and the human being. He aligns himself instead with the Augustinian tradition of ontological reflection that he thinks continues through German mysticism, Luther, and eventually, existential philosophy, even Heidegger, whom Tillich unfortunately considers to be an existentialist. Traditionally, the realm of metaphysics is characterized by difference and the realm of ontology by identity. But Tillich is associating himself with ontology in a way that ontology, in its traditional form, cannot brook. Already in *Sein und Zeit*, but more thoroughly and systematically in *Identity and Difference*, Heidegger introduces a theretofore unthought possibility of a difference within the same, which is to say, an ontological difference.

This was the most paradoxical and significant bringing together of seemingly exclusive categories since Kant’s synthetic *a priori*. Although there is not space to explore this further here, I want to indicate that it is this type of ontological framework in which Tillich’s differential use of mysticism gains its momentum. The mystical point of contact is with the question of God and this leads to the productivity of doubt, as an element of faith. The epiphany allows the content of his mysticism, the God above God, to appear. The withdrawal of the God of theism accomplished by doubt and the appearance of Nietzschean atheism make this epiphany possible. Tillich’s mystical overcoming of theism happens by virtue of the opening of a space for “secular” rationality and doubt, which denotes a thinking *sub specie historiae* as against *sub specie aeternitatis*.<sup>5</sup>

### I. Three Philosophers of Being: Kant, Nietzsche, and Heidegger

#### a. Kant

Kant launched the critique of metaphysics that has by now become a familiar theme in philosophical discourse both in the English-speaking world and on the continent. He was also the first to issue a sustained critique of religion and seek a post-metaphysical way of talking about God, a project now understood under the appellation “religion without religion.” That Kant was both the critic of metaphysics and of religion was not incidental. Metaphysics denotes the study of the being of beings, and theology, since Aristotle, had been determined as a branch of “special metaphysics.” In book z of Aristotle’s metaphysics, he delineates theology as the part of the inquiry into the being of beings that deals with the being of the highest being: namely, God, which is “thought thinking itself.”

Kant described the history of metaphysics as “mere random groping” among concepts<sup>6</sup> on account of the metaphysical compulsion “to resort to principles which overstep all possible empirical employment.”<sup>7</sup> Like Descartes before him, he desires clarity and certainty that metaphysics cannot obtain because it makes judgments that no human being can be asked to adjudicate. However, unlike Descartes, Kant does not posit the substantial ego as the foundation of his enquiry, but rather as an object of intuition indistinguishable from other objects of intuition.<sup>8</sup> He finds a new beginning for the Cartesian quest for certainty in the project of transcendental

idealism, the determination of the conditions that make experience possible. In his transcendental aesthetic, space and time emerge as the two forms of sensible intuition. Since the God of metaphysics is omnipresent and timeless, and everything humans perceive comes under the categories of space and time, the experience of God is impossible for humans. Hence, Kant says,

The persuasion that we can distinguish the effects of grace from those of nature (virtue), or even to produce those effects in us, is *enthusiasm*;<sup>9</sup> for nowhere in experience can we recognize a supersensible object, even less exert influence upon it to bring it down to us... To want to perceive heavenly influences is a madness in which, no doubt, there can be a method (since those alleged inner revelations can attach themselves to moral, and hence rational, ideas), but nonetheless remains a self-deception detrimental to religion.<sup>10</sup>

Tillich was largely affirmative with respect to the Kantian enterprise. In particular, he praises Kant's discovery of the limits of knowledge on account of human finitude. He explains, "The categories of reasons are categories of finitude. They do not enable human reason to grasp reality-in-itself; but they do enable man to grasp his world, the totality of the phenomena which appear to him and which constitute his actual experience."<sup>11</sup> The phrase "to grasp his world" is curious and inexplicable to me. Tillich wants to locate a trace of the infinite within the finite. This trace cannot be grasped by the *Gegenständlichkeit* of modern representational thinking. Perhaps Tillich is merely attempting to explain Kant's view, but the context of affirmation makes this possibility seem unlikely.

However that may be, what is most important to notice is the relationship between Kant's phenomenal/noumenal distinction and Tillich's theological method. Since Tillich embraces the phenomenological orientation Kant provides he must find a new way to talk about God that breaks with metaphysics or not talk about God at all. But Kant alludes to a way of speaking that Tillich will rely upon:

God's way can perhaps be so mysterious to us that, at best, he could reveal it to us in a symbolic representation in which the practical import alone is comprehensible to us, whereas, theoretically, we could not grasp what this relation of God to the human being is in itself, or at-

tach concepts to it, even if God wanted to reveal such a mystery to us.<sup>12</sup>

It is important to distinguish between symbol and analogy in the sense Kant and Tillich will use it and the use of Aristotle's analogy of being in medieval philosophy. Kant explains his position on analogy:

Such a cognition [of the relationship between the complex of appearances and the unknown] is one of analogy and does not signify (as is commonly understood) an imperfect similarity of two things, but a perfect similarity of two quite dissimilar things. By means of this analogy, however, there remains a concept of the Supreme Being sufficiently determined *for us*, though we have left out everything that could determine it absolutely or *in itself*; for we determine it as regards the world, and hence as regards ourselves, and more do we not require.<sup>13</sup>

Now Kant still regards this unknown as a being: a supreme being, or a supreme understanding and will. It may be, however, that he employs traditional names only because he has no other, as there is no reason to believe that he fails to understand that what we do not know, we cannot name. However this may be, what is essential is the unwavering phenomenological commitment, the concomitant denial of any positive knowledge about the unknown *in itself*, and the idea of perfect similarity of dissimilars.

There is abyss between this treatment and medieval philosophy's appropriation of Aristotle, where the so-called *via negativa* gets employed to reveal positive conceptions of the unknown as it is *in itself*, conceptions which, not surprisingly, parallel the dogmas of "orthodox" Christianity. The result of this procedure is predetermined from the outset; analogy only confirms the positions one already holds. Heidegger summarizes, "In the middle ages, the *analogia entis*—which nowadays has sunk to the level of a catchword—played a role not as a question of being but as a welcome means of formulating religious conviction in philosophical terms."<sup>14</sup> The crucial thing to notice is the issue of dissimilarity: each side of the analogy for Kant held together in a perfect relation whereby a relationship determination but no determination of characteristics of one side of the analogy on the basis of the other is possible.

Although Tillich will not follow the Kantian line of interpreting this in strictly ethical terms, he does think of the symbol as a phenomenon that gives ex-

pression to the divine-human connection containing certain ethical and existential implications but without yielding a literal, theoretical, and conceptual understanding of this relation. Kant's work impelled Tillich to write what is today called "a theology from below,"<sup>15</sup> one that has not fallen from heaven but emerges from the standpoint of a temporally situated human being, *sub specie historiae* rather than *sub specie aeternitatum*.

### b. Nietzsche

Nietzsche thought that Christianity amounted to an escape from the horror arising out of one's existence. It is not the fact of suffering, he explains in *The Genealogy of Morality*, but its meaninglessness, that human consciousness cannot tolerate: "...the suffering itself was *not* his [man's] problem, rather [his problem was] that the answer was missing to the scream of his question: 'to what end suffering?'"<sup>16</sup> His solution<sup>17</sup> is the idea of eternal recurrence—to have the courage to embrace each moment in such a way that one wills that it be repeated eternally. The philosophy of eternal recurrence is another challenge to live in the phenomenal world, the sphere of appearances, to embrace the moment for its own intrinsic worth, as against some externally assigned meaning. On the basis of Nietzsche's contribution, Tillich says, "Existentialism, that is, the great literature, art and philosophy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, reveals the courage to face things as they are and to express the anxiety of meaninglessness."<sup>18</sup> Tillich understands the pronouncement of Nietzsche's madman concerning "the death of God"<sup>19</sup> as the rightful rebellion of human beings against the concept of God as a divine actor seeing everything and controlling human beings as objects.

It is only on the basis of the rejection of this type of God, Tillich thinks, that the genuine power of religious experience is possible. This is why he comments in his sermon, "The Escape from God," that "The protest against God, the will that there be no God, and the flight to atheism are all genuine elements of profound religion. And only on the basis of these elements has religion meaning and power."<sup>20</sup> The "pious teachings" of divine omnipresence and omniscience, Tillich continues, "are at least as dangerous as they are useful."<sup>21</sup> The omnipresent and omniscient God, he concludes in *The Courage to Be*, "is the God Nietzsche said had to die because nobody can tolerate being made into a mere object of absolute knowledge and absolute control. This is the

deepest root of atheism. It is an atheism which is justified as the reaction against theological theism and its disturbing implications."<sup>22</sup> This conception of the "death of God" mirrors, in an interesting and thought-provoking way, the Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas's understanding of the same phenomenon: "The path that leads to the one God must be walked in part without God. True monotheism is duty bound to answer the legitimate demands of atheism. The adult's God is revealed precisely through the void of the child's heaven."<sup>23</sup> Like Tillich and Kant, Levinas is interested in contesting the notion of *enthusiasm*, that is, possession by the sacred, as an object.<sup>24</sup>

On account of Nietzschean influence, Tillich's project represents a certain coming-of-age for Christianity. It asks dialectically if after the "no" of the flight of the gods, the desacralization of the world, a religious "yes" is not only possible but necessary. Hence Tillich, in the same sermon discussed above, points to the impossibility of atheism: "The murderer of God finds God in man. He has not succeeded in killing God at all. God has returned in Zarathustra and the new period of history Zarathustra announces."<sup>25</sup> Indeed, Lawrence Hatab has provocatively suggested that Nietzsche's "early interest in Apollo and Dionysus and his continued reference to Dionysus in his later texts show at least that a 'deity,' in the sense of an extra human site of meaning and significance, would not be anathema to his purposes."<sup>26</sup> Nietzsche, Tillich realized, was not against religion as such, as is testified by the former's sustained interest in Homeric and tragic poetry, but against a religion that comes under the service of one's exemption from the conditions of existence. It was thus necessary for the latter to take on the former's project as his own. Tillich, then, finds himself in a dialectal situation: on the hand, it is no longer possible to think of God in theistic terms; on the other, it is not finally possible to escape the idea of God. It is fitting that the passage from *The Courage to Be* discussing the legitimacy of Nietzschean atheism quoted above immediately precedes the mystical invocation of the God above God of theism.

### c. Heidegger

"Every thinker thinks only one thought," Heidegger boldly declared in series of lectures during the summer and winter of 1951 and 1952 entitled *Was Heisst Denken?* [What is Called Thinking?/What Calls for Thinking?] He continues, "The

thinker needs one thought only. And for the thinker the difficulty is to hold fast to this one thought as the one and only thing that he must think; to think this One as the Same; and to tell of this Same in a fitting manner."<sup>27</sup> The one thought for the early Heidegger was the thought of Being. He says almost immediately in *Being and Time*, "On the foundation of the Greek point of departure for the interpretation of being a dogma has taken shape which not only declares that the question of the meaning of Being is superfluous but sanctions its neglect."<sup>28</sup> The dogma to which Heidegger refers is nothing other than the Aristotelian identification of being and *ousia*, or essence. He thinks that this prejudice cuts off the understanding of Being as an event (*Ereignis*) and fails to comprehend the historicity of Being-itself.

What the determination of Being as essence meant for metaphysics was a turning to the essential structures of things, a concern with beings rather than Being-itself. But Heidegger thought that before one could "know what it means to be ethical, what it means to be happy, what it means to be human, what it means to be lost, and what it means to be saved, one must first know what it means 'to be.'"<sup>29</sup> For Tillich, God is Being-Itself. But he refuses to follow the metaphysical tradition and thus identify God, as Being-itself, with a stable, unchanging first principle in the manner of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. In fact, Tillich found it necessary to reject all the possible theistic models of God from Augustine to Anselm to Aquinas to Kant because all of these thinkers understood God as a being.

Thus, Tillich argues, "Augustine simply identifies *verum ipsum* with the God of the church, and Kant tries to derive a lawgiver and guarantor of the co-ordination of morality and happiness from the character of the ethical command."<sup>30</sup> In the case of Anselm, Tillich did not object to the idea of God as a necessary thought, but to the transition from this thought to the existence of a being. This seems to "rehash" Aquinas's criticism of the ontological argument. It is important to notice, however, the rationale motivating his criticism. Unlike Aquinas who rejects the argument on logical grounds alone, the logical impossibility of the leap from thought to being, Tillich's rejection is based not only upon this same impossibility, but also upon incongeniality of talking about God as a being, even as the highest being, a being than which none greater can be conceived. Tillich follows Heidegger in critiquing the metaphysics of causality. The *Systematic Theology*

says, "...if we derive God from the world, he cannot be that which transcends the world infinitely. He is the 'missing link,' discovered by correct conclusions."<sup>31</sup> The concept of God as a cause transforms God into a thing, a being utilized by subjective rationality to offer systematic closure in its account of the world.

## II. The Mystical Overcoming of Theism and the Space for the Secular

Tillich concludes *The Courage to Be* with the introduction of the God beyond God, "the God who appears when God has disappeared in the anxiety of doubt."<sup>32</sup> Centuries earlier, the mystical friar Meister Eckhart, in his famous sermon on the poverty of spirit, had written: "I pray that God would rid me of God." Although he does not formally recognize the debt, the allusion is clear. The transcending of the God of theism has its roots in Eckhart's mystical affirmation; but Tillich, I want to suggest, demystifies this mystical affirmation by opening a space for the secular within religious discourse.<sup>33</sup> The word "secular" often takes the pejorative sense in religious discourse today, but I employ it according to its Latin origin and use in medieval Christendom, where it did not merely mean non-religious, but rather had a temporal signification. *In seculo* means in season, and thinking in the space of the secular means thinking in time or in the realm peculiar to finite thinking. The need for a secular space prompted Tillich to write what is sometimes called "a theology from below," one that begins with the human situation and moves toward God as an upward affirmation as against the belief that "divine revelation" falls from heaven and needs to be imposed upon the account of the human situation from the start.

Tillich's writing "from below" comes through in his emphasis on faith as the state of "ultimate concern," where doubt and questioning are not "the other" of faith but rather some of its constitutive elements, as well as the complementary need to offer an analysis of human existence. Tillich here offers a new definition of faith in terms of the interconnection of faith as ultimate concern and doubt, which breaks with what he calls the "voluntaristic distortion of faith," which "goes back to Thomas Aquinas, who emphasized the lack of evidence which faith has must be complemented by an act of the will."<sup>34</sup> For Tillich, faith is never the will to believe. He argues,

Doubt is overcome not by repression but by courage. Courage does not deny that there is doubt, but it takes the doubt into itself as an expression of its own finitude and affirms the content of an ultimate concern. Courage does not need the safety of an unquestionable conviction.<sup>35</sup>

Tillich shares Heidegger's view that the affirmation of the meaningfulness of being requires a confrontation with non-being. Tillich here resists the temptation to speak *sub specie aeternitatis* in terms of the modern *Weltanschauung*. He rather speaks *sub specie historiae*, as a historically situated and affected religious person.

For Tillich's ultimate concern, the ultimacy of faith is the ultimacy of concern rather than the ultimacy of the object of faith. Tillich's account of myth gives expression to this understanding. Tillich thinks that the Kantian project of demythologization was mistaken because symbol and myth are expressions of ultimate concern inexpressible in direct discourse, "One can replace one myth with another, but one cannot remove the myth from man's spiritual life. For the myth is the combination of symbols of our ultimate concern."<sup>36</sup> But Tillich thinks there is a third alternative to Kantian demythologization and religious objectivism, the understanding of a myth as a myth. He calls this "the breaking of the myth," which is to say, the prevention of its ultimacy. This brings us to Tillich's understanding of idolatry: "Christianity denies by its very nature any unbroken myth, because its presupposition is the first commandment: the affirmation as the ultimate as ultimate and the rejection of idolatry."<sup>37</sup> Any object of positive faith exalted as ultimate becomes an idol.

### III. Conclusion

The surest way to foreclose the experience of the holy is to exempt oneself from existence. Heidegger realized something that Tillich draws deeply from, that the possibility of a binding directedness, a centered personality, lies in the freedom of the abyss. This is the only possibility of contact with the divine that humans have, in the Pascalian affirmation that the god that is not hidden is not true. Whenever we try to grasp the "presencing" of the god as something present, the god withdraws. This is why the courage to be is grounded in the god who appears when god has disappeared in the impossibility of doubt, and, in a parallel way why mysticism, like all religious discourse, requires a space for the secular.

Regarding the theistic question, atheism is the ground of true religion.

It is finally important to ask again how things stand with the "mystical overcoming of theism." Perhaps the best thing to do is not to name Tillich a mystic, but to speak of a mystical aspect within Tillich's thought. This mystical aspect is none other than the Eckhart-inspired God above the God of theism. But Tillich resolutely denies the mystical interpretation of this encounter because it involves a flight from the world of concreteness, dissolves the person from which doubt and ultimate concern arise, and fails to maintain the requisite separation of the believer from the divine. I have, from the beginning, wanted to insist that Tillich himself is not the actor; he does achieve the overcoming of theism but allows himself to be taken up in the power of its overcoming. In Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics*, he discusses the character of human beings as the "uncanniest" of all creatures:

The un-canniest (the human being) is what it is from the ground up because it deals with and conserves the familiar only in order to break out of it and let what overwhelms it break-in. Being-itself throws humanity into the course of this tearing-away, which forces humanity beyond itself, as one who moves out to Being.<sup>38</sup>

Tillich did nothing other than stand earnestly and courageously in the draft of this overwhelming tearing-away from the history of theism. He found in the old familiarity of the crucified Christ and the New Being expressed in Paul, Augustine, Luther something decidedly new: the ultimate symbol of our existential estrangement in the wake of the flight of the gods, which, Heidegger knew, had to be experienced and endured.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Kline Taylor, *Paul Tillich: Theologian of the Boundaries* (London: Collins Publishers, 1987), esp. 12-15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (3 vols., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951-1963), I, 205.

