In This Issue:

Editor's Notes

Remembering the Past and Looking to The Future

Verna Marina Ehret

Welcome to the Spring/Summer issue of the North American Paul Tillich Society *Bulletin*. Many of you will have noticed there was no Fall/Winter issue for 2023. A number of things prevented that issue from happening, so this issue will be a little longer.

First, a quick recap of last year's meeting and a look ahead to this year's meeting. At the 2023 meeting we had a wide array of excellent papers thinking with Tillich about how we engage the ever-changing and challenging present. Many of those papers are included in this issue. You will see innovative thinking from a wide array of voices and angles. Some are complementary, while others raise mutual challenges. All of them both demonstrate and stimulate creative theological thinking.

At the 2023 meeting we had a brief update on the website and dues. Unfortunately, we still do not have the capacity to pay dues online. The website provides the range of dues and a form for paying dues. At the present time we are taking annual dues by check. These can be mailed to Greylyn Hydinger, Philosophy and Theology Department, Gannon University, 109 University Square, Erie, PA, 16541. There is a form on the website you can download and send with your payment. Regular membership fees are $60. Student membership fees are $30. You can also pay by check at the meeting.

Additional notes from the meeting included an announcement that the AAR has discontinued the Tillich Group, so all Tillich sessions will now be run through the Society alone. The Society has been renewed as an affiliated Society with the AAR for another five years. Further, the banquet is on hold until the Society is on more solid financial ground. In the meantime, we strongly encourage attendees to make connections at the meeting and plans for group dinners. The Collected Works in English project is moving forward (scaled back from the Complete Works) under the leadership of Russell Re Manning. Also, at the Board meeting we voted to apply to be reinstated as a religious non-profit in Massachusetts rather than an educational non-profit because the requirements are less extensive as we rebuild. This reinstatement will assist in recognition as a federal non-profit as well.

Elections: Eric Trozzo, Michelle Watkins, and Taylor Thomas were elected to the board for three year terms. J.J. Warren was elected to a two year term to replace Kirk McGregor, who was elected as Vice President. Additionally, Illona Nord has moved to Past President, Benjamin Chicka has moved to president, and Greylyn Hydinger has moved to president elect. Bemjamin Chicka and Greylyn Hydinger have been elected interim co-treasurers, but the Society is seeking a more long-term person in this position soon. Finally, Verna Marina Ehret remains secretary and *Bulletin* editor. Rachel Baard and Russel Re Manning's tenure on the board ended with the 2023 meeting. If you would like to become involved in the leadership of the society in any capacity, please contact Verna at vehret@mercyhurst.edu.

The 2024 meeting will be held on Friday, November 22 in San Diego. Because 2023 marked the 60th anniversary of the completion of Paul Tillich's three-volume *Systematic Theology*, this work is the center piece of this year's conference. The 2024 Annual Meeting is organized around the theme of *Employing and Revising Paul Tillich's System of Categories for the Present Religious Situation*. Three main questions shape this theme: 1) How are Tillich's categories currently used to guide inquiry? 2) How should Tillich's categories be revised in light of the findings of such inquiries? 3) What new theological claims are enabled by such uses and revisions? Details on the specific location of the meeting will be forthcoming through the Google group and the NAPTS website.

After the articles, this edition of the *Bulletin* is temporarily replacing the "Member Spotlight" with a more extensive "In Memoriam" section because of the significant losses to the Society this year. It also provides information on new publications and other work by members.

Note: The editor works to make sure everything that comes across her desk is included in the *Bulletin*, but please reach out if something you sent was not included or there is an error that needs to be corrected. Further, if you have presented recently at any Society or Tillich Group meetings and have not published your paper with us, please send it to vehret@mercyhurst.edu.

Articles

The Demonic, Sin, and Fundamentalism: A Mutual Illumination of Paul Tillich's Doctrine of Sin and Thomas Bauer's Theory of Fundamentalism

Emil Lusser

Introduction

The concept of fundamentalism has changed over the last century. It began as a self-designation of an American Protestant movement and was then used in a broader sense. In the wake of the Islamic Revolution in Iran (1979), the term was also applied to other religions. Finally, fundamentalism debates go beyond the sphere of religion and extend to other areas of culture, such as science or politics.[1] Now, fundamentalism can be discussed on different layers of theory; be it historical, sociological, or philosophical. But how can we talk theologically about fundamentalism? To answer this question, this paper ventures into the actualization of Paul Tillich's (1886–1965) concept of the demonic in the 1920s with the fundamentalism theory of the Arabic and Islamic scholar Thomas Bauer (*1961). Early Tillich was chosen because there are entry points to revitalize his theory of the Demonic into a theological interpretation of fundamentalism. However, Tillich's concept of the Demonic is very abstract, so Bauer's theory of fundamentalism is used to concretize the Demonic as an interpretive

category of past and present. While in his fundamentalism theory Bauer has already seen much that is correct, at the same time his model lacks a theory of religion that Tillich can provide. Furthermore, in this investigation, we are concerned with a theological understanding of fundamentalism, which a sociological theory such as Bauer presents cannot give. With the mutual illumination of Tillich and Bauer, the following questions will be explored: How is fundamentalism possible? What can be understood as fundamentalism?

The paper is divided into three sections: First, Bauer's theory of fundamentalism will be elaborated in relation to his interpretation of society and his understanding of religion. Then, Tillich's concept of the Demonic will be explicated against the background of his theory of religion and culture and in relation to his early doctrine of sin. Finally, the questions raised above will be discussed based on a mutual illumination of Bauer and Tillich.