<sup>4</sup> It is somewhat problematic to refer to Heidegger as Tillich's predecessor since, in fact, they were contemporaries. This use of this term, in this instance, means to denote only that the argument of *Being and Time* was deeply influential upon Tillich's subsequent thought.

<sup>5</sup> I borrow this pair from Richard Kearney, "The God Who May Be," in *Questioning God*, ed. by John Caputo,

Mark Dooley, and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 153-185.

<sup>6</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. by Norman Kemp Smith (Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 21.

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

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 334.

<sup>9</sup> Enthusiasm does not mean what it used to. Here Kant refers to the root meaning from *en-theos*, the belief that the god possesses and controls the subject.

<sup>10</sup> Kant, *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, trans. and ed. by Allen Wood and George di Giovanni, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 169.

<sup>11</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, I, 82.

<sup>12</sup> Kant, *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, 167.

<sup>13</sup> Kant, *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*, trans. and ed. by Lewis White Beck (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Library of Liberal Arts, 1997), 106.

<sup>14</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Aristotle's Metaphysics* ¶ 1-3: *On the Essence and Actuality of Force*, trans. and ed. by Walter Brogan and Peter Warnek (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), 38.

<sup>15</sup> This phrase, of course, is borrowed from liberation theology, but I find it an apt description of Tillich's project.

<sup>16</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. and ed. by Maudemarie Clark and Alan J. Swenson, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1998), 117.

<sup>17</sup> Solution here does not refer to the problem of suffering, as if Nietzsche merely wants to offer a counter-telos to the Christian one, but rather to the prevalence of the Christian "slave morality." With respect to suffering, Nietzsche wants to reproblematicize it.

<sup>18</sup> Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1952), 143.

<sup>19</sup> From Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. and ed. by Walter Kaufman, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, (New York: The Viking Press, 1954), 95.

<sup>20</sup> Tillich, "The Escape from God," in *The Shaking of the Foundations*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), 45.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 185.

<sup>23</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, "Loving the Torah more than God," in *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, trans. and ed. by Seán Hand, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 143.

<sup>24</sup> Levinas, "A Religion for Adults," in *Difficult Freedom*, 14.

<sup>25</sup> Tillich, "The Escape from God," in *The Shaking of the Foundations*, 47.

<sup>26</sup> Lawrence Hatab, "Apollo and Dionysus: Nietzschean Expressions of the Sacred," in *Nietzsche and the Gods*, ed. by Weaver Santaniello, (New Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 53.

<sup>27</sup> Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, trans. and ed. by J. Glenn Gray, (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 50.

<sup>28</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, trans. and ed. by Joan Stambaugh, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 1.

<sup>29</sup> Martin Gallagher, "The Question of Thomas Aquinas: Multidirectionality, Mediation, and the Hermeneutic Project," (Sr. Hon. Thesis, Baylor University, 2004), 69. If we doubt the seriousness of this neglect in our own time, we only have to recall the dismissive response to an American president's claim that an accurate description of his relationship with an intern depended on meaning of the word "is."

<sup>30</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, I, 207.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 205.

<sup>32</sup> Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 190.

<sup>33</sup> The rationale for this demystification will be clarified only by a return to the problem of enthusiasm. We have seen enthusiasm appear first in Kant's criticism of the belief that the effects are discernible and second in Levinas' rejection of possession by the sacred. The common source of these and all other uses only comes to light by considering the Greek root of the word. *En-theos* means that the god is inside the person, and in both Kant and Levinas, it identifies the belief in a loss of personhood, that one is under divine influence. Mysticism, likewise, names the experience of a self and freedom annulling union between the person and the god, and constitutes but another form of enthusiasm and its exception from space, time, and all the other conditions of existence with which Tillich thinks one needs to come to terms. His engagement with mysticism is for this reason not with mysticism's traditional form but with what we might call an aporetic mysticism, one that reproblematicizes the question of god, reopening the question in its questionability.

<sup>34</sup> Tillich, *The Dynamics of Faith*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 35.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>36</sup> *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 50.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 50-51

<sup>38</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. and ed. by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New

**PAUL TILlich AND THE NEW YORK  
PSYCHOLOGY GROUP, 1941-45**

TERRY D. COOPER

One of the most interesting and least known forums for the discussion of theology's relationship with psychology is the New York Psychology Group that met from 1941-1945. This group met once per month for nearly four years. Membership was by invitation only and the group consisted of some outstanding scholars in the New York area: Paul Tillich, Erich Fromm, Rollo May, Seward Hiltner, David Roberts, Ruth Benedict, and Carl Rogers, just to name a few. While the group was interdisciplinary in nature, the majority of members came from academic or professional positions in psychology, psychiatry, or theology. The group met a total of twenty-nine times on Friday evenings in various members' homes. These gatherings generally consisted of a presentation by a group member, which was followed by a very interesting discussion. A stenographer was present at the group meetings to insure accuracy of the records kept.

Well over a year ago when I was doing research for a book on Tillich and psychology, I knew that I needed to find out more about this group. But where should I look? Precious few references to the group existed in the writings I encountered. The most helpful resource was a chapter on the New York Psychology Group in Allison Stokes' fine book, *Ministry After Freud*.<sup>1</sup> Having read Allison's chapter, I contacted her and told her of my interests in Tillich and psychology. She informed me that Seward Hiltner, one of the co-founders of the group, had given her a copy of the group's presentations and discussions. During this conversation, Allison asked me if I would like to use all the records of these meetings for my book; I was elated and said "yes!" This consisted of nearly 200 pages of single-spaced presentations and recorded discussions. Thus, I am enormously indebted to Allison Stokes, and indirectly grateful to Seward Hiltner. I would also like to men-

Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 174.

tion that Britt-Mari Sykes was a valuable consultant in this project and that her own book on Tillich and existential psychology will be appearing with Mercer in Fall of 2006. It is on the basis of a careful study of the New York Psychology Group documents that I make my comments today.

The group focused its discussion around four central topics. The first year examined the psychology of faith; the second year focused on the psychology of love; the third year explored the psychology of conscience or ethics; and the final year probed the psychology of helping. I would like to highlight some of the key themes of these discussions and then conclude with why Tillich has been so important in the discussion between theology and psychology. These comments will obviously have to be brief given the time limitations of my overview.

### **First Year: Psychology of Faith**

The group's first year of discussions quickly revealed something that remained true throughout the entire four years: Paul Tillich and Erich Fromm were the two most central figures of an emergent division within the group. In fact, conversations between Tillich and Fromm were so interesting that at times it is difficult to not reduce the meetings to a debate between these two. As I read these discussions, I began to appreciate once again why Guy Hammond wrote his extremely helpful book on Tillich and Fromm in 1965.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the first year, Fromm did not miss one meeting and clearly provided more input to the group than anyone else. Fromm was fresh from having just published *Escape from Freedom*<sup>3</sup> and his comments often reflect the themes of that book: the hazards of authority, the dilemma of sado-masochistic religion, and the Feuerbachian belief that empowering God always means disempowering humanity. God is a symbol for the best of humanity and nothing more. Fromm became the primary representative for group members who believed that any faith that looks for God in the transcendent realm, a realm beyond human finitude, is inevitably an irrational, authoritarian religion. And for Fromm, the word "authoritarian" is perhaps the most despicable word in the vocabulary.

Tillich, on the other hand, spoke for the other side of the group. These group members recognized the need for an ultimate, unconditioned realm en-

countered in the depths of the human dimension, *but which was not identifiable with the human dimension*. This dimension is clearly beyond Fromm's "human potential." Further, contrary to Fromm, the recognition of this ultimate realm does not necessarily involve an assault on human aspirations. In fact, we "belong" to this other dimension despite the fact that we are currently estranged from it. For Fromm, we are estranged only from others and ourselves. For Tillich, however, we are estranged from our Ground and Source.

It is interesting to note that during the first year of discussions, Fromm argued that Tillich was not being honest about theological language. At times sounding almost Barthian, Fromm insisted that Tillich's use of abstract, ontological language about God as "Being-Itself" was inconsistent with what the Biblical tradition has meant by God. By refusing to describe God as a Divine Being, Tillich was not being loyal to the Judeo-Christian tradition. Fromm wanted Tillich to recognize that his "ontologizing" and "depersonalizing" of God was not consistent with the Western tradition.

Another important theme during the first year was Tillich's insistence that there is no naturalist explanation of faith. There can be no psychological reduction of faith. Given the fact that he was speaking to a room at least half-full of psychologists, this was a most interesting claim. Trying to explain faith from within human experience simply cannot be done. As Tillich put it, "It is always the answer which comes at us from some other realm."<sup>4</sup> Tillich told the group that Biblical writers and theologians had regularly asked themselves why people resist faith in God. Distortion of truth, pride, and injustice have all been suggested. However, said Tillich, "it would be an error to imagine that the analysis of the resistance of faith is able to lead us to the cause of faith itself."<sup>5</sup> For Tillich, of course, we are grasped by an ultimate concern. It is not a creation of the will. All Pelagian suggestions that faith is psychologically "willed" or created are to be rejected.

Making what seemed like a direct attack on Tillich's enthusiasm for Luther's discovery of justification by grace and its relevance for psychotherapeutic acceptance, Fromm argued that a rational faith is always based on an *active* involvement of the individual, and not something passive as in Luther's case. For Tillich, when Luther's finitude and self-contempt closed in on him, it opened him up to the experience of Divine grace. For Fromm, Luther was

simply full of self-hatred and was willing to bow down to an authoritarian tyrant in order to appease his conscience. Fromm detests the passivity of what he believes to be Luther's irrational faith. It is amazing that too brilliant men, Tillich and Fromm, could hold such radically different interpretations of Luther's experience.

### **Second Year: Psychology of Love**

While there were many concerns brought up during the second year of discussion on the psychology of love, the two most abiding issues seemed to be (a) the appropriateness of self-love and (b) the extent to which human love parallels Divine love.

As the discussions evolved, it became increasingly clear that Fromm was again the most influential member of the group. During his initial presentation, Fromm broke with Freud by emphasizing that self-love is an important precondition for loving others. He argued that much of the misunderstanding about self-love comes from confusing it with selfishness. Freud had reduced self-love to narcissism, arguing that if one loves oneself, there will be no love left over for others. For Freud, our love cannot be dually directed. Instead, it is either directed toward others or ourselves. Many of the ideas that Fromm published in his widely read book, *The Art of Loving* were presented during this year's discussion.<sup>6</sup> While a person may *appear* to be excessively self-involved, there is a deep sense of inadequacy and inferiority behind the self-absorption.

Tillich, however, had deep reservations about self-love. This uneasiness with the notion of self-love can be found throughout Tillich's writings, all the way from his early reflections until the very last public appearance he made with Carl Rogers, a dialogue in which the subject clearly came up.<sup>7</sup> Tillich argued that the term self-love, though pointing toward something valuable, is misguided. Unlike Freud, he was not so much worried that if we love ourselves we will have nothing left over for anyone else; instead, he simply did not think self-love is possible. While we can use this term metaphorically, we would actually be better off dropping it altogether and speaking of self-acceptance or self-affirmation rather than self-love. One reason for this is that love always has the character of being ecstatic or self-transcending. Self-love involves no such transcendence. Also, love assumes the separation of the loving subject from the loved object. Love always has the character of a drive toward union of

that which has been separated. Within our own consciousness, there is simply not the same kind of separation that is present between ourselves and others. Stated differently, connecting with unconscious elements within ourselves is not the same as connecting with other human beings. The word “love” is therefore not appropriate when we speak of our attitude toward ourselves. Fromm and Tillich remained in disagreement on this issue for the rest of their lives.

Another highly controversial issue discussed during the second year was the extent to which we can make parallels between divine and human love. In other words, can we describe the love of God in personal terms? To what extent is there a similarity between a love from human-to-human and a love from God-to-human? The group was divided deeply here and this division once again revolved around whether we can say anything about God in non-symbolic terms? In other words, does God *literally* love? Tillich, of course, was ever mindful that since God is not a “Being,” we can say nothing about God that is non-symbolic, other than that God is Being Itself. Perhaps the most controversial aspect of this debate can be put this way: Just as some theologians resisted an anthropomorphic God and wanted to make sure that the symbol of God is beyond all human categories, some psychologists in the group questioned the entire purpose of trying to have a “relationship” with a God who does not manifest the personal traits so deeply prized by humans. This God does not literally “accept us,” “love us,” or “forgive us.” Yet, group members wondered how the highly personal language of psychotherapy, which Tillich chose to use in describing the nature of divine acceptance, could possibly be useful if we cannot speak of God in a personal way. Put bluntly, does Tillich’s ontology sabotage his insightful use of psychotherapeutic analogies? This question seems especially relevant in the issue of love.

### **Ethics and Psychotherapy**

Because of limited time and the overlapping nature of the third and fourth years—which dealt with the psychology of conscience and the psychology of helping—I will consolidate my comments. In the beginning session of the third year, Fromm reviewed his principles of anthropocentric ethics. He clearly stated that reason, which should include the emotions, is the *only power* whereby humanity can recognize ethical standards. If unassisted human reason

cannot locate these ethical standards, it will be of no benefit to appeal to a transcendent source. Allegedly, “*trasmoral*” standards are transcendent only in the sense that they rise above the here-and-now and envision life’s possibilities. But this is a *fully human act of imagination and does not involve any sort of transcendent power*. It does not point toward some region of ultimate reality beneath or beyond the human.

David Roberts reminded group members that their “doctrine of the person” is always the determining factor in their view of what constitutes effective psychological health. Like Tillich, Roberts had a keen ability to bring the group back to the realm of implicit assumptions in psychotherapeutic practice. Roberts stated, “You may even refrain from ever exerting persuasive pressure, but surely your own world-view will operate consciously or unconsciously as a guiding criterion in estimating the extent to which the other person is facing reality or evading it.”<sup>8</sup>

Roberts understood that psychotherapists do not want metaphysical questions to invade their work so much that therapy is transformed into a philosophical debate. However, he believed that what a therapist does with a client is completely related to a larger picture of the human condition, and therefore, metaphysical questions are unavoidable.

There are times when it seems to me that therapy can preserve almost everything valuable in Christianity and help us to eradicate the rubbish. But there are other times when I feel that therapists have a lot to learn from Christianity in developing an adequate doctrine of man. In a praiseworthy effort to avoid fruitless speculation and abstract theorizing and with the praiseworthy motive of substituting openness for dogmatism, therapy has often been represented as having no presuppositions. We need to recognize the functional interrelationship between human welfare and the ultimate nature of the extra-human environment. This must not be circumvented by isolating psychological considerations from philosophical and theological ones. Moreover, I do not think that such phrases as “promoting growth,” “developing fullest potentialities,” etc., provide adequate criteria... In the end, what constitutes good growth or good potentialities cannot be seen except by placing human life against the background of its cosmic setting, physical and spiritual. There are some forces of anxiety that cannot be dealt with adequately so long as religious issues are circumvented; and there is one

kind of a sense of direction which religion alone can supply.<sup>9</sup>

The third and fourth years of discussions, then, brought up many issues about the relationship between psychotherapy and ethics, concerns that are still very much with us. The issue became whether it is actually possible to derive ethical norms from a comprehensive investigation of human nature. In other words, can the social sciences really deliver a portrait of how human beings should live their lives? Fromm said “yes.” Roberts, however, argued that Fromm’s notions of “growth” and “decay,” which Fromm believed could be historically observed by an objective eye, were already loaded with normative meanings. These understandings are *brought into* an investigation of human nature, and not *derived* from that investigation. Roberts’ approach seemed to be a philosophically hermeneutical one—our own pre-understanding has a great deal to do with what we “find.” While we may be able to distance ourselves somewhat from that pre-understanding, Fromm’s call to a neutral, objective evaluation of the human condition was philosophically naïve.

### **Conclusion: Tillich’s Ongoing Relevance for Psychology**

To conclude, I would like to briefly mention eight significant contributions, which Tillich has made to theology’s dialogue with psychology, contributions whose seeds were being sewn in the New York Group. The first contribution is Tillich’s insistence upon pushing psychotherapy to expose its hidden philosophical, and particularly, ontological assumptions. This has had an enormous impact on pastoral counseling and theology. Beneath practical aspects of counseling and pastoral care are assumptive worlds about human nature and the structure of existence itself. Tillich was a pioneer and model of pushing psychotherapy to reveal its less-than-scientific vision of the world. This emphasis encouraged “psychological scientists” to confess that they were also philosophers, and in many cases, implicit theologians. A critique of psychology’s ontological assumptions has become second nature to many pastoral counselors and theologians, and we owe this debt to Tillich.