Fundamentalism according to Thomas Bauer

Bauer's social theory must be understood against the background of his ancient Arabic studies. In his 1992 dissertation *Altarabische Dichtkunst (Ancient Arabic Poetry)*, Bauer opens with the statement that "hardly any other poetry in a still living language makes us feel its alterity as strongly as ancient Arabic."[2] Such alterities could be overcome only by putting oneself in the shoes of the listeners of the time and hearing each poem in its context. Bauer attempts to meet this ideal situation by turning his attention to poetic descriptions of wild donkeys. The result of his investigation is constitutive of his further theoretical development. On the one hand, he observes that although the ancient Arabic poets always say roughly the same, they nevertheless make an effort to ensure that every single poem has an original cut,[3] and on the other hand, each individual poem acquires its meaning only in the context of all other poems devoted to the same topic.[4] Not only is there a

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[1] Cf. Fritz, M.: Christlicher Fundamentalismus.
[2] Bauer, T.: Altarabische Dichtkunst, 1.
[3] Ibid., 148.
[4] Cf. Ibid., 251: „But this is the ‚depth' of ancient Arabic poetry: no ‚deeper' knowledge of the world and of man is

to be conveyed at first. Rather, the depths of the poetry itself must be plumbed further and further, the endless game of selection and variation that the Arab tribes played with each other over generations must be played on, ever new variants of the game and original moves

diversity of interpretations of the world in ancient Arabic poetry, but such diversity is also what gives meaning to the individual poems in the first place. From the dissertation, it can be concluded that Bauer sees the treatment of literary ambiguity as a feature of ancient Arabic poetry. It is important to keep in mind that Bauer encounters ambiguity in his ancient Arabic studies, for ambiguity forms a key concept in his cultural theory.[5]

In his 2018 essay *Die Vereindeutigung der Welt (The Unambiguation of the World)*, Bauer states that ambiguity can arise involuntarily as well as be brought about intentionally, for example through wordplay. Deliberately vague formulations make it possible for a statement to be interpreted over and over in a new and updated way. For example, the sentence: Human dignity is inviolable. What should be understood by the dignity of a human being is not decidedly determined here but must be interpreted anew again and again. At the same time, ambiguity can never be completely avoided; a residue of ambiguity always remains.[6] However, Bauer's idea of cultural ambiguity, which he elaborates on in his 2011 book *Kultur der Ambiguität (Culture of Ambiguity)*, refers to individual psychological considerations of tolerance and intolerance of ambiguity. Bauer considers Stanley Budner's approach to tolerance of ambiguity and intolerance of ambiguity transferable to social theory. According to Budner on the one hand intolerance of ambiguity describes „the tendency to perceive (i.e., interpret) ambiguous situations as sources of threat". While on the other hand tolerance of ambiguity may be defined as „the tendency to perceive ambiguous situations as desirable". Furthermore, Budner refers

to an ambiguous situation "as one that cannot be adequately structured or categorized by the individual, because of the lack of sufficient cues."[7]

To distinguish himself from literary and psychological models of ambiguity, Bauer's concept of cultural ambiguity describes phenomena in which the same term, act, or object has different meanings in society. However, this form of meaning dissent "is characterized precisely by the fact that mutually exclusive norms may be valid at the same time."[8] In addition, Bauer follows the assumption from individual psychology that "people by nature tend to avoid ambiguous, unclear, vague, contradictory situations."[9] Due to this, as Bauer reflects, we do not live in a world of diversity but can perceive a decline in diversity. Against the background of ethnic diversity, a variety of different lifestyles, and plural truths, for example in religions, it becomes evident that the world is anything but unambiguous. The tendency toward unambiguity is thus difficult to reconcile with an ambiguous world.[10]

According to Bauer, there are two ways of dealing with ambiguity in the case of ambiguity-intolerance: Indifference (Gleichgültigkeit) and fundamentalism. Between these two poles, every social sphere realizes itself, be it for example politics, science, art, or religion. Bauer defines indifference and fundamentalism as follows:

> The indifferent one recognizes ambiguity (or at least senses it without being aware of it) and therefore turns away from the ambiguous phenomenon. The fundamentalist, on the other hand, simply denies that ambiguity exists. In this case, since it does exist, he needs some religious or political authority that knows the correct interpretation, the only correct

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must be demonstrated. [...] Every move in this game evokes the memory of many other variants already played earlier. And it is only through this that the move is given meaning."
[5] For a reconstruction of Bauer's theory of ambiguity and religion cf. Wörn, K.: Ambiguität, 83–88.
[6] Cf. Bauer, T.: Vereindeutigung der Welt, 13–16.
[7] Budner, S.: Intolerance of ambiguity, 29f. Budner assumes that there are three possible ambiguous situations: „a completely new situation in which there are no familiar cues, a complex situation in which there are a great number of cues to be taken into account, and a contradictory situation in which different elements or cues

suggest different structures—in short, situations characterized by novelty, complexity, or insolubility."
[8] Bauer, T.: A Culture of Ambiguity, 10; Bauer defines cultural ambiguity as follows: „We may talk of the phenomenon of cultural ambiguity if, over a period of time, two contrary, or at least competing, clearly differing meanings are associated with the same term, act, or object; or if a social group draws on contrary or strongly differing discourses for attributions of meaning to various realms of human life; or if one group simultaneously accepts different interpretations of a phenomenon, all of them entitled to equal validity."
[9] Bauer, T.: Vereindeutigung der Welt, 15.
[10] Ibid., 11f.

interpretation. It needs a leader, a central committee, a self-appointed caliph.[11]

Therefore, Bauer sees fundamentalism and indifference as functional rather than substantive descriptions of social phenomena, which can be found in all spheres of society.[12] That means indifference and fundamentalism occur in every area of culture and are not restricted to religion. Building on the basic structure of society, Bauer's concept of religion is to be examined. For Bauer, religion is, as was already indicated in his dissertation, a matter of ambiguity for two reasons. First, religion is "based on faith in something that goes beyond what is rationally knowable, literally transcends […] it, faith, that is, in something greater and different from us."[13] This something is beyond interpretation. We cannot conceptualize that which eludes human cognition. Second, religion is constituted in communication. On the one hand, there is horizontal communication between people and on the other hand, vertical communication, in which "the divine, the actually quite other, communicates itself to human beings, that is, it communicates with them." The latter is characterized by the fact that vertical communication "does not take place always and everywhere, but [only] occurs in certain historical contexts."[14] However, vertical communication exists only in revelatory religions, for example in Christianity or Islam.