Second, Tillich has helped us see that while many psychologists *claim* to attack religious faith on strictly empirical grounds, they actually attack it *in the name of another faith*. By pointing out the “faith

dimension” of all thought, Tillich, in many ways, anticipated the postmodern reaction against the possibility of pure science and objective reason. Regardless of how detached one’s investigation attempts to be, the investigating subject brings an existential investment in the pursuit of knowledge. Again, the traditional objective detachment of Enlightenment scientific inquiry does not match the actual work of the scientist.

Third, Tillich greatly revived the meaning and “gut reality” of Luther’s “justification by grace through faith” by relating it to psychotherapeutic acceptance. Countless articles, sermons, and books have emphasized this “theology of acceptance.” Tillich’s brilliant exploration of Luther revealed not just an existential theologian but also a depth psychologist. Tillich was the first in a long line of people who argued that all effective psychotherapy *assumes* an ontological acceptance based on far more than psychology can uncover. This ontological acceptance is ultimately grounded not in the counselor or the society, but in God. The therapist or minister may reflect this reality but cannot create it.

Fourth, this acceptance is especially powerful because Tillich refused to reduce the reality of guilt to mere “guilt feelings.” Our brokenness, our separation, our guilt is quite real. They cannot be psychologically reduced and therefore clinically removed. Tillich reminds us that a transformative experience of grace presupposes an acknowledgment of our guilt.

Fifth, Tillich also modeled a balance between the concern for individuals and the concern for the social network that affects the individual. While he is immediately associated with existentialism and an interest in the private world of psychotherapy, Tillich also carried with him an interest in the social context out of which individuals operate. His early association with the Frankfurt School, in my mind, was never completely lost. Further, Tillich became the first chairperson of the “Self-Help for Emigrants from Central Europe,” a group devoted to helping emigrants find housing, employment, and other resources. As the Chair of the Self-Help group for fifteen years, Tillich offered consolation, referrals, and job connections for many persons.

Sixth, Tillich has provided an ongoing contribution to an understanding of anxiety, and particularly, the difference between existential and neurotic anxiety. Tillich, more clearly than anyone else, pointed toward a type of anxiety that simply cannot be

“therapized” away. A perpetual theme in Tillich’s thought is that all attempts to flee from this *ontological* anxiety result in *neurotic* anxiety. This ontological anxiety is not based on a faulty interpretation of life or an over-reaction to stress. Instead, it is part of the human condition. We may attempt to transfer this ontological anxiety into a fear we can conquer, but this cannot be done.

Seventh, while Tillich is widely known for showing the ontological roots of anxiety, he matches this philosophical analysis with a very keen clinical understanding. For instance, his discussion of how anxiety pushes us toward a limited self-affirmation offers a vivid portrait of the person who runs away from his or her own depths. Tillich’s insights here are very instructive for psychotherapists working with anxiety-ridden patients who can only affirm part of their being.

And finally, Tillich offers an ongoing resource against the battle with psychological Pelagianism. We cannot accept ourselves, forgive ourselves, cognitively heal ourselves, or provide any method of self-salvation. The finite cannot resolve infinite questions. As conditioned human beings, we cannot provide ourselves with “unconditioned” solutions. Will power, human reason, and moral intension will not deliver us from our ontological plight. Our estrangement from our Ground and Source cannot be remedied by our own efforts.

**IS BAD PHILOSOPHY GOOD THEOLOGY:  
REVISITING PAUL TILlich’S PROBLEM OF  
THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY**

CHRISTOPHER DEMUTH RODKEY<sup>1</sup>

“The theologian,” Tillich wrote in his last volume of the *Systematic Theology*, “must take seriously the meaning of the terms he uses.”<sup>2</sup> Following this quotation as a guide, in examining Tillich’s understanding of philosophy and theology within the context of his theology of culture, I will define the terms “philosophy” and “theology” as clearly as possible within the Tillich’s system of thought. Then, I will suggest several problems with his definitions of philosophy and theology. Finally, I will attempt to rationalize Tillich’s program in defining

These contributions, in my mind, make Tillich the most significant theological conversationalist with psychology in the twentieth century. And as we move into the twenty-first century, this contribution is far from over.

<sup>1</sup> Allison Stokes, *Ministry After Freud* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1985).

<sup>2</sup> Guy Hammond, *Man in Estrangement: A Comparison of the Thought of Paul Tillich and Erich Fromm* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1965).

<sup>3</sup> Erich Fromm, *Escape From Freedom* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1941).

<sup>4</sup> The New York Psychology Group of the National Council in Higher Education, 1941-45, 34. I wish to thank Alison Stokes of Ithaca College, New York, for providing me with materials on this group.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>6</sup> Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956).

<sup>7</sup> Paul Tillich, “Paul Tillich and Carl Rogers: A Dialogue,” in Howard Kirshenbaum and Valarie Land Henderson, ed., *Carl Rogers: Dialogues* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989).

<sup>8</sup> The New York Psychology Group materials, 177.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 178-179.

these two terms the way that he does, within his larger system and comment on the validity of Tillich’s system despite the ambiguities and problems with his definitions.

### Defining Philosophy and Theology

The difficulty of defining philosophy, Tillich writes, is that “there is no generally accepted definition of philosophy.” To this end, every philosopher “proposes a definition which agrees with the interest, purpose and method of the philosopher.”<sup>3</sup> Tillich proposes several definitions of philosophy throughout his body of work, though generally the task of philosophy is to describe the structure of reality. To generalize, I believe that “philosophy” to Tillich means a cognitive, *however uncertain*, method by which one observes reality and asks the “question of being” or the nature of observed reality itself.

Tillich posits philosophy as the discipline that asks questions that it cannot answer. He writes, “Philosophy asks the ultimate question that can be asked, namely, the question as to what being, simply

being, means,” and Tillich qualifies that “this implies that philosophy does not ask about the special character of the beings, the things and events, the ideas and values, the souls and bodies which share being.”<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Tillich writes: “Philosophy asks the question of reality as a whole; it asks the question of the structure of being. And philosophy answers in terms of categories, structural laws, and universal concepts.”<sup>5</sup> In other words, philosophy asks *the* ontological questions, and can only answer in structural terms of the forms of reality. The *content* or *value* of reality is a subject that is off-limits for the discipline of philosophy and is a privilege reserved only for theology. To be sure, the motivations behind limiting philosophy to the interrogative task of the ontological question are to keep philosophy from being autonomous, which would be to do that which it is not equipped to do; however the *temptation* of philosophy answering the ontological question is a real threat that may contribute to a heteronomous situation as such, Tillich’s definitions of philosophy and theology fit well within the context of Tillich’s larger system.

Second, if philosophy may only *raise* the ontological question—that is, to assess the structure of reality—then theology’s task, according to Tillich, is to answer the philosophical/ontological question; in other words, theology may assign value and meaning to the structure of reality. Like philosophy, theology, as well as its *task*, is defined numerous times throughout Tillich’s body of work; however, it is most consistent in his *Systematic Theology*, where theology is the discipline that *answers* the ontological (that is to say, *philosophical*) questions, and Christian theology specifically allows for a Christian bias on the theologian’s submission of her answers. Theology, as the “*logos* of *theos*,” within Tillich’s Christian context, according to critic Kenneth Hamilton, harks back to the Augustinian tradition of “faith seeking understanding.”<sup>6</sup> Theology is the discipline that answers the ontological question(s) posed by the discipline of philosophy, and within a Christian context, theology seeks to reconcile or *mediate* reason with the divine, or a faith seeking understanding.

### Problems with Tillich’s Definitions

In criticizing Tillich’s understanding of these two disciplines, I will focus on three primary issues. First, in Tillich’s system, the task of philosophy is

defined in terms of what tasks the philosopher cannot perform in regards to the theologian. Second, Tillich’s definition of philosophy asks the philosopher to perform an epistemologically impossible task. Third, Tillich’s defined relationship between philosophy and theology leads to a problem for the philosopher within the so-called school of existential philosophy; that is to say, the existential philosopher—as a philosopher pursuing meaning in the structure of reality—is overstepping his or her *proper autonomy* as a philosopher.

First, Tillich suggests a disciplinary bias in favor of theology, as “philosophy is the *handmaiden* of theology” in his system. The theologian’s task, in the end, *employs* philosophy as a tool whereas the philosopher must perform her task by ignoring *both* her own theological disposition *and* any knowledge of theology (or even, how the theologian might use her philosophical conclusions) in the interest of maintaining the proper autonomy of her philosophy. Tillich writes that “a theological element, an ultimate concern, gives the impulse to philosophy,” meaning that the philosopher’s ultimate end is to aid the theologian in her task. Similarly, Tillich writes that “a philosophical element is implied in theology,” while philosophy must remain abstinent from indulging in a theological *vice*.

If Tillich is very serious about maintaining that theology and philosophy can *not only* co-exist as separate and autonomous disciplines *but also* that such a co-existence leads to a theonomous state between the two, it seems to me that theology should not be positioned as the crown jewel of philosophical yearnings. To be sure, though, Tillich realizes, “there is hardly a historically significant philosopher who does not show [the] marks of a theologian.”<sup>8</sup>

Second, the task of objectivity that Tillich suggests for the philosopher, as I mentioned before, is epistemologically *impossible*. Just as Tillich’s bias against philosophy asks the philosopher to perform an impossible (“super-scientist”) task, Tillich’s charge to the philosopher is humanly impossible and leaves the philosopher a highly improbable likelihood of success at her task. Tillich writes in his *Systematic Theology* that “although driven by the philosophical *eros*, the philosopher tries to maintain a detached objectivity toward being and its structures,” meaning that she or “he tries to exclude the personal, social, and historical conditions which might distort an objective vision of reality.” While the philosopher must remain objective, “the theo-

gian,” Tillich says, “quite differently, is not detached from his object but is involved with it,” that she “looks at his object (which transcends the character of being an object) with passion, fear, and love.”<sup>9</sup> Given Tillich’s bias against philosophy, I now ask, “given such an impossible task, *is philosophy possible?*”

A philosopher, by virtue of the fact that we are speaking of a *human* philosopher, simply cannot escape her own conditioning of the world, and it seems to me that a philosopher directs her philosophy based upon her own social conditions toward some ideal or ultimate concern. The fact that a philosopher cannot escape her own context with any sense of objectivity leaves a criticism of Tillich that all philosophers are really theologians, whether they realize it or not.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, is it ethical as a Christian theologian (*especially* an ordained theologian, such as Tillich, as a pastoral concern) to ask of the philosopher to dismiss his or her religious convictions for disciplinary philosophical ends? Beyond this, by ridding philosophy of its “existential impulse” or even the suggestion of any ultimate concern, is philosophy a task worth pursuing outside of its employment as a tool to the natural sciences and theology?<sup>11</sup>

Kenneth Hamilton has argued, I believe, well, that Tillich’s definitions of philosophy and theology do not really create a major difference between philosophy and theology; rather, for Tillich philosophy and theology are really the same reality, that given the task of theology, philosophy is a *redundant* task. Hamilton suggests that a philosopher has a burden placed upon him or herself to reject her “hidden theologian,” since Tillich’s understanding of the philosophical enterprise is in fact a *theological project with a theological agenda*.<sup>12</sup> “The distinction” between philosophy and theology, Hamilton says, “really breaks down, because as Tillich himself admits, in the last resort the system must hold that the two are the same,” dealing with *the* whole of the ontological task.<sup>13</sup> He continues: “Every theologian worth his salt, Tillich insists, must be a philosopher as well,” and “the philosophers who turn out to be theologians in disguise, he says, are the creative ones.”<sup>14</sup> Hamilton concludes that Philosophy, as Tillich describes it, is a literally *meaningless* venture, since the theologian and philosopher’s main differences surround the authenticity of their works’ claims to objectivity or subjectivity. Hamilton’s claim that Tillich’s definitions of theology and phi-

losophy are really the same will become important to this discussion later.

Third, I believe that Tillich’s definitions of philosophy and theology leave many questions regarding any understanding of existential philosophy. In other words, in existential philosophy (where philosophers explicitly interpret the meaning or value of being), there is an ambiguity that cannot be discerned, given Tillich’s definitions, whether existential philosophy is really theology, or bad philosophy, or if it is *theonomous* philosophy. In this sense, “existential philosophy” (as contrary as this label may be) is an established category of philosophical discourse that seems to go beyond the rules provided by Tillich’s system.<sup>15</sup> In fact, I believe that existential philosophy for Tillich would not only be considered *bad* philosophy, but not really philosophy at all, because existential, or “creative philosophy” oversteps its proper boundaries as a philosophy.

Tillich’s definitions lead to the impossibility or redundancy of philosophy.<sup>16</sup> Philosophy, to Tillich, must maintain its theological (that is to say, *existential*) impulse yet it must remain devoid of making claims that place meaning or value upon the reality that it observes. Philosophy is only able to relate to its object, namely *reality*, while the discipline may only relate to its object existentially; and when philosophy does such, according to Tillich, philosophy becomes overly autonomous and is overstepping its proper boundaries.<sup>17</sup>

### Alternatives and Conclusions

Within the context of Tillich’s seemingly “megalithic” theological system, most of Tillich’s commentators agree that his tasks set for philosophy and theology inherently have many problems, and that Tillich’s definitions work in the specific sense that he wishes them to, but not necessarily for a wider audience dealing with other areas of philosophy or theology.<sup>18</sup> Though criticizing a theologian’s system is not necessarily a difficult task (especially on problems that arise with definitions around such ambiguous and controversial areas like philosophy and theology), suggesting alternatives or modifications to Tillich’s definitions are much more challenging. Keeping in mind two other critics’ suggestions (with which I am sure many of my readers are familiar)—Robert Scharlemann’s suggestion of adding a third category, *theontology*, and Kenneth Hamilton’s interpretation of Tillich as an apologist (albeit a *bad* apologist)—I suggest two new directions in

which to think about Tillich in terms of the problem of theology and philosophy.<sup>19</sup>

First, while I hope that placing this problem within Tillich's context of his theology of culture has been helpful in pinpointing what Tillich's understanding of philosophy is, I cannot help but be led to a discussion of the Indian mystic Sri Aurobindo Ghose. Aurobindo's project was both theological and philosophical, but he rejected these categories outrightly, as his writing was *self-subverting* to these categories.<sup>20</sup> I similarly believe that Tillich's writing is self-subverting of these categories; and, as a Western thinker, unlike Aurobindo, Tillich's confrontation of the problem of theology and philosophy is demanded by his Western, particularly U.S., academic culture.

Tillich, like Aurobindo, was searching for a *non-tribal* way of thinking about the traditional questions of human experience. This non-tribal search could not have simply been theological or philosophical, but had to provide a way of thinking about theology and religion as contextualized within philosophical trajectories of thought, but outside of our constructed and traditional twentieth-century philosophical and onto-theological methods.<sup>21</sup> Tillich's definitions of philosophy and theology fail (for the same reason as Aurobindo's) because they are self-subverting and do not really work outside of Tillich's system, as we can perceive it. At the same time, Tillich's definitions *do* work because they encourage a self-subversive means to deconstruct constructed or already-deconstructed pretensions regarding philosophy and theology, and point to "tribalistic" problems regarding the two disciplines, which ultimately hinders philosophy and theology from being practical or relevant to individuals wishing to bridge the abyss between the two disciplines, between religions, or between political world-views.

To my question, *Is bad philosophy good theology?*, for Tillich, this, in an ultimate sense, has no answer, because for both philosophy and theology to operate relevantly they must transcend themselves, each other, and their content must self-subversively fragment their own forms into a new, non-tribal *thinking*.

Second, an analysis of language will be helpful. Thirty-five years ago, at the October 1969 AAR meetings in Boston, Paul van Buren presented a paper titled, "Theology and the Philosophy of Religion From the Perspective of Religious Thought," which was later published in *Union Seminary Quarterly*

*Review*.<sup>22</sup> In his essay, van Buren said that theology and philosophy often talk about the same thing, but what makes one method "theology" and the other "philosophy" is largely dependent upon the overall agenda by which the author writes, and less to do with one's biases. In other words, for example, if one's ultimate goal in analyzing Anselm's *Proslogium* is to, in the end, contribute to a larger apology for the Catholic faith, then clearly one is a theologian. If one makes the same analysis of the *Proslogium* but the career goal of the thinker is to examine the use of language to make conclusions about the human condition without any churchly concern, clearly one is a philosopher.<sup>23</sup> The problem remains, though, how this can be discerned and whether one is honest with her audience or not.<sup>24</sup>

Following van Buren's analysis of language, I wish to suggest that philosophy and theology, when authentic, talk at the edge of language, as opposed to talking in the safety of the center.<sup>25</sup> It is clear that philosophy and theology often converge around the same areas of thought, especially when a discipline attempts to speak about ontology. Language about ontology, when genuine, points to the edges of language to the limit where categories, words, and the form of language itself break down, rupture, and stretch the perceived boundary of human language. When genuine, this language—whether from a philosophical, theological, or other perspective—is theonomous: it leaves the reaches of the heteronomy, at the center of language, behind.