From this functional definition, Bauer derives three characteristics of religious fundamentalism. First, an obsession with truth, second, the negation of history, and third, a striving for purity. By obsession with truth, Bauer understands the striving for unambiguity. The striving for unambiguity becomes noticeable when a religious group assumes that only one interpretation can be true, and that this truth must be recognized unequivocally. Thus, perspectival, and therefore ambiguous worldviews are principally rejected. The negation of history does not mean a denial of past events, since fundamentalist religious communities also refer to

supposedly historical events, but rather a historical-critical investigation in history. The third and final characteristic of religious fundamentalism, the striving for purity, can be understood as isolating unvocalized content and norms from ambiguous influences. For example, fundamentalist groups segregate themselves from the rest of the culture to prevent the contamination of their theories and practices by outsiders.[15]

The Demonic in Paul Tillich

Around 1900, the concept of the Demonic becomes an interpretative category of the social situation. Time diagnoses, both in literature as well as in theology and philosophy, use this term to describe the mundane hustle and bustle of modern life.[16] In Tillich's work, the concept of the Demonic appears from 1919 onward but does not receive a systematic function until his 1923 writing *Grundlinien des religiösen Sozialismus (Basic Lines of Religious Socialism)*.[17] In the following section, Tillich's concept of the Demonic is explicated against the background of his early theory of freedom and within the framework of his doctrine of sin.

In his 1910 doctoral lecture *Die Freiheit als philosophisches Prinzip bei Fichte (Freedom as Philosophical Principle in Fichte)*, Tillich concisely presents his theory of freedom. There he states: "To postulate God is not to assume his existence theoretically for practical reasons, but to bring to exposition the freedom of the absolute I in the individual."[18] Accordingly, the idea of God functions in Tillich as a description of the general structure of consciousness. The underlying structure of consciousness is the unconditioned, which becomes conscious in the act of faith. In the act of faith, consciousness grasps itself and becomes aware of absolute freedom as the foundation of consciousness. Tillich describes absolute freedom as the tension between "freedom as the self-positing of reason" and "freedom as the power to contradict oneself."[19] Therefore, the unconditioned as the

[11] Ibid., 39.
[12] Cf. Ibid., 30.
[13] Ibid., 34.
[14] Ibid., 35.
[15] Cf. Ibid., 29f.

[16] Cf. Danz, C.: Das Dämonische, 147f.
[17] Cf. Danz, C. and Schüßler, W.: Wirklichkeit des Dämonischen, 7.
[18] Tillich, P.: Freiheit als philosophisches Prinzip, 61.
[19] Ibid., 62.

foundational structure of consciousness is expressed in the relationship between position and negation of individual freedom. "Sin" is, according to Tillich's 1912 theological dissertation *Mystik und Schuldbewusstsein (Mysticism and Guilt Consciousness)* "the contradiction that posits itself by the power of its being as a contradiction."[20] Therefore, sin is neither position, i.e., freedom to posit oneself, nor negation, i.e., freedom to negate one's positing, but the counter-position. While negation can be understood as a moment of position, just as the finite can be understood as a moment of the infinite, the counter-position eludes this possibility. Therefore, sin describes the absolute opposition between the conditioned and the unconditioned. If God as absolute freedom, i.e., being in the unity of position and negation, describes the structure of consciousness, sin must be understood as the self-limitation of one's freedom. Sin is the contradiction of reason against its presupposition.[21]

But how do God and sin, absolute freedom, and the freedom to self-contradict, respectively relate to each other? Tillich pleads to include sin as the contradiction against the unity of self-position and self-negation into God as the unity of self-position and self-negation. Tillich concludes that "the relation of God to sin is the content of all theological statements and can only be understood in them. God has not an abstract but a concrete relation to sin, namely that he overcomes it."[22] Therefore, the self-contradiction of human freedom is integrated into the concept of God and thus it is overcome. God functions as the principle of absolute freedom only because in him the freedom to posit oneself and the freedom to contradict oneself have been brought to a paradoxical unity. The divine and the counter-divine, the creative and the destructive are transferred into a unity that allows Tillich to speak both of God's transcendence, i.e., the incomprehensibility, the strict difference between

God and humanity, and at the same time of God's revelation in creation, with which God originally stands in unity. Tillich's doctrine of creation and doctrine of sin is already closely intertwined in his early theological system. He aims at tying revelation to the act of faith, which occurs underivably and in which humanity becomes aware of their presupposition, i.e., God as the principle of absolute freedom. This is an attempt to free the Kantian-Fichtian understanding of religion from its determination as the fulfillment of the moral law and to integrate irrationality, which consists in the incorporation of self-contradiction into God's being, into his conception of revelation. According to Tillich, religion does not consist in the freedom to bend under the moral law, but in an underivable performance in which the individual becomes aware that they cannot fulfill the categorical imperative but can and must act freely.

Against the background of Tillich's freedom-theoretical doctrine of sin, the demonic will be treated in a next step as a sense-theoretical revision of the early doctrine of sin. In his 1926 essay *Der Begriff des Dämonischen und seine Bedeutung für die Systematische Theologie (The Concept of the Demonic and its Importance for Systematic Theology)*, Tillich states: "The importance of the concept of the demonic first became apparent to me in the basic problem of the philosophy of religion, the question of the relationship between sacred and profane, between religion and culture."[23] For Tillich the pressing question is: How is it possible that religion is an independent sphere in culture and at the same time underlies all cultural spheres. Insofar as the concept of the demonic gains its importance from that question, Tillich concludes that the demonic "must be pursued from the foundation of the philosophy of religion onwards through all the main parts of systematics."[24] From the end of World War I, Tillich worked on a meaning-theoretical realignment of his early theory of freedom, which is the

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[20] Tillich, P.: Mystik und Schuldbewußtsein, 89.
[21] Cf. Tillich, P.: Systematische Theologie von 1913, 338: „Sin, by its very nature, is contradiction, that which eludes derivation. The standpoint of sin has been recognized as a moment of the standpoint of reflection, whose character it is precisely to contradict the absolute system and thus the epitome of everything that can be deduced; on the

theological standpoint, which is conditioned by the standpoint of reflection, sin is what is always already presupposed."
[22] Ibid., 339.
[23] Tillich, P.: Begriff des Dämonischen, 285.
[24] Ibid., 285.

foundation of his theory of culture and religion. "Every spiritual act is," according to Tillich's 1923 *Religionsphilosophie (Philosophy of Religion),* "an act of meaning" and by meaning he understands "the common characteristic and the ultimate unity of theoretical and practical spheres of spirit."[25] For Tillich, meaning functions as a medium for the self-realization of the consciousness.

Tillich describes the functioning of meaning consciousness with the following structural elements: "The consciousness of the context of meaning in which each individual meaning stands and without which it would become meaningless."[26] Consciousness is relationally constructed in itself and therefore every positing of the consciousness must be interpreted in its context. Otherwise, it would be without meaning. The next element is "the consciousness of an unconditional meaning that is present in all individual meaning."[27] The unconditional meaning is the precondition for the possibility of meaningfulness in the first place. The unconditional meaning is the foundation of consciousness, which precedes the subject-object structure. Consequently, it is the enabling ground for every act of consciousness. The last structural element is "the consciousness about a demand, under which every single meaning stands, to fulfill the unconditional meaning."[28] Thus, Tillich describes consciousness as being under the demand to grasp itself in its deep structure, i.e., in its relation of individual meaning to unconditional meaning. But this is impossible because of the relationality of the consciousness. For the consciousness cannot realize the infinite reflexivity to the positing of the self-consciousness in a concrete positing of meaning. Tillich summarizes the first element in the concept of form and the second in the concept of import (Gehalt) and uses them to describe the self-apprehension of the spirit. The former describes the "transcendental functions of the spirit, i.e., the autonomous activity of the spirit in its inner self-relatedness," while the latter stands for "the self-

apprehension of the spirit in the reflexivity of its cultural activity."[29]

Based on the meaning consciousness, Tillich explains the difference between religion and culture as follows: "Every religious act, [...] is by its form a cultural act; it is directed toward the totality of meaning. But it is not cultural according to its intention; for it does not mean the totality of meaning, but it means the import of meaning."[30] Culture is the directedness towards conditional forms and therefore the realization of the autonomous activity of the spirit in its inner self-relation. Religion is directedness toward unconditional import, understood as an event of self-disclosure in which consciousness becomes aware of its cultural activity. The ideal society would be the unity of religion and culture because then every form would function as a medium for the import and therefore reveal the inner functioning of the consciousness. But, since the attempt to grasp the meaning import results in infinite reflexivity, it cannot be apprehended by forms, but only be intended symbolically through forms. Thus, religion describes an attitude of spirit (Geisteshaltung), which is formally the same as in culture but differs in its intention. This religious intention is the prerequisite for meaning fulfillment to be possible in all functions of consciousness. Consequently, according to Tillich, only in religion a complete realization of the spirit or the representation of the deep structure of consciousness is possible. Religion and culture, however, stand in a reciprocal relationship: "Culture is the form of expression of religion, and religion is the content of culture."[31] This conception allows Tillich to abolish the contraposition of religion and culture in culture and explains why religion can be found in all cultural spheres.

From here, the relationship between sacred and profane must be clarified, which emerges from this redefinition of religion and culture. According to Tillich, "a meaningful act or an object of meaning is sacred in so far as it is the bearer of the unconditional

[25] Tillich, P.: Religionsphilosophie, 133.
[26] Ibid., 133.
[27] Ibid., 133.
[28] Ibid., 133.

[29] Abreu, F.H.: „Directedness Towards the Unconditioned", 50.
[30] Tillich, P.: Religionsphilosophie, 135.
[31] Ibid., 142.

meaning, profane in so far as it does not express the unconditional meaning."[32] Something acquires sacred quality when it functions as a medium for the fulfillment of meaning, i.e., the fulfillment of unconditional meaning in the individual meaning. Sacredness describes the conditions of the possibility of the self-disclosedness of consciousness by understanding conditional forms as a medium for unconditional import. For Tillich, reality is imbued with the tension between sacred and profane. Because the sacred is the articulation of the relation of the unconditional meaning to the conditional meaning, it is both the ground and the abyss of all positing of meaning.[33] Since in the sacred lies the demand for the unconditional meaning to be fulfilled in the conditional meaning, it must be asked how it then happened that not everything is sacred; that it came to a separation of religion and culture or of sacred and profane at all.

To answer this, the bi-conceptual worldview (sacred/profane, religion/culture, import/form) must be abandoned in favor of a tri-conceptual one, "in which the third concept (the demonic, the destructive, the contrary to meaning, etc.) is not, for instance, the antithesis that is to come to synthesis, but the actual contradiction that must be fought against absolutely."[34] This statement corresponds to Tillich's early doctrine of sin, in which sin is seen as a counter-position that, unlike the antithesis, is not allowed to come to synthesis, but rather expresses itself as a contradiction against its being as a contradiction.[35] The possibility of the demonic lies in the nature of the consciousness of meaning, in which the unconditional meaning is at the same time the foundation of every individual meaning and, due to its relation to meaning and the with that occurring infinite reflexivity, hostile to meaning.[36] According to this, the demonic is the extraction and isolation of the unconditional meaning in contradiction to the

demand to fulfill the unconditional meaning in the individual meaning. However, since the demonic is grounded in the sacred, understood as the medium for grasping the unconditional meaning in every individual meaning, the demonic is both creative and destructive.[37] This dialectic of the demonic is due to its emergence out of the sacred.

Nevertheless, in Tillich's *Philosophy of Religion* it says: "The demonic has all the expressions of the sacred, but it has them with the prefix of contradiction against the unconditional form, and it has them in the intention of destruction."[38] Thus, the counter-position, which Tillich already deals with in his 1912 *Theological Dissertation on Schelling*, is reformulated meaning-theoretically: The demonic contradicts the transcendental functions of consciousness, which are designated by the term unconditional form. The functions of consciousness are unconditional and valid by their being as a structural moment of consciousness in which the deep structure is the unconditioned. Since the transcendental forms are a precondition of the demonic, the demonic occurs as a contradiction against itself. The demonic describes the positing of consciousness in its relation to its content that is to its meaningful self-positing and contextual determinations. It shows the possibility of the isolation of the consciousness in its directedness toward the conditional forms and its relation to its deeper structure, i.e., the unconditioned.[39] Therefore, the demonic alienates consciousness from its preconditions. By that, it comes to the formation of demonizations of culture within culture. For example, religion is formed as an independent sphere of culture, although religion underlies all spheres of culture. Both the divine and the demonic reveal themselves through the medium of culture, but the divine discloses the unity of religion and