It is at the *dynamic* edge of language where the most authentic language about the ground of being may be expressed. Think, for example, of the self-subverting nature of language in the writings of early Gnostic texts (such as *Thunder: Perfect Mind*), the *Mystical Theology* of Pseudo-Dionysius, the sermons of Meister Eckhart, the broken use of the word "conceive" in the *Proslogium*, or more recently, the difficult language of Luce Irigaray's *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche* or Thomas Altizer's *Godhead and the Nothing*.<sup>26</sup> It is in these writings where perhaps the only thing that is consistently clear may be the incoherence of language. As such, the categories of *philosophy* and *theology*, when speaking away from their "safety zones" at the center of language, disassemble themselves at the edge of language.<sup>27</sup>

Philosophy and theology, then, when speaking of the limit of language, or "that of which nothing greater can be conceived," or the nature or meaning of being-itself, are really one and the same, as their

disciplinary categories no longer apply. As a kind of *radical theonomy* (which I propose is *different* from the theonomy of history, but is a truly radical theonomy that is absolutely self-subverting and ultimately points to the Nietzsche's eternal return of the same),<sup>28</sup> the difficulty with Tillich's definitions lie in the fact that Tillich is here speaking on the *edge* of language, and no definitions, no matter how well they might "fit" in his system, will ever be adequate because of the self-subverting nature of this kind of language. While Tillich does affirm that "anyone standing on the boundary between theology and philosophy," as he believes that he does, "must develop a clear conception of the logical relation between them," I believe that even if Tillich really believed that he discovered the "logical relation" between philosophy and theology, the problems with his definitions point toward the *inadequacy* of the language and categories which he defends.<sup>29</sup>

In this sense, while Tillich's conception of philosophy and theology seems to me to be one of the most deeply unsatisfying areas of Tillich's thought, given all of the ambiguities and problems here, I now see that Tillich had the courage to speak at the edges of language, and risked incoherence in his thought precisely because it is here where he is speaking about concepts that ultimately must transgress against themselves, as the words approach the limits and break the form of language.

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Robert S. Corrington of Drew University for his assistance in the revising of this essay.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 21. In my exploration of Tillich's understandings of philosophy and theology, I am intentionally avoiding the idea present throughout Tillich's earlier thought on this subject, namely "theonomous metaphysics," which I believe he later recants in a larger dismissal of the "traditionally-understood" Kantian category of metaphysics, I will discuss this later. "Theonomous Metaphysics" is most relevantly explained by Tillich in *The Interpretation of History* (London: Char-

les Scribner's Sons, 1936), especially in the essay "Kairos and Logos," trans. Elisa Talmey, 123-175. This avoidance is specifically of the so-called "German Tillich."

<sup>3</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1:18.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, abridged ed., trans. James Luther Adams (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 85.

<sup>5</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1:20.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Kenneth Hamilton, *The System and the Gospel: A Critique of Paul Tillich* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1963), 61, 71.

<sup>7</sup> Tillich, *Protestant Era*, 88. Tillich does claim that "there is no conflict between theology and philosophy, and there is no synthesis either—for exactly the same reason which insures that there will be no conflict;" it is the participation in this ambiguity that I here call "a theological vice" (*Systematic Theology* 1:27).

<sup>8</sup> *Systematic Theology* 1:25.

<sup>9</sup> *Systematic Theology* 1:22.

<sup>10</sup> John Randall, "The Ontology of Paul Tillich," *The Theology of Paul Tillich* (Richmond, VA: Knox, 1965) 139.

<sup>11</sup> George Thomas, "The Method and Structure of Tillich's Theology," in *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, ed. Charles Kegley and Robert Bretall (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 102.

<sup>12</sup> Hamilton 60.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 64; David Roberts, "Tillich's Doctrine of Man," *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, ed. Charles Kegley and Robert Bretall (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 113. Hamilton here is referring to Tillich, *Protestant Era* 101ff.

<sup>14</sup> Hamilton 64.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Roberts 114.

<sup>16</sup> Roberts 113.

<sup>17</sup> J. Thomas, "The Correlation of Philosophy and Theology in Tillich's System," *London Quarterly and Holborn Review* 184 (Jan. 1959) 52. G. Thomas comments that "only the 'theonomous,' the 'saved' reason, according to his own view, can be expected to see the truth of the situation clearly and profoundly. Only such a reason can properly formulate the 'questions' to which the Christian message gives the 'answers'." (G. Thomas 103). Further: "It is like saying that a dog is an animal with four legs, a furry coat and a tail and that insofar as a cat has those characteristics it is a dog!" (J. Thomas 53).

<sup>18</sup> Although Tillich himself acknowledges this characteristic of his definitions in *The Protestant Era*, it seems that the definitions of these disciplines—or, perhaps his method of establishing definitions (for example, care,

technology, Protestantism)—are subservient to his larger systematic task. Tillich writes: "Philosophy and theology are divergent as well as convergent. They are convergent as far as both are existential and theoretical at the same time. They are divergent as far as philosophy is basically theoretical and theology is basically existential." (*Protestant Era*, 88).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Hamilton; Robert Scharlemann, "Tillich's Method of Correlation: Two Proposed Revisions," *The Journal of Religion* 46, 1, ii (Jan. 1966): 92-103.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Sri Aurobindo Ghose, "The Renaissance in India," online (org. pub. 1920) '4. Robert McDermott, "Sri Aurobindo: An Integrated Theory of Individual and Historical Transformation," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 12 (1972), 120 (cited from R. R. Diwakar, *Mahayogi Sri Aurobindo* [Bombay: Bharatiya Vbidya Bhavan, 1967] 174).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Vichwanath Varma, *The Political Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. (Delhi: Motil Banarsidass, 1976) 58-60; Paul Colaço, "Sri Aurobindo—A Philosopher," *The Modern Schoolman* 38, 4 (1951): 291-300.

<sup>22</sup> Paul van Buren, "Theology and the Philosophy of Religion From the Perspective of Religious Thought," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 15, 4 (Summer 1969) 467-476.

<sup>23</sup> Paul van Buren, "Anselm's Formula and the Logic of God," *Religious Studies* 9 (1973) esp. 279-282.

<sup>24</sup> Van Buren (1969) 475-476.

<sup>25</sup> Paul van Buren, *The Edges of Language* (London: SCM, 172).

<sup>26</sup> Of the lesser known of these, see: Luce Irigaray, *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. Gillian Gill (New York: Columbia UP, 1991); Thomas Altizer, *Godhead and the Nothing* (Albany, NY: SUNY UP, 2003).

<sup>27</sup> Van Buren (1969) 282.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Maurice Blanchot, "The Exigency of Return (1969)," "The Exigency of Return (1970)," "Thanks (Be Given) to Jacques Derrida," *The Blanchot Reader*, ed. Michael Holland (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995) 279-289, 290-297, 317-323.

<sup>29</sup> Paul Tillich, *On the Boundary* (New York: Scribner's) 55.

**TILlich's "THE SELF-INTERPRETATION OF  
MAN IN WESTERN THOUGHT"**

DUANE OLSON

**I. Explaining "The Self-Interpretation of Man"**

In his final four semesters of teaching at Harvard University, from the Fall of 1960 to the Spring of 1962, Paul Tillich delivered a series of lectures he titled "The Self-Interpretation of Man [sic] in Western Thought." Each semester was devoted to a special period of Western history. The first semester covered "Ancient Greek Culture," the second "Late Ancient Culture," the third "Renaissance Culture," and the final "Modern Culture." Since Tillich gave two lectures per week for four semesters, this was an ambitious undertaking comprising approximately 120 lectures. I include an addendum at the end of the paper listing Tillich's original outline for the courses.

By "the self-interpretation of man," Tillich meant to disclose "the way in which [man] finds himself dwelling in the midst of [the] triangle of himself, his world, and that which transcends himself and his world, that which underlies both of them and is their unity and their creative source" (from Peter John's transcription of 2<sup>nd</sup> lecture, tape not available). Tillich explains that the primary way to access the self-interpretation of any period is through philosophy, because it is "the place of radical questioning and all-embracing answering (1<sup>st</sup> lecture)." Philosophy takes up the fragmentary self-interpretation of other cultural realms and gives a totalizing self-interpretation, asking about "the nature of being and its structures" (2<sup>nd</sup> lecture). Thus, the history of philosophy in the four periods listed is the primary object of these lectures.

Other cultural realms have an important place in the lectures, however. Tillich explains in the second lecture that philosophy is always done in a context. He identifies three special elements of that context as (1) religion, which he calls the "birthplace" of philosophy; (2) science, which he labels the "consequence" of philosophy "applied to empirical reality;" and (3) "the arts," which he labels the "most revealing expression of man's self-interpretation." Beneath these elements, he says, is "the sociological situation," which includes economics, politics, and all other forms of social relations. These "determine the possibilities" of the self-interpretation in any period

without being "deterministic." The self-interpretation of every situation is both limited by the sociological conditions out of which it occurs and transcends those conditions, expressing something creative and new.

To summarize, the lectures consist primarily of a focus on the philosophy of four major periods of Western history. Along with this is a selective look at religion, science, and the arts in each period, with frequent references to the social situation as a contextually determining factor of the above elements. What could be better? Or better still, what could be more important? For most of the remainder of this essay, I focus on three specific reasons why I think these lectures are important. The first and most obvious reason is that in these lectures we have the mature Tillich giving his most comprehensive philosophical/cultural analysis of Western history.

This analysis is unique in the Tillichian corpus. Even casual readers of Tillich are familiar with the fact that he constantly engaged in historical analysis in arguing for his positions. That analysis, however, was almost always limited and framed by his constructive purposes. Tillich acknowledged the importance of historical analysis for constructive thinking as early as the 1920's in developing what he called the "metallurgical" method for the human sciences. As he articulated it, the metalogical method had three parts. In the first part, philosophy abstracts the elements of being and their tension, a move Tillich identified as the "Doctrine of the Principles of Meaning" (*System of the Sciences according to Objects and Methods (henceforth, SS)*, 159). Once the elements are abstracted, they are shown to be concretely embodied in the history of culture, though in a one-sided way, a procedure Tillich labeled the "Doctrine of the Material of Meaning" (*SS*, 167). Finally, from this analysis, a normative argument arises that shows the way in which the tension between the elements is resolved constructively, with each element being brought to full expression in a present cultural form. Tillich called the constructive argument the "Doctrine of the Norm of Meaning" (*SS*, 170). The use of history exemplified in this method in the Doctrine of the Material of Meaning is typological. History is analyzed to yield types that emphasize one side of the elements of being. I would argue that for the remainder of his life in his constructive work Tillich continued to use this predominantly typological approach to history.

In contrast to the typological use of history in his constructive work, Tillich's analysis in *The Self-Interpretation of Man* is what he identifies in the *System of the Sciences* as part of the "Sciences of Being." Its focus is what he called there the "history of culture," which is concerned not with individuals as such, but "spiritual contexts" (SS, 130). The extensive analysis of the history of Western philosophy and culture in these lectures complements and even completes his analysis in the lectures that comprise the published volume called *History of Christian Thought*. If *History of Christian Thought* analyzes religion as the substance of culture, *The Self-Interpretation of Man* completes the polarity by analyzing culture as the form of religion.

A second reason the lectures are significant is because of what they tell us about Tillich's thought. Throughout his life, as far back as the *System of the Sciences*, Tillich claimed that the empirical analysis of history is always determined in some way by one's own normative position. In the *System of the Sciences*, he rejects equally a strict ideological reading of history, and the notion that history is open for purely objective analysis by historians who approach their material with a blank slate (SS 118-119,124). By Tillich's own principles, then, there is much to be learned in these lectures about his thought by asking why he chooses to look at the periods and thinkers he examines, and how he examines the material. In fact, I think analyzing the interaction between the content Tillich examines and his constructive ideas expressed elsewhere is the most important and rewarding part of the lectures, at least for Tillich scholars.

Let me give a couple of examples that display this interaction from the lectures. These examples are meant to serve only as suggestive possibilities of the kind of reflection on history and on Tillich's thought that the lectures can provide. When presenting the Sophists in the series of lectures on ancient Greek culture, Tillich makes a number of comments on their critique of a literal belief in the Greek gods (tape 12). He then moves from explaining their specific critique to a principle of the relationship between the criticism of religion and philosophy of religion. This is a common move in the lectures, whereby Tillich looks at something concrete and abstracts from it a principle for general historical analysis (reversing the order of elements of the metalogical method, if you will). He says in a bold statement, "the criticism of religion is the sound ba-

sis of every philosophy of religion." He continues, "someone who has never taken seriously a critique of religion like that in the early Greek philosophers and the sophists cannot produce a useful philosophy of religion" (tape 12). This abstraction not only tells us about the history Tillich analyzes, or why he focuses upon and even valorizes the Sophistic critique; it also tells us about Tillich's own frame of reference for his philosophy of religion, emerging as it does from the critique of a literal or supra-natural understanding of God.

I give another example from the ancient Greek culture tapes in Tillich's discussion of Socrates. This discussion is one of the highlights of the extant tapes. Here, Tillich says things about Socrates that at least I have never heard him say before. I quote him at length.

In both Socrates and Jesus, the being of the person is more important than what they said and the result of their sayings. Socrates is philosophy in his whole being, not in his results. Philosophy is, so to speak, incarnated in his personal existence. The essence of philosophy is the essence of his spiritual personality. That is his greatness. It would be absolutely wrong to consider him as someone who also said something after the others said what they said. This textbook interpretation is always wrong, but here it is even more wrong. Philosophy appears in him as a person of immense negation, determining the whole period of the Western world, as the subjection to the demands of objective reason (tape 12).

Tillich continues by claiming that what Socrates incarnates is a "philosophical attitude." He says, "Socrates has no fixed dogma, no school traditions. He didn't deliver knowledge but he formed the consciousness toward asking questions and toward accepting the norms of truth as they are given in the structure of mind and reality."

There are numerous similarities and differences that can be developed at this point about the relation between Tillich's analysis of Socrates and that of Jesus in his Christology. With Socrates, as with Jesus, Tillich expresses his appreciation for the irreducible individual in history, a unique historical manifestation that is irreplaceable. But the uniqueness of both is not in their individuality as such, but in the fact that as individuals they incarnate a principle, the New Being or Philosophy itself. Moreover, they incarnate this reality not only by who they are,

or because of their being as positively expressed, but by the negation of their individuality.

A final reason the lectures are significant is because of the many side comments Tillich makes in them. Such comments appear in his extemporaneous answering of student questions that were placed on his desk before each class, a procedure he followed throughout the lectures, but also at those times during the lectures where he strays from a strict examination of the material.

His side comments include interesting personal anecdotes and reflections on his life experiences. He mentions, for example, things as diverse as what he wrote in his journal when he was a boy, and what he discovered in his dialogues with Hoseki Hisamatsu. Beyond this, however, he makes numerous side comments on theoretical issues that have serious merit.

I want to give an example of a valuable side comment that comes from the lectures on ancient Greek culture, tape five. The lecture itself is on the fragments of Heraclitus. After commenting on the importance of the fragments, Tillich moves into a discussion about how to interpret them, given the fact that they are fragments. This discussion in turn takes him into a wider discussion of hermeneutics as a whole. Again, I quote Tillich at length.

No philology ever can reach the meaning of a passage as it was in the mind of the man who wrote it in the moment he wrote it. Out of my own personal experience I would say this is also true of the author himself when he later tries to interpret what he has written earlier. He is in the same boat with all of his serious interpreters. He doesn't know much more about it than they. I have learned, from many theses and other works done about my own works, a lot about what I said that I never would have learned if I had re-read my own writings. This is methodologically very interesting, because it shows that a text, if it is meaningful at all, is not defined by the subjective intention of the author in the moment in which he writes it. After it has been written it has a life of itself. This makes it possible that all the great things in history have found interpretations throughout history, and these interpretations in their diversity have influenced history in different ways again and again. In this sense, a creative work, which is re-creation, has some inexhaustibility, and since inexhaustibility is a character of the ultimate, creation participates in

a finite way in the inexhaustibility of the creative ground itself.

This is a particularly telling comment about Tillich's understanding of his own creative work and creativity in general. The hermeneutical position he develops on the autonomy of the text is Ricoeur before Ricoeur, and is here given with an explicit theological twist about the nature of creativity participating in the creative ground.

## II. Unearthing "The Self-Interpretation of Man"

If I have sufficiently whetted your appetite regarding the value of these lectures, let me then disappoint by explaining briefly why it appears that they will remain unpublished. The main reason for this is because they are fragmentary: virtually two semesters are missing. Without explaining all the details, let me briefly trace my experience of trying to get the complete set of lectures.

I am told that when the lectures were given, all four semesters were recorded on nine-inch reel-to-reel tapes. Paul Lee was Tillich's teaching assistant for the class, and for some reason (that remains unclear to me), he was given possession of the tapes. Around 1970, Paul Lee had copies of at least some of the tapes dubbed onto other nine-inch reel to reel tapes, and also had copies, again, of at least some of the tapes, made into cassettes. These dubbed tapes and cassettes were apparently given to the McHenry Library at the University of California, Santa Cruz. I say apparently, because I have been in touch with the special collections librarian at the McHenry library who tells me there is no record of the tapes ever having been a part of the collection, but a number of the reel to reel and cassettes tapes I have say they are property of that library.

Sometime between 1970 and 1976, Paul Lee sent the tapes to Peter John. Peter intended to transcribe them for publication, but did not begin the task at this time. In 1976, Renate Albrecht came to Peter's residence and copied the available tapes onto cassettes, but what she copied was barely more than two semesters of lectures. She gave a copy of her cassettes to the University of Marburg. Jean Richard also received a copy.

After 1976, apparently the original tapes were given back to Paul and then back to Peter. In 2001, Peter began the process of transcribing the tapes from the nine-inch reel-to-reel originals. Peter transcribed the first six lectures and sent the transcriptions to Harvard University Press to be considered

for publication. They wanted more information before making a decision about publication, but Peter made no more transcriptions.

Peter John sent the tapes to me, because the series of lectures was being considered as part of the Tillich Collected Works Project, and I was directed to explore their availability and viability. Jean Richard also sent me a copy of his cassettes. There are more cassettes than nine-inch reel to reels, but even the cassettes are missing roughly two semesters of lectures. The entire semester of lectures on the late ancient period is missing, and most of the lectures on the modern period. The Santa Cruz Library knows nothing about the tapes. The Library at Marburg only has copies of the cassettes I have. Neither Peter John nor Paul Lee knows the whereabouts of any other tapes. The notes on the lectures in the archives, of which I have a copy, are fragmentary at best. In the notes, Tillich writes out in considerable detail a number of his introductory lectures, but the vast majority of the content of the lectures in which he analyzes individual thinkers and movements is simply not there.

One mystery in this is that in 2001 Peter transcribed the first six lectures of the series. Five of those lectures are not on the tapes I have. In other words, the tapes I have begin with lecture number six of Peter's transcriptions. In 2001 Peter had access to tapes I do not currently have. He doesn't know where they are, since he says he gave all the tapes he had to me.

Personally, I would like to see the Tillich Collected Works Project add to Tillich's published corpus, and I believe "The Self-Interpretation of Man" would be a valuable addition. Unfortunately, however, without a complete set of tapes, this does not appear viable.

#### Works Cited

- Tillich, Paul, *The System of the Sciences According to Objects and Methods*, translated by Paul Wiebe, London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1981.
- Tillich, Paul, "The Self-Interpretation of Man," unpublished lectures on tape and unpublished transcriptions by Peter John, 1960-1962.

#### Addendum

Humanities 141: "The Self-Interpretation of Man in Western Thought"

Tillich's Original Conception for the Course – From Harvard Archives (412:001)

Fall 1960: Early Greek Culture

Self-interpretation and world explanation

Philosophical principles and artistic styles

The archaic character of early thought

Separation of the mind

Cultural criticism and the turn to the self

The position of Socrates in the history of man's self-interpretation

Plato's image of man: man between the eternal essences and temporal existence

The classic and the tragic in sculpture and drama

Psychological problems and ethical ideals in Aristotle

Man and polis in classical Greece

Spring 1961: Late Ancient Culture

Critical naturalism in art and philosophy

Skeptics and hermits

The liberation from fear and the gardens of Epicurus

Stoic self-interpretation of man and its lasting significance for Western culture

Stoicism and Roman law

Expulsion and return of religion

Archaistic revival in the arts

Neoplatonic and Christian understanding of man

Byzantine mosaics

Fall 1961: Renaissance Culture

The religious interpretation of the Italian Renaissance

The renewal and transformation of the ancient traditions in the arts and philosophy

The victory of the scientific over the magic relation of man to nature

The significance of Nicolaus Cusanus for the modern self-interpretation of man: the coincidence of the finite and the infinite

Analogies and contrasts between the Renaissance and Reformation: man as individual and as microcosm

The tragic underground of Renaissance humanism: Michelangelo

The "modern mind": empiricism and utopianism

Spring 1962: Modern Culture

The modern industrial society and its "enlightened" self-interpretation

The principle of "harmony" from economics to religion

The classic-romantic protest: the "great synthesis" of Western culture and its failure

Critical naturalism in the arts

The existentialist revolt in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

The existentialist style of thought and expression in the 20<sup>th</sup> century  
The rediscovery of the unconscious and the change in the self-interpretation of man

The question of man's historical existence in an endangered world

## HEALTH AS A METAPHOR FOR THE CREATED CONDITION<sup>1</sup>

DEREK MICHAUD

### I. Introduction

There is evidence of brokenness, suffering, strife, oppression, and sickness everywhere today. Our media provide for us near immediate access to the tragic reality of an unhealthy world. From the AIDS pandemic to global terrorism and counterterrorism to the prevalence of homelessness our shared human condition appears to be one of universal, yet thankfully not complete, ill health. From the sciences, we have learned in the last few centuries that the wellbeing of one dimension of reality is often, if not always, intricately related to others. Unquestionably, theology and philosophy as humanity's deepest reflection on itself, the cosmos, and the Ultimate ought to have much to offer in response to these developments.

To be sure, there is no shortage of positions on the "human condition," and it has been increasingly realized that the analytical divisions between human and nature and between individual and society are untenable and untrue.<sup>2</sup> What is required for our period is a theological anthropology that takes seriously humanity's imbeddedness within the rest of creation and which sees the innumerable problems that face us and our world as profoundly interrelated and matters of vital concern. Our increasingly complex situation of environmental, social, interpersonal, and individual distortion calls for a united rhetoric. There are however few attempts made to unite these multiple concerns under a metaphor with public appeal.<sup>3</sup>

This essay argues that Tillich's unitive view of reality combined with his assessment of the existential condition as one of distortion and illness across all dimensions of life, offers us the helpful metaphor of "health" for understanding the condition of all created things in an ambiguous and fragmentary, yet realistic, holistic vision of reality which provides its

own motivation for action in the world while acknowledging the central place that divine healing has in and through such action.<sup>4</sup> Many have noted Tillich's emphasis on holistic human health and the unity of life but there is a glaring lack of development of the cosmic holism implicit in Tillich's thought that this essay seeks to begin to remedy by offering both an interpretation of Tillich and a constructive extension of his thought.<sup>5</sup>

To this end, the following essay has two closely interrelated goals. First, in sections II–IV, it is shown that the metaphor of "health" should be applied to Tillich's understanding of the human as well as the more general created condition. That is, it is argued that "health" as a metaphor, including the poles of "illness" and "wellbeing," is an appropriate interpretation of Tillich's understanding of reality and not just humanity.<sup>6</sup> Second, in sections IV and V, it is argued that a sufficiently vague characterization of the metaphor of health presents a plausible hypothesis about the nature of reality including the human condition in general that may prove helpful in addressing the very predicaments it identifies. Both goals are explored in some detail regarding a Tillichian ecotheology in section IV.

### II. The Human Condition in Tillich: A Question of "Health"<sup>7</sup>

The theology of Paul Tillich is notable for many reasons. Among them are his attempts at apologetic, his attempts at utilizing culture as a theological (re)source, and his insistence on the place of ontology in philosophy and religion. Less in keeping with his "liberal" image, yet central to his vision, is Tillich's insistence that the religious predicament of estrangement from our selves, each other and our ground (God) and its solution in the New Being, the Spiritual Presence, and Eternal Life is the heart of the theological system. Tillich's vision of the human condition is essentially one of "health" broadly construed multi-dimensionally and across multiple realms. By "dimension" Tillich means those aspects of reality commonly called "levels" such as physical, chemical, biological, social, and historical and by "realm" he means localized "areas" of interaction

between dimensions with one of them being determinate for the character of the realm.<sup>8</sup> For example, the chemical processes in the human body, which are often identical or very similar to those in other organisms, represent a dimension and the individual in which such processes take place is a realm. The present section therefore briefly reviews Tillich's conception of the human religious predicament and its solution.<sup>9</sup>

It has often been noticed that Tillich's theological system is nearly entirely concerned with his understanding of the human predicament and its solution.<sup>10</sup> In order, therefore, to understand Tillich's system one must first grasp his categories of essence and existence, which are conveniently summarized in a brief essay entitled "Psychotherapy and a Christian Interpretation of Human Nature" that appears in *The Meaning of Health*. Here we find the familiar scheme of Tillich's anthropology divided into three parts.

Man must be considered under three aspects: first, under the aspect of his created goodness or original innocence; second, under the aspect of the distorted existential situation in which he finds himself actually; third, under the aspect of his rehabilitation through healing or saving powers which he experiences in life and history.<sup>11</sup>

These three important features are more fully elaborated across the extensive Tillichian corpus but even in their abbreviated form are suggestive of Tillich's anthropology and the applicability of the metaphor of health to Tillich's understanding of the human condition. Ironically, though, this extraordinarily brief statement encodes nearly all of the religiously significant features of Tillich's thought. Before this statement can be discussed however it is important to note that, while this essay focuses on Tillich's cosmological and anthropological thought, the basic dynamic of harmony/disharmony identified here has its roots in the ontological polarities that Tillich develops in volume one of the *Systematic Theology*. The full exposition of the health metaphor would require extensive development of these concepts from ontology through the dimensions of cosmological reality but this is beyond the scope of this essay. It is enough for now to notice that the general trend holds true even in Tillich's ontology that human beings and all things exist on a continuum of more or less well-being or harmony.<sup>12</sup>

First, Tillich affirms that all things individually and collectively stand in a relationship to their ultimate source and ground that is characterized by the creator/creature relationship and that the creatures are made to live in potential harmony with each other and themselves and immediate communion with their creator. This essential state of being is in actuality no state at all for Tillich, however, because it is a "state" in which that which characterizes humanity most, our finite freedom, is not actualized.<sup>13</sup>

Second, Tillich re-affirms that the "state" of original innocence is tragically, and universally, lost through "the Fall" or the actualization of potential as finite and clearly distinct beings.<sup>14</sup> Since essential being is not a temporal event but rather an existential/ontological reality, "Everyone continuously loses his dreaming innocence" which is the condition of un-actualized or essential goodness. Tillich interprets the myth of the Fall from Eden as illustrative of "a universal experience" characterized by "separation from and enmity toward other beings [including oneself] and...the permanent threat of losing the ground and meaning of...life."<sup>15</sup> Existence is characterized by estrangement from everything; ourselves, leading to psychological illness; each other, leading to social disorder; from our environment, leading to the destruction of the natural world; and from God, leading to loss of meaning and purpose and typifying estrangement in all its manifestations while simultaneously signifying all the rest.<sup>16</sup> Human beings live in estrangement for which they feel and are guilty.<sup>17</sup>

Tillich claims that self-actualization is a necessity but he claims that the estrangement that this brings about is not necessary at all and that everyone everywhere is in fact guilty of "not accepting the infinite as infinite." Actualization requires merely self-relatedness not selfishness, solitude or individualization but not bitterness, insecurity but not anxiety about the future.<sup>18</sup> Thus, "the natural anxiety of finitude is transformed into the desperate anxiety of guilt," and this "[psycho-spiritual] disease splits natural and bodily wholeness, and the horror of death cannot be conquered by courage."<sup>19</sup> Estrangement leads to anxiety, despair, and existential destruction in human beings and to the destruction of the processes of life in nature generally.<sup>20</sup> Since this disruption is between what we are in essence or potentially and what we are in existence it is understood as a kind of illness, a disruption of the harmonious functioning of the things of the cosmos, in-

cluding especially humanity as individuals and as a whole. Estrangement from God is self-estrangement, which signals the destruction of wholeness or the continuous advent of illness in mind, body, and spirit.<sup>21</sup>

Third, in keeping with his diagnosis of the human predicament, Tillich affirms that the solution is divine, though always mediated, “healing.”<sup>22</sup> Tillich refers variously to this process of healing as salvation, regeneration, redemption, atonement, justification, sanctification, reconciliation, reunion, and acceptance depending on the particular audience or subject at hand, but nevertheless claims that these expressions are descriptive of a single act of the “re-establishment of an original but disrupted unity: salvation, i.e., making whole and healthy; redemption, i.e., buying back; atonement, i.e., (perhaps) bringing at one; reconciliation, i.e., bringing together.”<sup>23</sup> Tillich says that, “The means of salvation or cosmic healing is primarily the divine act in which the demonic [or disintegrating] forces are overcome and cosmic disorder brought to a new order;” that is, the New Being overcomes the old being of estrangement.<sup>24</sup> This process, like all healing, is not, however, without potential for pain. Salvation is not mere psychological comfort.

Spiritual healing involves the (re)establishment of unity with God and is accomplished through ecstasy, which “occurs only if the mind is grasped by...the ground of being and meaning.”<sup>25</sup> That is, “Ecstasy transcends the [limits of the] psychological,” and is “the form in which that which concerns us unconditionally manifests itself within the whole of our...conditions.”<sup>26</sup> Religious ecstasy is both the condition necessary for divine revelation and the condition of “being grasped by the Spiritual Presence,” which is synonymous with “faith.”<sup>27</sup> Faith involves the conquering of our estrangement from our ground and with it the partial reunion of our selves to our essential selves. Restoration occurs in and through existence not through an escape from it.

Salvation or healing seeks as its goal the wholeness that is classically expressed as “the peace of God” or “‘man reconciled’ and thereby re-established in his essential and created harmony” with one’s self, others, the world, and with God.<sup>28</sup> The solution to the human predicament of estranged illness is therefore divine healing, and although this healing is always mediated through human or other natural agents and is likewise always fragmentary, ambiguous, and partial, it is nonetheless the relief of

infirmity and a “return” to health or the relative actualization of the integrated personality (body, mind and spirit) as a centered whole.<sup>29</sup> One is, for Tillich, always partially “healthy” or “saved” for otherwise one would not exist at all.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, human beings are also always at least partially ill, that is, estranged from themselves, their surroundings, and most importantly (yet not divisibly) separated from God since they have actualized themselves through their freedom, establishing their independent selves and with this the danger of existential separation from everything. “Health” expresses the human condition in its character as a continuum of relative harmony and value.

Healing is thus a matter of degree in actuality though it remains a full possibility in essence and this is the meaning of the eschatological hope of the Kingdom of God.<sup>31</sup> For Tillich, the ambiguities of temporal existence can be healed only through constant transparency to the eternal ground out of which everything stands in the experience he called the “eternal now.”<sup>32</sup> Tillich says,

A pathetic struggle over their past is going on almost without interruption in many men and women in our time. No medical healing can solve this conflict, because no medical healing can change the past. Only a blessing that lies above the conflict of blessing and curse can heal. It is the blessing that changes what seems to be unchangeable—the past. It cannot change the facts; what has happened has happened and remains so in all eternity! Nevertheless, the meaning of the facts can be changed by the eternal, and the name of this change is the experience of ‘forgiveness’.<sup>33</sup>

Living in the presence and acceptance of this blessing is living in the “eternal now” or realized eternal life. This life is not “eternal” in quantity but rather in reunited quality. Therefore, there is a kind of healing to which only the religious instinct can point and for which only ecstasy can provide. Wellbeing remains a goal within the “eternal now,” always successively approximated yet already present in anticipation through the New Being and the Presence of the Holy Spirit.

All healing, regardless of the realm or dimension in which it takes place, is, for Tillich, a moment of ecstatic connection with the ground of being.<sup>34</sup> Thus, all healers whether they are medical doctors, psychologists, social workers, or conservation workers enact the divine work of healing in the dimensions

and realms of their vocation. However, health in one dimension or realm does not necessarily imply health in others even though disorder in one can lead to disorder in the others. This is why spiritual health, for Tillich, can only come through the action of the Spirit in the New Being and the Spiritual Presence, and hence the importance of faith and religion for the fully healthy life.<sup>35</sup>

A healthy body and psyche does not provide one with meaning and a deeply felt sense of place in and with the universe and one's ground. For Tillich, only faith, or being ecstatically "grasped" by the ground of being in and through the Spiritual Presence and the New Being mediated through the symbols of a spiritual community (i.e. church) and the Christ, can bring to human beings final healing of the dimension that distinguishes us from the rest of creation as far as we know, the dimension of the spirit which bears the functions of religion, morality and culture.<sup>36</sup> "Health" in the spiritual dimension, like all the rest, is a matter of maintaining a tenuous balance and therefore the process of healing is a constant one and is synonymous with the divine function of sustaining creation.<sup>37</sup> In this way, Tillich maintains, while acknowledging that destruction is the necessary first step in any new creation and the sustenance of life, that wholeness nevertheless is the appropriate and realistic end for human beings to seek.<sup>38</sup> This "wholeness" is a harmony of the relevant components not a mere unity since many destructive conditions stem from excessive togetherness. For Tillich, the meaning of life is life made whole, just as the answer to the question of being is Being itself.<sup>39</sup>

Wholeness in any dimension or realm does not mean, however, that fragmentation is not possible or even actual, far from it. However, there is a profound hope in Tillich that our existence, and that of all things, which teeter on the edge of non-being at all times,<sup>40</sup> will be sustained by the ground and fountain of being provided we accept our lives as the unwarranted gifts they are and seek to coexist with each other and creation in harmony, all the while remaining open to the depths from which we come, acknowledging and coming to terms with our finitude.

The metaphor of health, including the distinct yet not mutually exclusive poles of illness and well-being, is descriptive of Tillich's conception of the human condition in all its aspects. The problems that afflict the body are matters of "health" most clearly of course but those of the mind, society, spirit, and

even history are also matters for which salvation is required and this is accomplished ecstatically in and through human agency mediating the sustaining energy of God who, while not a person, "is" gracious *ad extremis*; the God who is Being tends toward allowing for the health and wholeness of creation but cannot do so as though from without. Wholeness must arise within creation through the actions of creatures that are ecstatically transparent to and open for the power of being as the source of all being, life, and health. Wellbeing involves harmonious functioning in all dimensions to the extent that is possible with the clear understanding that all things end. However, in as much as we live in and through the eternal ground of being, we have our share of eternity as well if we open ourselves to it in the "eternal now." This has the potential to focus our energy toward the finite world and the task of being a mediating force for healing within it, thus living in communion with God and all creatures.