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[32] Ibid., 146.
[33] Cf. Ibid., 148: „By the fact that the sacred transcends positively and negatively the immediate forms of consciousness, it becomes for the consciousness on the one hand the fulfillment to which it strives, on the other hand the abyss from which it recoils, and both are one."
[34] Tillich, P.: Begriff des Dämonischen, 287.
[35] Cf. Tillich, P.: Das Dämonische, 140f.: „[T]here is not only a deficit of form, but also a form of the contrary of

form, there is not only a lesser positive, but also a counter-positive."
[36] Cf. Tillich, P.: Religionsphilosophie, 148.
[37] Cf. Tillich, P.: Das Dämonische, 141f.; cf. Wittekind, F.: Das Dämonische, 116.
[38] Tillich, P.: Religionsphilosophie, 149.
[39] Cf. Danz, C.: Das Göttliche, 11.

culture, while the demonic leads to a separation between religion and culture.

Conclusion

Against this background, the questions from above will be addressed. The possibility of fundamentalism must be treated theologically in the context of the doctrine of creation. The starting point for this is the demonic, which stands for the contradiction against the divine. The divine describes the self-apprehension of the spirit, that is the unity of form and import. The demonic which – mythologically speaking – stands in battle with the divine, makes it possible to separate the unity of form and import that is inherent in the divine. By splitting this unity, a differentiation in culture occurs, which is realized again and again. Therefore, it can be stated that the ideal unity of form and import is lost. Or in terms of freedom theory: The demonic splits the paradoxical freedom to position and at the same time to negate one's own freedom in such a way that it comes to a limitation of one's own freedom.

Therefore, fundamentalism as a phenomenon must be treated within the framework of the doctrine of sin. For because of the demonic, on the one hand, there is the formation of rational but meaningless autonomy, which is directed towards the form, and on the other hand, there is the formation of irrational heteronomous movements, which posits the conditioned form to the unconditioned import. The former is built on the freedom of self-positing, and the latter utilizes the power to self-contradict. What Tillich describes with meaningless autonomy, Bauer would call indifference (Gleichgültigkeit) towards ambiguity-intolerance, while Bauer's concept of fundamentalism could be applied to Tillich's concept of heteronomy. However, for Tillich, autonomy is necessary for the revelation of the divine, while heteronomy must be overcome in the act of faith. At the same time, the interplay between heteronomy and autonomy, made possible by the demonic, is responsible for the differentiation of culture. These new spheres in culture can either integrate themselves into the autonomous culture or separate themselves from it in the form of heteronomy.

Tillich's concept of heteronomy can be concretized with Bauer's theory of fundamentalism. Bauer gives three characteristics of fundamentalism that help to actualize Tillich's doctrine of sin to reflect on fundamentalism as an expression of sin. Bauer speaks of truth obsession, i.e., that a dogma or norm is fixed as irrefutably true that allows no alternative interpretations. Tillich writes analogously of positing something conditional as unconditional. Connected with this, two further criteria for the theological interpretation of fundamentalism emerge. On the one hand, the past is rejected as history is open to interpretation, and on the other hand, there is a tendency to isolate oneself from the rest of society.

Finally, it is necessary to refer critically to the differences between Bauer's and Tillich's theories to shed light on the problems of a potential continuation of the considerations just presented. This concerns, on the one hand, the use of the term ambiguity and, on the other hand, the conception of religion. The demonic, which is ambiguous in Tillich because it is both creative and destructive, is not ambiguous in the same way that the world is ambiguous in Bauer. Tillich's concept of ambiguity recurs to a bipolarity of position and negation, whereas in Bauer ambiguity refers to multiple meanings. In Bauer, unambiguity has a negative connotation, whereas in Tillich the divine, which only happens in the breakthrough of the unconditioned, is understood as unambiguous and has a positive, i.e., creative function. However, it comes to the breakthrough of the unconditional with Tillich underivable. The artificial attempt at unification is heteronomous and has then, like Bauer, a negative connotation. This leads to the serious difference between Bauer's sociological theory of religion and Tillich's theological philosophy of religion. In contrast to Bauer, Tillich assumes that in the act of faith there is a reflexive self-disclosure in which consciousness unambiguously internalizes its deep structure. However, since this is an event, this unambiguity cannot be maintained. For Tillich, religion describes the reflexive realization of consciousness, whereas Bauer understands it as a sociological-historical phenomenon.

Lastly, since from the Christian theological standpoint one can only speak of sin as it has been

overcome in Christ, it remains to ask how the overcoming of fundamentalism can be explained within the framework of the doctrine of justification. Tillich's doctrine of the justification of the doubter can be mentioned as an impulse for this. Then fundamentalism could be understood as an attempt to eliminate doubt. But this question must be answered in another place.

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Self-love as a Positive Concept on Social Media

Alberte Zerman Steffen

Introduction

This paper is a theological phenomenological consideration of self-love. It is a consideration of a possible positive connection between a current expression of self-love found in a culture of body positivity on the social media platform Instagram, Paul Tillich 's theological understanding of self-love and Dan Zahavi 's phenomenological understanding of self-affection. In the paper I will first present a culture of body positivity on Instagram that includes an explicit notion of self-love researched by Tracy Tylka and others. Then I will present self-love within theology by presenting Paul Tillich 's understanding of self-love as he states it in *The Courage to Be* from 1952 and *Love, Power and Justice* from 1954. As an immersion, I will consider self-love phenomenologically by presenting Dan Zahavi 's understanding of bodily grounded self-affection in

his work *Self-Awareness and Alterity* from 2020. Parts of my paper repeat central points in my prize paper "Identity and alterity" graded at the University of Copenhagen in 2023.