While this section has stressed the spiritual aspects of human health, this is not the limit of the application of the metaphor in Tillich's thought or its usefulness for us today. Tillich considered spiritual healing the "depth-dimension of mental healing" and granted, with qualifications, the possibility of religious healing of mental illness and even the body.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, the reduction of the health of human beings to the mere manipulation of chemical or mechanical parts troubled Tillich. He worried that the treatment of only one dimension at a time would create disorders in other dimensions such as the potentially debilitating psychological effects of some invasive physical procedures.<sup>42</sup> Thus, Tillich was concerned with the health of the entire human being, not just the parts that make one up, and this concern extends, either explicitly as in the case of society and history or more implicitly as in the case of ecology, to all of creation.<sup>43</sup> In this way, Tillich suggests that our concern should be for the qualitative wellbeing of individuals, societies, and the rest of the natural world considered together because complete quantitative "health" is not possible or desirable.<sup>44</sup>

### III. Human and Cosmic "Health"

When Tillich spoke of salvation, he did not mean merely the comforting of spiritual anxiety. Rather, he meant to include all dimensions of humanity and all of the cosmos with us.<sup>45</sup> In this way, the metaphor of health is appropriate for understanding Tillich's vision of human and cosmic reality: a

reality full of conflict that drives toward destruction and death but one in which the possibility of healing is always present, a reality full of profound hope. Tillich's vision of the "created condition," that is, the condition of existent beings, or in expressly theological language "creatures," is also fruitfully understood by means of the metaphor of health.<sup>46</sup>

Although Tillich placed great emphasis on the human condition, his thought carries with it an implicit notion of the universality of "health" as a description of the created condition.<sup>47</sup> This section first demonstrates that the theme of health extends beyond the psycho-spiritual to include all the dimensions present in human beings and second, argues for the explicit extension of the Tillichian concepts of "illness" and "healing" to the entire human environment including nature and society in addition to their overt use in respect of individual human beings. Such an extension of the metaphor of health is justified because of Tillich's claim (supported by current science) that all of reality is essentially united, despite existential estrangement, and that "levels" of reality do not exist.<sup>48</sup> Health as a metaphor for the human condition, therefore, includes all the dimensions present in humanity including those dimensions that occupy other realms beside individual human beings. Thus, the human condition is inexorably embedded within, indeed is part of, the larger created condition.

In the too-often-neglected third volume of Tillich's *Systematic Theology*, he discusses at length the concept he calls the multidimensional unity of life (MDU).<sup>49</sup> The basic structure of the concept is also contained in the brief yet rich essays "The Meaning of Health," and "Dimensions, Levels, and the Unity of Life," in which Tillich discusses the MDU with specific reference to its implications for human wellbeing. In the following few paragraphs these essays will serve as a launching pad into Tillich's thought on the unity of life.

The principle of the MDU, while complicated in its specifics, can be described rather simply as the notion that the actuality of being is "life" (in an ontological sense, including organic and non-organic dimensions),<sup>50</sup> which includes the qualifications of being (essential and existential), and which sees the various components of the cosmos as essentially (and therefore potentially but not actually) beyond mutual interference. As Eduardo Cruz has succinctly put it, "all life processes involve a movement from self-identity to self-alteration, and a return to one's

self in such a way that three functions can be recognized in them: self-integration, self-creation and self-transcendence."<sup>51</sup> This process of self-reintegration (i.e. healing) and self-transcendence (i.e. growth, including the emergence of more complex dimensions of life) extends to all beings and is only most obvious in humanity because in us all dimensions are actually present.<sup>52</sup>

Thus, the MDU points to an essential state of harmonious communion of all things with themselves, each other, and their ground. This is not to deny conflicts their necessary place, however, since Tillich is quick to add that conflict is a symptom of the ambiguity of all existence. Harmony is an ontological potentiality and an ideal but within existence it can only be partially realized.<sup>53</sup> This does not mean that existence cannot get better and successively approximate this ideal. While some disruption of harmony will always be present, the trick is limiting this to those cases where new harmonies are the result rather than continuous destruction.

By employing the MDU, Tillich affirms that creation is an ontological, and therefore eternal, process whereby the actualization of any one dimension or realm presupposes the actualization of those that lie "behind" or "beneath" them.<sup>54</sup> For example, the chemical dimension is reliant on and is a transcendent effect of the dimension of the physical (such as is treated by physics). The same structure applies to all the dimensions of life.

While Tillich maintains that spiritual healing is the only kind which is affected "directly" (that is with minimal mediation) by the Spiritual Presence,<sup>55</sup> he also says that any healing, under any dimension and in any realm, is ultimately the product of the divine healing power which is symbolized in the concept of the New Being and the stories of physical healing by Christ.<sup>56</sup> It is telling for our thesis that Tillich opens the essay "The Meaning of Health" with these words, "In order to speak of health, one must speak of all dimensions of life."<sup>57</sup> His argument is that the various aspects of reality, which Tillich views in terms of "life," "are present within each other and do not lie alongside or above each other."<sup>58</sup>

Tillich distinguishes seven dimensions in "The Meaning of Health"—mechanical, chemical, biological, psychological, mental, spiritual, and historical—and notes that these are not exhaustive but are merely expedient for discussion chosen out of innumerable dimensions. More to the point, he notes that in human beings all the dimensions of life are united

and that in us “all of them are actually present.”<sup>59</sup> As evidence for the unity of physical, biological, psychological, and historical dimensions in humanity Tillich offers the example of psychosomatic medicine in which the psychological has affects on the physical and vice versa.<sup>60</sup>

Tillich discusses human health in terms of the dimensions of life he has identified as present in and indeed composing humanity.<sup>61</sup> In the mechanical or strictly physical dimension, human “health is the adequate functioning of all the particular parts of man. Disease is the non-functioning of these parts because of incidents, infections, and imbalances. Healing, then, is the removal of the diseased parts or their mechanical replacement: surgery.”<sup>62</sup> Under the chemical dimension, health is “the balance of chemical substances and processes.”<sup>63</sup> Neither of these two types of health and healing are complete on their own and each demand the other as well as the more inclusive dimension of the biological where ideally “balance is achieved between self-alteration and self-preservation.”<sup>64</sup> The biological dimension involves the health of the entire organism and it leads to the dimension of self-awareness in which the dialectical processes of life are most clearly visible.<sup>65</sup> Psychological health involves “self-alteration in every moment, in receiving reality, in mastering it, in being united with parts of it, in changing it, etc.” and “in all this a risk is involved,” which “accounts for the reluctance to take all these encountered pieces of reality into one’s centered self” that leads to neurotic withdrawal from reality.<sup>66</sup>

The spiritual dimension designates life in meaning and value as it is inherent in morality, culture, and religion and in this dimension “the problem of health receives another depth and breadth, which then, conversely, is decisive for all the preceding dimensions.”<sup>67</sup> “Morality is the self-actualization of the person in his centered encounter with the other,” and “Here the psychotherapeutic problem becomes the moral problem... And healing is the power of overcoming both distortions [of legalism and lawlessness].” “In order to be healed, the spirit must be grasped by something which transcends it, which is not strange to it, but within which is the fulfillment of its potentialities. It is called ‘Spirit’ (with a capital S). Spirit is the presence of what concerns us ultimately, the ground of our being and meaning.”<sup>68</sup>

The spiritual dimension, with its explicit reference to culture as bearer of spirit and to the Spiritual Presence as a healing force, leads Tillich to the di-

mensions of history and society. In this regard his question is, “To what degree is personal health possible in a society which is not a ‘sane society’ (Erich Fromm)?”<sup>69</sup> In response, Tillich offers the idea that building a sane society (as an institution) is not an adequate answer because it ignores the ambiguities inherent in history and the necessity of health among leaders of a society.<sup>70</sup> In his more extensive discussion of the historical dimension in volume three of the *Systematic Theology*, Tillich answers this question with the symbol of the Kingdom of God, an eschatological vision which is both temporal and eternal and which finds its completion in the “eternal now.”<sup>71</sup> Consequently, as Tillich himself concludes, “The road through the many dimensions, and the meaning of health within them, has shown...that complete healing includes healing under all dimensions.”<sup>72</sup>

As Michael Drummy has noted, Tillich took with radical seriousness “the notion that nature shares with humanity the fundamental experience of estrangement or, in mytho-poetic biblical terms, of ‘fallenness,’” and accordingly the non-human has an important place in Tillich’s soteriology and eschatology.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, owing to his estimation of the ontological equality of all dimensions of life Tillich cannot help but see all of reality in essentially the same terms as his analysis of human beings.<sup>74</sup> All dimensions of life that are present in humanity undergo the transition from essence to existence and the dynamics of life.<sup>75</sup> However, the dimensions of reality extend to include the basic atomic structures as well as other more complex creatures in addition to being a component of human beings. As a result, Tillich extends the diagnosis of the predicament of existential estrangement, or as we have come to call it “illness,” to all of nature and not just to humanity.

Furthermore, Tillich affirms that humanity and nature are inseparable. “Man reaches into nature, as nature reaches into man. They participate in each other and cannot be separated from each other.”<sup>76</sup> Therefore, Tillich saw “the assault on the non-human world” as an attack on “the interdependent fabric that unifies all life, from the biological to the cultural” as well as the spiritual and the historical.<sup>77</sup> Thus, the “health” of nature is affected by humanity and humanity is affected by the health of nature for Tillich, which has become evident in the proliferation of incidents of environmental pollution and its adverse affects on human and non-human health.

The clearest example of the applicability of the metaphor of health to all of reality is made by Tillich in his statements on the New Being, or the principle of reconciliation and healing in his system whose bearer was Jesus as the Christ and whose "function...is not only to save individuals and transform man's historical existence but to renew the universe."<sup>78</sup> As Drummy says, "Indeed, his entire theory of redemption [or cosmic healing] rests on the conviction that 'there is no salvation of man if there is no salvation of nature, because man is in nature and nature is in man.'"<sup>79</sup> Again, as Drummy states, "The notion of salvation as understood by Tillich consists then of a 'cosmic healing' and is by no means limited to that infinitesimal sector of the universe occupied by humanity."<sup>80</sup> In addition to our essential and existential solidarity with nature, Tillich furthermore saw communion with nature as an important element in the health of humanity and by extension and in virtue of the destructive capacities possessed by our species as an important element in the health of all life.<sup>81</sup>

The human condition is characterized by the relative health of all the dimensions present within us and this health is itself embedded within the dynamic and ambiguous fabric of all life. Nevertheless, Tillich recognized that life is everywhere at odds with life. In this respect, Tillich's implicit theology of nature is well suited to address the contemporary conflicts between ecological stewardship and human wellbeing. Instead of promising a return to Eden and the utopian communion of all living beings with each other his thought recognizes the inherent struggles associated with life. Tillich offers the promising vision of a world that is always struggling to balance the demands of its inhabitants and the various dimensions of life present in them toward a goal of the maximization of health across all dimensions and in all realms to the extent that this is possible.

Estrangement from our environment affects our health in all dimensions and our misuse of nature diminishes its health in all of its dimensions as well. Indeed, because of the MDU, even non-human nature has a spiritual dimension, at least in potential.<sup>82</sup> The dimensions of life are united even when they are located in different realms (such as human beings or trees). This means that on Tillich's view salvation and sanctification or "healing" is a truly cosmic thing, including rocks and stars as much as human beings but not in terms of responsibility, guilt, or the full depth of the affects of estrangement or healing.<sup>83</sup>

While Tillich affirms the shared status of fallenness across all dimensions and in all realms<sup>84</sup> and he is hesitant to absolve nature of guilt,<sup>85</sup> he nevertheless claims that human beings are responsible for "the Fall" and that as moral agents we have an obligation to make things right, though without reunion with our ground our attempts ultimately fail.<sup>86</sup> We are responsible for the health of all things, not in a causal sense only but in virtue of our freedom to act and our status as deciding selves that unite the dimensions.

A Tillichian notion of health must therefore include the human as well as the non-human and ought therefore to be extended to include the entire created cosmos and likewise a Tillichian notion of the whole of reality can be characterized by the metaphor of health applied to all dimensions and all realms at once.<sup>87</sup> In short, if for Tillich being is life then it is characterized by health, including the possibility of essential unity, wholeness, and life and the possibility of existential estrangement, disruption, and death.

#### IV. "Health" and Ecology

Tillich's understanding of the created condition can be understood through the metaphor of health broadly construed and this is in keeping with his holistic vision of reality and the centrality of cosmic salvation in his theology. Furthermore, the human condition is inextricably linked with and embedded within this created condition such that no understanding of Tillich's anthropology can ignore his views on nature and life generally. The extension of the metaphor of health has important consequences for the possibility of a Tillichian ecotheology.

Today it hardly needs to be said that life on earth faces profound challenges in the form of environmental degradation, species extinction, and a general assault on the health of the biosphere that includes and sustains humanity. In response to the realization of the interrelations of human behavior and the wellbeing of the natural world Christian theologians (and others) have increasingly taken nature and ecology seriously.<sup>88</sup> Often the challenge of the eco-crisis has been addressed under the theological rubric of the doctrine of creation that stresses the ontological parity of all "creatures" as creatures as well as the Biblical idea that creation is essentially good in an attempt to legitimize concern for nature in hopes that this will lead to positive action toward environmental wellbeing. While this is an admirable first step toward a theological response to the eco-crisis,

it too often lacks specific actionable recommendations beyond simply respect or love for and “stewardship” of nature. As Pan-chui Lai has noted, it is not the God-world relationship that holds promise for a Tillichian ecotheology so much as “the participation of nature in the process of fall and salvation.”<sup>89</sup>

Indeed, if Tillich’s theology of nature has any credence, such a scheme in fact does not go far enough in that it still posits a distinction between humanity and nature and it ignores the necessity of conflict between dimensions and realms of life. Put simply, the creation-centered, stewardship ecotheology most often put forward does not adequately appreciate the radical interconnections between all dimensions of reality nor does it provide a framework with which to model responsible ecological behavior because it does not present a holistic vision of reality that includes anthropology. The problem behind the eco-crisis is not simply that people do not know that all of creation is God’s good creation that is worthy of protection. Rather, the problem is at least as much the difficulty of navigating the ambiguity of life such that the wellbeing of human and non-human life is maximized. “Stewardship” language implies more or less capable stewards but their existence remains to be proven.

Ecology and human health are intricately bound together in all dimensions. This interrelatedness expresses itself in the affects of environmental pollution on human and non-human health as well as the affects of human personal and social health on the environment. It is equally true that when humans release toxic chemicals into the water they affect the health of themselves (directly or indirectly) as well as the health of other species (and at times entire ecosystems) as it is that when the “unhealthy” personal desire to over-consume is unchecked more and more pollution results from the use of automobiles and other resource-guzzling devices. Human health in the biological dimension is connected to the health of the environment as illustrated by respiratory diseases caused or exacerbated by air pollution and human health in the psychological dimension is affected by the decrease in open, green space in our cities as well as affecting the health of ecosystems through our runaway greed. Social disruption likewise leads to ecological strife and, as Rasmussen puts it, the eco-crisis is a crisis of culture as well as nature.<sup>90</sup> It would seem that only healing of all things at once can bring about the greatest wellbeing of any

one thing—cosmic “salvation” is indeed required for the wellbeing of everything. This means first that the ecological problems faced by our planet require a regeneration of the human heart, mind, and soul. We must be “saved” so that our world may be as well.

The suggestion that the metaphor of health presents a better way to understand the eco-crisis (and its attending physical-psycho-medical-spiritual-social problems) on theological grounds is supported by the recent prevalence of its use by scientists actively engaged in the study of nature and human medicine. On the biological and ecological side for example, Fairweather advocates the use of “ecosystem health” as a descriptive and action directing metaphor for the wellbeing of rivers.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, Karr adds that the metaphor of health grows logically out of current scientific understandings of river ecosystem functioning, speaks well to the public and gives voice to the kinds of actions that are needed to protect and “heal” such systems.<sup>92</sup> On the public health and medical side, Martens and Huynen have argued that the metaphor of health has broad application to socio-cultural, economic and ecological dimensions and that a comprehensive image of their future wellbeing is dependent on models that consider all the important forces.<sup>93</sup> Similarly, Ansari, et al., have argued that a danger exists in the too narrow scope of modern epidemiology, which ignores sociological and ecological dimensions of human health.<sup>94</sup> The fact that Tillich’s theology and the sciences both recommend the metaphor of health in the ways argued for here provides mutual support for the its usefulness and the appropriateness of its application to all dimensions of reality. Surely, it is significant that Tillich’s theological vision and the scientific visions outlined here agree that it is no longer fruitful to divide reality and the problems that we face.