Body Positivity and Self-Love

First I will account for body positivity on social media and its inclusion of self-love. A comprehensive amount of articles in the international research journal *Body Image* (initiated by cognitive-behavioral psychologist Thomas Cash) account for the subject of body positivity. Articles cover both empirical research of body positivity on social media, the user's response to it, and of its development in psychological research. In the article named "#bodypositivity: A content analysis of body positive accounts on Instagram" from 2019, Clinical Psychologist and PhD in Social Media and Body Image Rachel Cohen and colleagues states that body positivity is a growing social media trend, and that particularly Instagram has seen a rise in body positive accounts. Instagram is a photo and video-based platform where user-accounts share photos and videos accompanied by short texts called captions. Cohen provides an elicited number of more than 7 million posts with the hashtag #bodypositive in 2018. Today that number is over 19 millions.[40] Cohen describes the movement of body positivity on social media as a reactive response to appearance-based ideals and defines it as "a more inclusive and positive conceptualization of body image."[41] The movement has roots in fat activism that begun in the 1960s. In all, body positivity aims to convey a realistic view on the body and opposes idealistic body standards from society. In another article in the publication *New Media & Society*, also by Cohen and colleagues, named "#BoPo on Instagram: An experimental investigation of the effects of viewing body positive content on young women's mood and body image"

Cohen notes that the "pop-cultural emergence of body positivity on social media coincides with a theoretical shift in the body image research literature from a focus on body image disturbance to an exploration of positive body image."[42] Here Cohen references another article from the publication *Body Image* by Professor of Psychology Tracy Tylka and PhD in Psychology Nicole Wood-Barcalow named "What is and what is not positive body image? Conceptual foundations and construct definition" from 2015.

In the article Tylka and Wood-Barcalow provide an overview of a cognitive-behavioral psychological concept of body positivity. Tylka and Wood-Barcalow describe how the research field of body image is influenced by psychological eating disorder prevention research, feminist scholars, humanistic and counseling psychology and more.[43] Tylka and Wood-Barcalow define body positivity as a realistic and positive image of one's own body which is resilient to outside judgement of the body from society. On the basis of empirical quantitative and qualitative research of diverse human experience of body positivity Tylka and Wood-Barcalow describe that positive body image is multifaceted, holistic, both stable and malleable, protective, linked to self-perceived body acceptance by others and shaped by social identities.[44] Over all a positive body image is described as a positive, accepting, appreciative and loving relation to the body which Tylka and Wood-Barcalow describes as part of the self.[45]

Body acceptance and love, Tylka and Wood-Barcalow describe as "expressing love for and comfort with the body, even if not completely satisfied with all aspects of the body."[46] Tylka and Wood-Barcalow emphasize that "Body acceptance and love is not narcissism or vanity", but rather "loving the body for what it can do and its

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[40] Instagram, October 2023.

[41] Rachel Cohen "#bodypositivity: A content analysis of body positive accounts on Instagram," 3.

[42] Rachel Cohen "#BoPo on Instagram: An experimental investigation of the effects of viewing body positive content on young women's mood and body image," 1548.

[43] Tracy Tylka and Wood-Barcalow, "What is and what is not positive body image? Conceptual foundations and construct definition," 119-120.

[44] Tylka and Wood-Barcalow, "What is and what is not positive body image?" 118-119, 121-123 and 126.

[45] Tylka and Wood-Barcalow, "What is and what is not positive body image?" 122.

[46] Tylka and Wood-Barcalow, "What is and what is not positive body image?" 122.

connection to others."[47] This description is reflected in the captions on Instagram that accompany photos and videos with body positive content. In a recent article from 2022 conveying a study of the content in body positive Instagram posts by Ellie Cowles and colleagues in *Body Image* named "Imagery versus captions: The effect of body positive Instagram content on young women 's mood and body image" Cowels interprets the love of body in the body positive movement on social media as self-love. Cowles writes with reference to Tylka and Wood-Barcalow 's article: "Body positive images are often accompanied by captions which convey messages relating to self-love, appreciation, acceptance, and broad conceptualizations of beauty."[48] Cowels uses here an example of #loveyourself that often accompanies #bodypositive, and describes how captions often involves so-called self-love quotes as well.[49]

I have now accounted for my paper 's background of self-love as a part body positivity on social media. This paper is a consideration of this material through theology. I will now present Tillich 's understandings of self-love within his works *The Courage to Be* and *Love, Power and Justice*.

Paul Tillich's understanding of Self-love

As you know, Paul Tillich was a Lutheran theologian with a theology often labeled as existential and inspired by psychology and phenomenology. Tillich criticizes a theological concept of love that he believes is purely self-sacrificial, with the help of existential philosophy such as Nietzsche. Tillich discusses the nature of self and love with contemporary leading figures in psychology such as Rollo May, Erich Fromm and Carl Rogers.[50] Tillich describes God as unconditional and faith as an absolute concern.[51] With regards to self-love, Tillich distinguishes different types of self-love in *Love,*

Power and Justice. The work is an analysis of the title concepts and their intertwined relations within a trinitarian frame. Tillich defines self-love as either "Selfishness" or "Self-acceptance", the latter he describes as: "the affirmation of oneself in the way in which one is affirmed by God."[52] Tillich prefers to use the term self-love metaphorically because it goes against his greater general understanding of love as reunion of the separated.[53] This is very important. Self-love is a mediated concept that we ,according to Tillich, do not have any immediate access to. Tillich writes: "If love is the drive towards the reunion of the separated, it is hard to speak meaningful of self-love. For within the unity of self-consciousness there is no real separation, comparable to the separation of a self-centered being from all other beings. […]. Self-love is a metaphor, and it should not be treated as a concept."[54] The following is an example of Tillich's use of the term self-love as self-acceptance or self-affirmation. In *The Courage to Be* Tillich describes how faith affects the human self-relation in a spiritual dimension of life. Tillich states: "Everyone who lives creatively in meanings affirms himself as a participant in these meanings. He affirms himself as receiving and transforming reality creatively. He loves himself as participant in the spiritual life and as loving its contents. He loves them because they are his own fulfillment."[55]

Tillich's differing definitions of self-love as selfishness and self-love as self-acceptance or self-affirmation may be described as distinctions between false and true self-love. To distinguish what is true self-love it may be fruitful to consider a larger problem and way to approach normativity within Tillich's writings.

Distinguishing True Self-love within a Problem of Normativity

In Tillichs theology the following three different kinds of normativity is to be found: autonomy,

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[47] Tylka and Wood-Barcalow, "What is and what is not positive body image?" 121-125.
[48] Elie Cowles, "Imagery versus captions: The effect of body positive Instagram content on young women's mood and body image," 121.
[49] Cowles "Imagery versus captions," 121-122.
[50] (Tillich 2009: 394-395, Meszaros 2018: 53 and 59, and Cooper 2006: 99.

[51] Paul Tillich. *Theology of Culture,* 41 and Tillich 1957: 13-14.
[52] Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice,* 34.
[53] Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice,* 5.
[54] Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*: 33.
[55] Tillich, *The Courage to Be,* 44.

heteronomy and theonomy. Tillich goes in depth of normativity in his work *Systematic Theology Volume One*.[56] In the work Tillich states that "Autonomy and heteronomy is rooted in theonomy, and each goes astray when their theonomous unity is broken."[57] Separately autonomy and heteronomy are in conflict whereas in theonomy they function together.[58] In *The Courage to Be* Tillich describes corresponding types of courage which explain this normativity: courage to participate in the world (heteronomy) and courage to individualize oneself (autonomy).[59] Tillich describes how the self in a heteronomous courage to participate may lose itself in conformist or collectivist societal ideals when he writes about "threats to the individual self" and a "danger of loss of self."[60] Tillich also describes how the self in an autonomous courage to individualize itself may lose the world around it in a radical Existentialism in which the self has become an "empty shell."[61]

Tillich finds a fruitful union of the courage to individualization and the courage to participation in the courage to be. Here the self is truly itself and also truly a part of the outside world around it but not enslaved by its ideals. A theonomous courage to be is the norm of what Tillich calls "absolute faith" in "God above God."[62] Theonomy, Tillich writes, "transcends the theistic idea of God."[63] He elaborates that "Theism in all its forms is transcended in the experience we have called absolute faith. It is the accepting of the acceptance without somebody or something that accepts."[64] With regards to the conflict between heteronomy and autonomy Tillich elaborates that "The courage to be which is rooted in the experience of the God above the God of theism unites and transcends the courage to be as a part and the courage to be as oneself. It avoids both the loss of oneself by participation and the loss of one's world by individualization. The acceptance of the God above God […] makes us a part of that which is not

also a part but is the ground of the whole."[65] Over all, theonomous faith rooted in the love of God, to Tillich is a courage to be both as a part of society and as an individual self. As such it is a certain kind of norm that makes it possible to distinguish and recognize Tillich's before mentioned understanding of true self-love as self-acceptance on the ground of God's affirmation of the self.

As an immersion into my theological consideration of self-love I will now consider Dan Zahavi's phenomenological concept of bodily grounded self-affection.

Dan Zahavi's phenomenological understanding of Bodily Self Affection

Dan Zahavi is a Husserlian phenomenologist and central in the so called new approach to Husserl. Zahavi's works convey a primary understanding of transcendence.[66] Zahavi's work *Self-Awareness and Alterity* originally published in 1999 and republished in 2020 conveys two central ideas in his collected works: pre-reflective self-awareness and the minimal self.[67] Themes in the work are self-manifestation and hetero-manifestation, and a distinction between pre-reflective and reflective self-awareness.[68] As part of an analysis of the human experience of alterity Zahavi highlights that human awareness of the world is always bodily grounded. Zahavi states, that "Every perspectival appearance implies that the embodied perceiver is itself co-given."[69] To be reflectively aware of this and letting ourselves be affected by this, Zahavi describes as self-affection. Self-affection is not an emotion. It is to be affected by consciousness of and attentivenss to our bodily situation in the world.[70] It is an openness towards others, when we know our own view point. Zahavi writes: "self-affection is always penetrated by the

[56] Tillich 1951: 83-86 *ff.*
[57] Tillich 1951: 85.
[58] see also Tillich, *The Courage to Be,* 82-83.
[59] Tillich, *The Courage to Be,* 79 and 104.
[60] Tillich, *The Courage to Be,* 103 and 84, 87.
[61] Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 140 and 142.
[62] Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 167 and 171.
[63] Tillich, *The Courage to Be,* 167 and Tillich 2014: 171.
[64] Tillich, *The Courage to Be,* 171.

[65] Tillich, *The Courage to Be,* 172-173.
[66] Dan Zahavi, *Self-Awareness and Alterity, A phenomenological Investigation, A New Edition,* 193 and Weis etc. 2019: 3-4.
[67] Zahavi, *Self-Awareness,* xiv.
[68] Zahavi, *Self-Awareness,* 55 og 118.
[69] Zahavi, *Self-Awareness,* 95-96.
[70] Zahavi, *Self-Awareness,* 97 and 101 *ff.*

affection of the world."[71] Zahavi introduces a birth motive and explains:

> To be born is not to be one 's own foundation, but to be situated in both *nature* and *culture*. It is to possess a physiology that one did not choose oneself. It is to find oneself in a historical and sociological context that one did not establish oneself. [...]. Birth is essentially an intersubjective phenomenon, not only in the obvious sense that I was born by another, but also because this very event only has meaning for me through Others. My awareness of my birth, [...] is intersubjectively mediated.[72]

In all, self-affection is letting ourselves be affected by our physical, historical, social and psychological point of view which is shaped by the surrounding world. This self-affection lays a ground for being affected by each other's physical, historical, social and psychological point of view which differs from our own.

Concluding considerations

This paper was a theological phenomenological consideration of self-love on the background of a current expression of possible self-love found in a culture of body positivity on social media. I have described a positive body image as a self-loving self-relation which is not narcissism but loving the functionality of our bodies and their ability to connect us with each other. I have also presented Tillich's distinction between self-love as selfishness and self-love as self-acceptance within a theonomous norm of absolute faith. Lastly I have presented Dan Zahavi's understanding of self-affection as awareness of our human bodily grounding. What my paper considers is the possibility of a positive connection between an awareness of our human bodily grounding, appreciating the functionality of our bodies and their ability to connect us with each other, and a God-given self-acceptance in faith which encourage us to be both our individual self and a part of society.

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The Power of Religious Socialism to Combat Global Climate Catastrophes

Kirk R. MacGregor

On the ninetieth anniversary of *Die sozialistische Entscheidung*, I will use the interpretive lenses of environmental ethics and philosophical theology to appraise the modern relevance of Tillich's religious socialism for combating catastrophes associated

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[71] Zahavi, *Self-Awareness,* 127.