Dealing with the eco-crisis in different ways from human salvation implies a disjuncture between humanity and nature that is simply inconsistent with Tillich’s vision of reality and what the sciences have clearly shown us. The fate of nature is our fate. In theological terms, both are matters of ultimate concern, which can and must be addressed in reference to Ultimate Reality and which are best understood in terms of the metaphor of health. As Drummy notes, “By implication [from Tillich’s notions of salvation and nature], our understanding of the experience by human beings of ‘redemption’—can and should be extended to the entire created universe.”<sup>95</sup>

Noticing that all created things share in a unified nature as creatures and that there is Biblical warrant to advocate stewardship is a fine beginning but it is not enough. Thus, Drummy's call for "bio-agape"<sup>96</sup> (developed out of Tillich's understanding of nature) as the attitude Christians should cultivate toward nature is a fine goal but it fails to recognize the difficulties many have with "loving" a natural world they fear, or are simply incapable of caring for. Additionally, Drummy's call for "creative stewardship" of nature with God and an attitude of love of all life, while a logical development out of Tillich's thought, does not take with adequate seriousness Tillich's appreciation of the depth of estrangement. It is not enough to say that we ought to relate to nature in a caring way because as estranged human beings we are not capable of caring for ourselves, those closest to us, and our societies. Ecological and psychosocial issues are more intimately related than Drummy's approach admits. He notes that it is Tillich's extension of salvation to all of reality that provides the key to an ecotheology but he goes on to develop that in purely external relational terms through the concept of love without exploring the dimensions within the loving person that also require renovation.<sup>97</sup> Creative stewardship does describe the kind of "cosmic healthcare" called for here in its external ecological aspects but it ignores the internal human aspects. This makes the call for bio-agape less feasible and suggests a difference between the predicament of nature and humanity that Tillich would deny.

The healing work of love is needed "within" as well as "without," and this is why ecological ethics needs theology, which can speak to all dimensions at once. Ethicist J. A. Nash has also noted the importance of cosmic salvation in ecological ethics but he, like Drummy, ignores the work needed to create people who can relate well to their world. He also sees the root of ecological sin "within" humanity but does not address the need to transform and heal all dimensions of reality (mechanical, chemical, biological, psychological, spiritual, cultural [ecological] and historical) at once.<sup>98</sup> Tillich and the eco-feminists are much more sensitive to the need to address the full complexity of reality than Drummy, Pan-chui Lai, or Nash are.

Drummy is correct that full healing of estrangement from nature has for a goal something like bio-agape (though there is no reason to limit this to the biotic realm). However, the benefit of an ecotheol-

ogy rooted in the metaphor of health is that it directs attention to all dimensions at once, not just those of the already harmonious centered self, as Drummy calls for with his suggestion that human beings relate to nature in caring, nurturing ways. The problem is not just that our consciousness of nature is distorted or that we have neglected our role as earth's stewards. Rather, the issue is that we (and everything else in our world) are "broken" and in need of healing. This point is more fully realized by Pan-chui Lai but it is not extended to include the necessity of healing within humanity as well as in our relationships with nature. Despite Lai's argument against "stewardship" on the grounds that it postulates a superior position for humanity, there is a creeping superiority of abstract spiritual ideals that places emphasis on relationship and motivation rather than the nature of the problems in all their dimensions.<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, in as far as healing and love are both expressive of the unity of the separated, however, we can say that we must have love permeate our being in order to love nature and in this respect, our argument is in basic agreement with Drummy and Lai.

Tillich realizes the necessity of healing in all dimensions at once because he takes with radical seriousness the fact that all things are intimately connected.<sup>100</sup> One cannot have a healthy relationship with the biotic world without being a stable centered individual within a relatively secure and nurturing social group. One must be able to love in order to love and it may be that much of the eco-crisis owes its existence to a far more fundamental breakdown in reality than mere attitude, consciousness, and actions vis-à-vis nature. Loving and being able to love (in the agape sense, including justice) are equally matters requiring the solution of the basic predicament of estrangement. That is, both require healing and that is true for everything always and everywhere.

This is not to say that relationality with the biotic realm is not an important part of the project of cosmic healing. It is, but it is not the most fundamental dimension in that process. The whole human being as the crossroads of all the dimensions of being, is the location of the choices necessary for the health of realms beyond the scope of an individual (i.e. society, nature) but only when individuals are transformed and "at-one" with their essential selves can they expand their realm of concern to the rest of life. The sick, hungry, oppressed, and marginalized cannot respect nature and work with it as creative stewards. The mentally ill, the greedy, and the ego-

tistical cannot effectively love their environments without first becoming well themselves. One must be a lover in order to love and while this capacity is never completely absent, it seems reasonable that one must reach some kind of threshold of centeredness and completion in order to extend concern and renovating sentiment out beyond oneself.

All dimensions of reality have their expressions of estrangement—their openings to the threat of non-being—and we would be well advised to treat them all at once and not to ignore (especially in our theology) the foundational role of the physical/chemical dimensions as well. Many eco-problems call primarily for restoration in the physical and/or chemical dimension(s) such as polluted air. One need not “love” all of life to act to clean the air. It might be enough to love one’s family. Indeed, if the predictions are correct, a mass conversion to a nature-centered spirituality may not be possible in time to avoid disaster. However, we can take positive actions wherever they present themselves and thus strive toward the goal of total cosmic health or well-being. In this process, it may be possible for gradual conversion to a kind of bio-agape to take place. The metaphor of health is, therefore, not in conflict with Drummy’s bio-agape as a goal only as a means.

The eco-crisis is a manifestation of the universal tragedy of estrangement and sin. Its solution is the holistic healing only possible through the power of the New Being and the Spiritual Presence along with our working with and acceptance of these powers as transformative for our lives and our world. The metaphor of health provides guidance in the form of the injunction to seek the good of all, everywhere—because it is good to do so—even while acknowledging that such a reality is always a goal and never a full reality even as it is an eschatologically anticipated and fragmentarily actualized one within existence through the New Being. The conditions of a “healthy” dimension or realm will vary in their particulars but will share the theme of uniting dimensions and realms in harmonies. It is nothing short of the fullness of being actualized in existence (i.e., “life”) that is the goal—as much diversity as possible living in as much harmony as possible with as little strife as possible. This may be idealistic but as Tillich claimed without some essentialist end in view we are without guidance.

## V. A Proposal

The maximization of non-estranged being in the most inclusive realms possible ought to be pursued and this can only be accomplished by simultaneously addressing the illnesses of reality in their respective realms. In its simplest terms, the metaphor of health entails (but is not limited to) the following: All created beings are characterized by potentialities for illness and wellbeing, disruption and flourishing, death and life, and this condition is best represented in terms of “health” simultaneously across multi-dimensions and multiple realms. The metaphor is intentionally vague in order to include all of reality within its purview on the conviction that all things are related to each other in some way. The metaphor is suggestive as a general account of the created condition and provides an orientation for praxis that is often difficult to find in more explicitly and exclusively ontological imagery.

The metaphor of health and healing is most obvious in the biological and psychological dimensions but this is not the limit of its applicability. In the social realm, illness and estrangement manifests itself in violence, oppression, and the unequal distribution of opportunity. Healing, therefore, involves social work and programs directed at removing these problems.<sup>101</sup> In the ecological realm, illness manifests itself as pollution, ecosystem degradation, and the over-exploitation of natural resources. Healing in this realm involves measures to reverse the damage already done (though these must be very careful not to cause new problems in the process) as well as efforts to keep these afflictions from being duplicated in the future. These examples, along with countless others, have obvious connections to each other and thus the predicaments of the created condition ought to be addressed together when ever possible so that the holistic health of individuals, ecosystems and societies can be attained.

Despite its relatively extensive development above the metaphor of health remains a hypothesis in respect of its truthfulness as a symbol for reality. Further public inquiry is needed. The application and testing of the metaphor of health is, however, recommended on several grounds. First, its universal scope reflects the interconnectivity between all things revealed by much of contemporary metaphysics and the natural sciences. The metaphor of health may be a bridge for an engagement between process thought and Tillich (despite his penchant for substance philosophy) for this reason. Second, applying

“health” language to all dimensions of human life avoids the religious temptation to divide the body from the mind and/or spirit. Third, “health” language is easy to understand in its general contours. It lends itself to a very wide public hearing. Fourth, “health” language suggests proactive as well as retributive moral acts. Fifth, “health” language brings soteriological and eschatological themes to bear on the problems that face humanity and the rest of creation. This is critical for those who wish to learn from Tillich since nothing was more important for him than these issues. They are the heart and soul of his thought.<sup>102</sup> Sixth, a “health” orientated ecotheology brings soteriology to bear on the problems facing our planet. Purely relational ecotheologies fail to recognize the necessity of personal healing that goes beyond mere education. Seventh, “health” brings theological anthropology, another great strength of Tillich’s system, firmly into the front lines in ecotheology and social ethics. Finally, “health” promotes and potentially makes possible interdisciplinary problem solving. Perhaps, concepts from medicine can illuminate theology, and social work can inform ecology etc. but only if representatives from these disciplines talk to each other and the metaphor of health may provide a bridge for such dialogue.

There are potential problems with a Tillichian metaphor of “health,” however, many of which are related to his insistence on the normativity of unity versus plurality and conflict. As we have tried to argue though these problems are more apparent than real for Tillich since he clearly understood reality to be sometimes fundamentally conflicting and he saw that creativity requires destruction. The unity called for here (wellbeing) is not simple identity but involves harmony between distinct but not separable elements. A related potential problem is that Tillich assumes that all things everywhere are in fact connected either directly or indirectly across sometimes-great distances and times. While there is mixed scientific and metaphysical evidence in this regard, surely we are wiser to assume profound interconnectivity than not. For if it does turn out that actions always have far reaching consequences then precaution may keep life going on Earth where waiting for evidence might leave us with no way out.

Some have noticed that for all his affection for nature, Tillich was mostly concerned with humanity and some have argued on this basis that he is not a good guide for ecotheology.<sup>103</sup> While it is true that Tillich emphasized the human and the psycho-

spiritual, one need not continue to do so in order to be consistent with his thought.<sup>104</sup> Tillich relates the cosmic dimensions of his theology throughout his *Systematic Theology* and other writings, even going so far as to claim that the predicament of all of creation is the result of the estranged actualization of human beings as selves. Tillich’s emphasis on the human seems supportive of human responsibility toward the non-human because those who destroy the natural world doom themselves to a degree of separation from all things, and those who separate themselves from everything and their own ground truly are destined for self-destruction.

It may also be objected that Tillich did not adequately appreciate the role of society in as much as he dwells on the centered individual. This objection, while well noted, is again more apparent than real in so far as Tillich always affirmed the importance of society on personal development and functioning and vice versa.<sup>105</sup>

Finally it may be objected that a Tillichian notion of “health” relies too much on Christianity to be of much use (or that it is not Christian enough!) in a global public. While it is true that the fundamental pattern through which Tillich interprets the world is derived from the Christian account of salvation history (existential- and ontologized), he was of the conviction that such a pattern is central to all religions.<sup>106</sup> Thus, it could be that the metaphor of health provides needed interreligious common ground while remaining vague as to the particular manifestations of sickness and healing power at work. The Christian and Western science origin of the metaphor of health might not be the obstacle it would seem to be after all if it turns out to be a good vague category for the created condition in all religions.<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, there is no necessary reason to connect the metaphor of health with any established institutional religion, provided there remains some way of recognizing the necessity of meaning and fulfillment in human life and that this is taken to be a matter of ultimate concern. Some social element will be necessary but it need not take the form of any “church” as they are now.

## VI. Conclusion

This essay has argued that Tillich’s theological anthropology and his implicit ecotheology imply the metaphor of health and further that applying this metaphor to his discussion of created being(s) universally increases our understanding of Tillich. It has

been shown that there are plausible reasons to use “health” as a universal metaphor and furthermore anticipated arguments against it are weak or manageable. The use of Tillich’s implicit metaphor of “health” for the created condition is therefore reasonable and may allow for truthful engagement with reality. Several concluding ideas can be briefly mentioned, each of which ought to be explored and tested in more detail than is possible here.

First, “health” seems to be a uniquely appropriate metaphor for the condition of “created things” within the framework of Tillich’s theology. It unites all the major areas of his theology. Second, “health” seems to have great potential as a common rhetorical and problem-solving device for addressing complex multidimensional predicaments such as arise in social and ecological ethics. Third, “health” is suggestive of a common understanding of reality among the religious traditions.<sup>108</sup> Fourth, “health” as a universal metaphor overcomes the dualist tendency of stressing either the physical or the spiritual but not both without reducing the physical to the spiritual or vice versa. Fifth, the universality of “health” suggests the importance of anthropology and soteriology over the doctrine of creation per se in ecotheology. Sixth, while this essay focused on Tillich’s cosmological and anthropological thought, the basic dynamic of harmony/disharmony identified here as the “health” metaphor for all of created reality has its roots ultimately in the ontological polarities of being which Tillich develops in volume one of the *Systematic Theology*. Finally, “health” suggests that while the human condition is unique, it is also only one part of the larger created condition with which we share our existence and to which we owe our respect and for which we ought to be concerned. Whereas the “human condition” might ignore nature and a theology of nature might see humanity in purely negative and, one might add, unnatural ways, a theological understanding of the created condition avoids these dangers and is the only truly non-anthropocentric approach available to us for ecotheology and ethics. As long as we generate schemes with categories of the human and the world or nature we separate ourselves from the only kind of existence available to us and that is the multidimensional unity of life.

All these observations (and many more left unmade) offer solid grounds for further study and experimental application of the metaphor of health.

Only through such further inquiry can the true measure of the metaphor’s usefulness be ascertained.

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<sup>1</sup> This essay began life as a term paper for Robert C. Neville’s course “Advanced Systematic Theology II: The Human Condition” at Boston University in the spring of 2004. I would like to thank Professor Neville for his help and encouragement of this project. R. B. James and others with NAPTS read and supplied helpful comments on this essay. The essay also owes more than words can say to the late Rev. Dr. Oscar E. Remick. All errors of course remain my own for which I eagerly await correction. [dmichaud@bu.edu](mailto:dmichaud@bu.edu)

<sup>2</sup> See L. L. Rasmussen’s *Earth Community Earth Ethics* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003 [1996]), 7-8, and Part I “Earth Scan” (25-173).

<sup>3</sup> The ecofeminist and other liberationist cases are a possible exception to the rule that there is too little of this kind of integrated thinking. See for example R.R. Ruether’s *Gaia & God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992).

<sup>4</sup> I use “metaphor” because health has another more limited meaning already. The theory is however that this reflects reality truthfully as well. See R.C. Neville’s *The Truth of Broken Symbols*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), 44. An ethically “self-motivated” approach is necessary in light of the (Tillichian) view of God “who” is not a supernatural lawgiver or enforcer. For example, God may be said to “love” symbolically but there is no reason to postulate on this basis that we ought to love as well. To argue in such a way is to make Tillich’s God a highest, greatest being and this he repeatedly denies.

<sup>5</sup> See for example C. Gertrude Cutler’s “Tillich’s Multidimensional View of Health: A Message of Holistic Healing” in *Theonomy and Autonomy: Studies in Paul Tillich’s Engagement with Modern Culture*, edited by John J. Carey. North American Paul Tillich Society, (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984), 171-189; and Karin Grau’s “Healing Power” — *Ansätze zu einer Theologie der Heilung im Werk Paul Tillichs*, (Münster, Hamburg, London: Lit Verlag, 1999) both of which address the concept of healing in all dimensions within the human being but do not extend that notion to all of reality as well. I am unaware of any work that makes the kind of cosmic claim to “health” that this essay does. Drummy’s *Being and Earth: Paul Tillich’s Theology of Nature*, (Lanham: University Press of America, 2000) and Pan-chui Lai’s “Paul Tillich and Ecological Theology,” *The Journal of Religion* 79(2): 233-49 (1999), come closest but as we shall see they ultimately do not go far enough

either. Eduardo Cruz's "On the Relevance of Paul Tillich's Concept of Life," in *Paul Tillich's Theological Legacy: Spirit and Community*, ed. Frederick J. Parrella, (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 118-24, is also very helpful but does not make the conclusion that the struggles which mark life in all its dimensions are essentially a matter of "health" nor does it make a call for the application of these ideas to the non-human world. John P. Dourley has argued that Tillich's correlation of religious and psychological healing is too clearly drawn. See his "Issues of Naturalism and Supranaturalism in Tillich's Correlation of Religious with Psychological Healing," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 26(2) (1997): 211-22. This may be true but only if one ignores the persistent refrain in Tillich that the dimensions of reality, while interconnected in realms, are relatively independent. Religious healing is not limited to psychological healing or vice versa. Perhaps the modern conflation of the soul and the spirit, which Tillich clearly lamented, leads to this confusion. E. Amelung's "Life and Selfhood in Tillich's Theology," in *Karios and Logos: Studies in the Roots and Implications of Tillich's Theology*, ed. J. J. Carey (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984 [1978]), 167-83, makes the connection between Tillich's notion of "life" and ethics but does not see that connection in its radical fullness.

<sup>6</sup> It must be noted that health may be used in at least two ways—1<sup>st</sup> it might designate a favorable condition as in the phrase "good health" and 2<sup>nd</sup> it might designate, as is the intention in offering the term as a metaphor, the whole spectrum of conditions from profound illness to the most vigorous wellbeing.

<sup>7</sup> This essay has a limited scope and will engage only those areas of Tillich's thought that have direct bearing on his implicit notion of cosmic health. Even so, some aspects of his thought are underdeveloped here but it is hoped that the thesis about the metaphor of health has been proven. Tillich's three volume Systematic Theology, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951-63) is referenced by the common abbreviations ST I, ST II, and ST III.

<sup>8</sup> ST III, 11-30, especially 16. The essay "Dimensions, Levels, and the Unity of Life," *Main Works/Hauptwerke*, ed. Gert Hummel, Volume 6, (Berlin; New York: de Gruyter, 1992), 401-16, is also very helpful. It also intriguingly speaks of the possibility of a world soul (406).

<sup>9</sup> This essay does not address the important question of the universality of Tillich's conception of the human predicament. In short though this ought to be handled as

an empirical matter requiring extensive and difficult comparative work.

<sup>10</sup> D.E. Roberts "Tillich's Doctrine of Man," in *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, eds. C.W. Kegley & R.W. Bretall (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 108. This essay emphasizes the cosmological aspects of Tillich's thought but it should be noted that the universalism observed in the metaphor of health owes its existence to the structures of Tillich's ontology. See R. D. Morrison II's "Tillich's Telescoping of Ontology and Naturalism," in *Karios and Logos*, 83-106, on his ontology with reference to "life."

<sup>11</sup> "Psychotherapy and a Christian Interpretation of Human Nature," in *The Meaning of Health: Essays in Existentialism, Psychoanalysis, and Religion*, ed. P. LeFevre, (Chicago: Exploration Press, 1984), 53. This pattern mimics closely the dialectic of Hegel. The metaphor of health highlights Tillich's idealism, which need not be a problem if his ideas are treated as hypothetical theories of reality and made open to as much correction as possible. Indeed, "Life is marked by struggle. In an early work Tillich, following Hegel, states: 'Indeed, this cycle of creation and destruction is life.'" (Cruz, 122, quoting Tillich's *Political Expectation*, ed. J. L. Adams, (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 11).

<sup>12</sup> Much future research is required in this area and Lasse Halme's *The Polarity of Dynamics and Form: The Basic Tension in Paul Tillich's Thinking*, (Münster, Hamburg, London: Lit Verlag, 2003) looks to provide a very promising guide through these elements in Tillich's thought. It may be that creaturely "health" mirrors an eternal reconciliation and harmonization "within" God. See Dan Peterson's "Jacob Böhme and Paul Tillich: A Reassessment of the Mystical Philosopher and Systematic Theologian," unpublished essay presented at the Annual Meeting of the North American Paul Tillich Society in San Antonio Texas November 2004. A unique opportunity for collaboration with process thought is opened up by this dynamic inner life of God that deserves greater attention than it has received to date. This divine dynamics gains additional support by the use of Sein rather than Leben in the German versions of the essay "Dimensions, Levels, and the Unity of Life" (Main Works, volume 6, 401).

<sup>13</sup> "Psychotherapy," 53-4; ST II, 29-43. Thus, while the mythic vision of Paradise may have an appeal it is ultimately unattainable by creatures with the capacity for deciding and acting as centered selves. Essential being, while not actual, remains normative for Tillich in that the essential unity of the individual within themselves and with their ground and surrounds returns later in his system

as elements in the solution to the human predicament. All of this of course illustrates Tillich's substance philosophy approach to reality. This does not automatically disqualify his thought today despite the prevalence of process thinking because he is very clear that the cosmos is dynamic and he is just as concerned with becoming as with being.

<sup>14</sup> "Psychotherapy," 54-6; ST II, 29-31, 39-44.

<sup>15</sup> "Psychotherapy," 55; ST II, 29-44.

<sup>16</sup> ST II, 44-59.

<sup>17</sup> "Psychotherapy," 55; ST II, 66-8. This element of guilt is applicable to some aspects of the psychological, spiritual, cultural, and historical dimensions since these are constituted by and/or influenced by an agent – the centered individual. Other types of "health" are not cases of justified guilt. This is why "sin" must only be used to describe culpable spiritual illness.

<sup>18</sup> "Psychotherapy," 55.

<sup>19</sup> "Psychotherapy," 55; cf. ST II, 59-78. On courage, see Tillich's famous *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952).

<sup>20</sup> ST II, 59-78.

<sup>21</sup> Tillich, "Erich Fromm," in *The Meaning of Health*, 73. Also Tillich, "Estrangement and Reconciliation in Modern Thought," in *The Meaning of Health*, 2.

<sup>22</sup> "Psychotherapy," 56. Mediation is through the symbols of Christ, the traditions and sacraments of the church. See Tillich's *A History of Christian Thought*, ed. C.E. Braaten, (New York: Touchstone, 1968), 155f. It may be that mediation is possible through other symbol systems but that would be an empirical question requiring testing judged by the standard of the New Being.

<sup>23</sup> "Estrangement," 1; ST II, 166.

<sup>24</sup> Tillich, "The Relation of Religion and Health: Historical Considerations and Theoretical Questions," in *The Meaning of Health*, 16-52; ST II, 37, 118-38, 165-8.

<sup>25</sup> ST I, 112.

<sup>26</sup> ST I, 113.

<sup>27</sup> ST III, 112. I am indebted to my fellow student Sarah Fredericks for the realization that how the Spiritual Presence relates to the health of the non-human is not clear and should be a fruitful area of future research. This lack of clarity does not doom the project however since the health metaphor relates to salvation as well as sanctification. The ambiguity here is essentially that of Tillich's understanding of the limits of the later vis-à-vis the former. Tillich is hesitant to speak of the activity of the Spirit in the non-spiritual but this is I believe a hesitancy owing to his limited scope (the human) when discussing the Spirit rather than a real rejection of the Spiritual Presence in the non-human dimensions/realms.

<sup>28</sup> "Relation," 41.

<sup>29</sup> "Relation," 47. On "centeredness" see also ST III, passim. A fuller development of the health metaphor would include deeper consideration of this concept.

<sup>30</sup> ST II, 167. Complete illness, to stick with the metaphor, would be completely being overcome by non-being.

<sup>31</sup> ST II, 167; ST III, 362-423. The Kingdom is not merely social or human but includes all of reality (ST III, 377).

<sup>32</sup> See "The Eternal Now," in *The Essential Tillich*, ed. with preface by F.F. Church, (New York: Collier Books, 1987), 120-8.

<sup>33</sup> "Eternal Now," 126. The parallel here with Whitehead's prehension of all actual occasions by God is intriguing.

<sup>34</sup> ST II, 166-80; ST III, 111-3, 275-82.

<sup>35</sup> ST III, 275-82. This is not to say however that any religion will do. In order to be "healthy" it would have to engage with the divine healing power. In a way reminiscent of Karl Barth though even religion is ultimately transcended through the Spiritual Presence (ST III, 243f.).

<sup>36</sup> ST III, 275; 21.

<sup>37</sup> ST III, 111-29, 138-282.

<sup>38</sup> Tillich is very clear that life is always ambiguous unless it is transcended ecstatically through the manifestation of the Spiritual Presence but this is never completely unambiguous. ST III, 30-282. Cf. "The Meaning of Health," in *The Meaning of Health*, 167. Cf. the quote from Political Expectations in Cruz, 122 (note 12 above) and his discussion of the tragic nature of the ambiguity which characterizes life (122-4).

<sup>39</sup> ST III, 275-282.

<sup>40</sup> ST I, 186-204.

<sup>41</sup> "Relation," 50. Unlike the "Christian Science" of Mary Baker Eddy though Tillich was supportive of the medical arts. See M. B. G. Eddy. *Science and Health: With Key to the Scriptures*, (Boston: The First Church of Christ, Scientist, 1971 [1875-1906]).

<sup>42</sup> "Meaning," 168, 172-3.

<sup>43</sup> "Meaning," 165-73.

<sup>44</sup> The implications for medical care and athletics (both too often neglected by theology) is that striving after ever more quantity of life or physical performance is ultimately unfruitful and runs afoul of the fundamental truth of our finitude. It is therefore not healthy in Tillich's terms and may even lead to disorders of the mind, psyche, or spirit. The health of an act in one dimension or realm can only truly be judged by exploring its implications across all dimensions and realms.

<sup>45</sup> ST II, 42.

<sup>46</sup> Creation in Tillich signifies the relationship between God and all things. It is ontological not temporal and continuous not completed. The phrase "created condition" is mine and not Tillich's but it expresses the universal scope of his vision.

<sup>47</sup> Implicit in the sense that it is present but not nearly as developed as his understanding of human psycho-spiritual health which is clearly and extensively developed in his thought. Both ideas are, however, found in Tillich (Drummy, 59-106).

<sup>48</sup> ST III, 12-15.

<sup>49</sup> ST III, especially 11-30 and *passim*. Also "Dimensions, Levels, and the Unity of Life."

<sup>50</sup> ST III, 11. On the organic and the inorganic in Tillich see J.E. Huchingson's "Dimensions of Life: The Inorganic and the Organic in Paul Tillich and Teilhard de Chardin," *Bulletin of the North American Paul Tillich Society*, (Spring 2004) 30(2): 20-3.

<sup>51</sup> Cruz, 122.

<sup>52</sup> On the emergence ("transition from potentiality to actuality") of the dimensions see "Dimensions, Levels, and the Unity of Life," 406-8.

<sup>53</sup> ST III, 15. The process of conquering ambiguity is a continuous one and is an inherent part of life for Tillich (Cruz, 122-4). Essentialization is a potentiality and only partly realizable in actuality.

<sup>54</sup> ST III, 16. In "Dimensions, Levels, and the Unity of Life," Tillich opens the slight possibility of "downward" emergence from the spiritual to the physical etc. on the grounds of a world soul (406).

<sup>55</sup> ST III, 275.

<sup>56</sup> ST II, 96.

<sup>57</sup> "Meaning," 165.

<sup>58</sup> "Meaning," 167. Here we clearly see Tillich's tendency toward non-dualism.

<sup>59</sup> "Meaning," 167.

<sup>60</sup> "Meaning," 168.

<sup>61</sup> "Meaning," 168-72.

<sup>62</sup> "Meaning," 169.

<sup>63</sup> "Meaning," 169.

<sup>64</sup> "Meaning," 169.

<sup>65</sup> It must be noted that Tillich does not mean to suggest that physical health is the result of moral failure. Rather it is a matter of disharmony due to the ambiguity of an estranged cosmos. In that sense only does it have anything like a moral cause.

<sup>66</sup> "Meaning," 169-70; The ideas here are very complex and deserve more extensive treatment than can be given in this essay. It is enough to notice that the self-

reflectivity of this dimension arises out of the centeredness of the organism in the biological dimension.

<sup>67</sup> "Meaning," 170. Thus the profound interrelatedness of the dimensions; they all potentially affect each other.

<sup>68</sup> "Meaning," 170-2; cf. ST III, 111-114.

<sup>69</sup> "Meaning," 171-2.

<sup>70</sup> "Meaning," 172. This is, as we shall see, why the eco-crisis is not merely one of relationship between humanity and nature nor even of consciousness or love.

<sup>71</sup> ST III, 394f, especially noteworthy here is the connection to the eternal as the healing of the problems of history and time and death, hence finitude.

<sup>72</sup> "Meaning," 172.

<sup>73</sup> Drummy, 35.

<sup>74</sup> Drummy, 78, 82-92.

<sup>75</sup> Drummy, 80. See also Cruz, 120-22 on the dynamics of the life process.

<sup>76</sup> ST II, 43.

<sup>77</sup> Drummy, 62. Drummy offers excellent exposition of the sacramental dimensions of Tillich's thought on nature (72-5), though he seems to be trying at times to insert a category that has already been agreed to as a useful one for ecotheology rather than developing a category out of Tillich for this goal since he did not think that everything possessed a natural sacramentality.

<sup>78</sup> ST II, 95; quoted in Drummy, 87.

<sup>79</sup> Drummy, 87, quoting Tillich's "Redemption," 304.

<sup>80</sup> Drummy, 90, quoting "Estrangement," 14. The same point is made by Pan-chui Lai, 234.

<sup>81</sup> Drummy, 91-2.

<sup>82</sup> ST III, 276.

<sup>83</sup> Drummy, 83.

<sup>84</sup> ST II, 39-40.

<sup>85</sup> ST II, 41.

<sup>86</sup> ST II, 80-6.

<sup>87</sup> This argument extends Tillich's own (he occasionally distinguished reconciliation from salvation which is 'healing' but the two are virtually the same given the non-temporality of essential being) but in consistent and productive ways. It must be noted that the essential being of an individual and the essential or ideal being of a society are not matters of form only. They are primarily matters of value. Neville's notion of truth as the carryover of value is a helpful guide in this regard and that is complementary to Tillich's understanding of essences. See his *Recovery of the Measure: Interpretation and Nature*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), chapter 3, (pp.53-70). In addition, Tillich's thought represents a kind of enlightened anthropocentrism perhaps but it does not make the non-

human world merely instrumentally valuable nor does it advocate environmental protection simply for our sake – instead it seeks to view us as parts of the whole of life and with it in relationship to God. It recommends environmental stewardship in the name of life as a whole and not for us only and it does not allow us to ignore the profound responsibility we have for all of creation while also showing us that without communion with the ground of being we are not capable of healing our broken world. Thus, religion turns out to be extraordinarily important in the struggle against the eco-crisis and not just a convenient add on. Rasmussen and others concerned with the present crisis in ecology have made a similar point to the Tillichian one made here.

<sup>88</sup> An excellent example of selected essays on the leading edge in Christian ecotheology and ethics can be found in D.T. Hessel and R.R. Ruether, eds. *Christianity and Ecology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

<sup>89</sup> Pan-chui Lai makes the point where the point that the Kingdom of God is not a merely social symbol but that it extends to all of reality as well (especially 247-9

<sup>90</sup> Rasmussen, 7-8.

<sup>91</sup> Fairweather, “State of Environment Indicators of ‘River Health’: Exploring the Metaphor,” *Freshwater Biology*, (1999) 41(2): 211-220.

<sup>92</sup> Karr, “Defining and Measuring River Health,” *Freshwater Biology*, (1999) 41(2): 221-234.

<sup>93</sup> Martens and Huynen, “A Future without Health?” *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, (2003) 81(21): 896-901.

<sup>94</sup> Ansari et al., “A Public Health Model of the Social Determinants of Health,” *Sozial Und Praventivmedizin*, (2003) 48(4):242-251.

<sup>95</sup> Drummy, 91.

<sup>96</sup> Drummy, 129-144.

<sup>97</sup> Drummy, 130.

<sup>98</sup> See J. A. Nash, *Loving Nature: Ecological Integrity and Christian Responsibility*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991). It may be appropriate to add the dimension of ecology after that of culture in Tillich’s typical lists of the dimensions.

<sup>99</sup> Pan-chui Lai, 247-9. Relationality is key of course but so is the disharmony present “within” the parties related.

<sup>100</sup> See Tillich’s very brief essay “The Hydrogen Bomb,” in *Theology of Peace*, ed. R. H. Stone, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), 158-9. Most importantly, Tillich notes that, “the resistance against the self-destructive consequences of technical control of na-

ture must be done in acts which unite the religious, moral, and political concern, and which are performed in imaginative wisdom and courage” (159).

<sup>101</sup> See Tillich. “The Philosophy of Social Work,” in *The Meaning of Health*, 179-83. C. D. Moe-Lobeda’s recent *Healing a Broken World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003) speaks of theological healing in the social and ecological dimensions as well.

<sup>102</sup> John J. Carey puts it this way: “Tillich’s interests have to be seen as broadly generalized, as dealing with the struggle to find meaning and purpose in life. His ethical writing has to be seen in relation to his dominant theological theme that the great Divine work is bringing humanity from broken, finite Being to restored and whole Being.” *Paulus Then and Now* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2002), 109. We might add that this applies, logically if not explicitly, to all of creation and not just to humanity.

<sup>103</sup> Among them is Gordon Kaufman who expressed this idea to me in 2002. See also Drummy, 117.

<sup>104</sup> The example of Drummy comes to mind. He is clearly engaged in a Tillichian program but he is not in the slightest a classical anthropocentrist.

<sup>105</sup> See, for example, ST II, 65-6.

<sup>106</sup> “Psychotherapy,” 56.

<sup>107</sup> On the notion of the vague category for comparative theology see the volumes of the Comparative Religious Ideas Project, *Religious Truth, Ultimate Realities, and The Human Condition* all ed. Robert C. Neville, (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001).

<sup>108</sup> At the very least there would seem to be a good opportunity for dialogue with Eastern Orthodoxy. See the volumes *Healing*, ed. J. T. Chirban (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Press, 1991) and Jean-Claude Larchet’s *The Theology of Illness*, trans. J. & M. Breck (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2002) both of which address notions of holistic health from the perspective of modern medical science and the Patristic Fathers. Furthermore, while it might be objected that the metaphor of health is not helpful for those who conceive of religion more in terms of a “dance” with the divine than a predicament and solution dynamic surely even there a distinction is made between dancing poorly (i.e. “illness”) and dancing well (i.e. “wellbeing”). That said, the Confucian concept of love being essentially “renovation” of all things has interesting parallels with Drummy’s notion of bio-agape (and agape generally) as well as the metaphor of health developed here. See “The Great Learning” in *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, trans. and compiled Wing-Tsit Chan,

(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973 [1963]), 86.

### EDITOR'S NOTES

- The Summer issue will contain papers by Don Dreisbach, Steven Fink, Jari Ristiniemi, Jonathan Rothchild, and Henry Spaulding.
- If you presented a paper at the 2004 meeting of the North American Paul Tillich Society, or at the Tillich: Issues in Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture Group at the AAR, please email your paper to the editor. The author retains the copyright and is free to submit his/her paper to journals.

• If you wish to publish a book notice or book review, or have published a book or article, please let the editor know so the *Bulletin* can announce it.

• If you have found a new publication on Tillich, please let the editor know.

### REMINDERS:

- The Summer 2005 Issue will contain your Dues Invoice for 2005.
- The Annual Meeting of the Society will take place in Philadelphia this year. Housing information will be in the Summer Newsletter.

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