[72] Zahavi, *Self-Awareness,* 177.

with global climate change.[73] In *The Socialist Decision*, Tillich maintained that "real property, heavy industry, major manufacturing, major banks, and foreign trade" must be centralized in the hands of a democratic government.[74] While wishing to regulate these "*positions of economic power*," Tillich denied that the state should hold every means of production.[75] Rather, the free market must exist "as a register of needs and as the regulator of the direction of production and the establishment of prices—all, to be sure, within the perimeters of central planning."[76] Tillich's endorsement of central planning entails that a democracy answerable to the electorate must govern free exchange.[77] For such governance would bolster individual business enterprise and safeguard small business proprietors from the threat of monopoly.[78] Regarding technology, Tillich held that religious socialism should navigate a *media via* between the polarities of misusing technological potentialities and of succumbing to a romantic antipathy toward technology. On Tillich's estimation, economically viable technological progress will find greater support on religious socialism than on capitalism, which automatically rules out the creation of socially beneficial innovations that will ostensibly not generate profit. Hence religious socialism deeply accomplishes technological advancement by synthesizing it with the course of human development.[79] Drawing together these lines of thought, Tillich argued that "the goal of socialist economics is the *unification of world economic space* and the rational utilization of the earth's virtually unlimited productive possibilities in the service of humanity as a whole and all of its constituent groups."[80] According to Tillich, this goal must be achieved through the cooperation of democratic governments (hopefully democratic socialist ones) around the world in order to satisfy the unconditional demand for justice. Here I will argue that Tillich's approach to centralization, technology, and government cooperation underwrites a twofold approach to combating global climate catastrophes: remedying climate change politically, as advocated by Naomi Klein, and remedying climate change technologically, as advocated by John Latham and Stephen Salter.

A professor of climate justice at the University of British Columbia, Klein asserts that the "blindingly obvious roots of the climate crisis" are "globalization, deregulation, and contemporary capitalism's quest for perpetual growth."[81] Since capitalism produced the climate crisis, capitalism is impotent to eradicate it. Not only has unfettered capitalism spawned ostensibly limitless consumer demand, but it has carelessly magnified consumption with no concern for the constraints of our limited and closed natural processes. Moreover, capitalism caters to the concerns of the wealthy instead of the poor and marginalized, a fact which worsens the problem since the poor and marginalized find themselves most affected by the climate crisis.[82] As Kathryn Blanchard and Kevin O'Brien observe, "The world's poor tend to have contributed the least to climate change but are, unjustly, the most likely to be driven from their homes and livelihoods by rising seas and extreme weather events. Christians should take this very seriously, because our faith calls us to serve Christ by serving the poor, to recognize their suffering as the suffering of God."[83] In view of the impotence of capitalism to remedy the climate crisis, Klein argues that the optimal solution to the problem is robust governmental action devised to forestall deleterious economic activity.[84] Tillich's program of

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[73] This paper relies heavily on and builds on my book *Paul Tillich and Religious Socialism: Towards a Kingdom of Peace and Justice* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2021). Frequent citation to this book will be made throughout the paper.

[74] MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 148.

[75] Paul Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, trans. Franklin Sherman, rep. ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012), 159, emphasis original; MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 147.

[76] Tillich, *Socialist Decision*, 160; MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 148.

[77] MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 148.

[78] MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 156.

[79] MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 149.

[80] Tillich, *Socialist Decision*, 159, emphasis original; MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 151-52.

[81] Naomi Klein, "Capitalism vs. the Climate," *Nation*, November 9, 2011; quoted in Kathryn D. Blanchard and Kevin J. O'Brien, *An Introduction to Christian Environmentalism: Ecology, Virtue, and Ethics* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 114.

[82] Blanchard and O'Brien, *Christian Environmentalism*, 114.

[83] Blanchard and O'Brien, *Christian Environmentalism*, 120.

[84] Blanchard and O'Brien, *Christian Environmentalism*, 114.

centralization and national cooperation seems necessary to implement this solution. Applying Tillich's model of religious socialism, corporations and industries presently responsible for pollution would be nationalized and then regulated by a global partnership of democratic governments. This partnership could also, as Klein suggests, raise taxes on fossil fuels and begin long-term preparations to guarantee that local communities are prepared for varying climate conditions.[85] As Klein writes: "Climate change supercharges the pre-existing case for virtually every progressive demand on the books, binding them into a coherent agenda based on a clear scientific imperative."[86] Klein's understanding of the scientific imperative represents part of what Tillich identified as the unconditional moral demand or imperative that everyone receive equitable treatment. Following Kant, Tillich thought "this imperative carried with it the notion that all people be treated as ends in themselves and never as mere means."[87] Regarding this so-called "principle of personality," Tillich wrote: "Therefore one had probably better speak of the principle of personality as a principle of justice. The content of this principle is the demand to treat every person as a person."[88] Accordingly, "the justice of being" amounts to "the intrinsic claim of every person to be considered a person."[89]

Mirroring Tillich, Klein balks at the idea of a completely centralized government and defends the need for private property and private enterprise. However, Tillich and Klein regard government as an indispensable restraint on the potentially unrestricted power of international corporations. Klein maintains that "global capitalism has caused and exacerbated climate change because it ceded power to giant corporations, giving control over the future to corporate boards rather than citizens, structuring the economy for short-term profits and

rapid growth to benefit the few rather than for a healthy, sustainable future for all."[90] In Tillichian fashion, Klein holds that in the absence of government "corporations are at liberty to extract resources, manipulate people into exploitative working conditions, encourage excess consumption, and avoid responsibility for the climate change that they have helped to bring about."[91] Tillich's model of religious socialism precludes a single world government while fostering international agreements on climate change, recognizing that only the global community can adequately police and prevent corporate overindulgence. Moreover, Tillich's religious socialism transforms democracy into a realm in which everyone, notwithstanding wealth, possesses equal power and thus can politically participate in a bottom-up quest for environmental justice.[92] Tillich pointed out that promoting true democracy involves averting the threat of curbing individual participation "sometimes even to the vanishing point in mass societies with an all-powerful party bureaucracy...by methods which deprive a large number of individuals of political influence altogether and for an indefinite time."[93] Thus true democracy ensures that each person "possesses equal participation in the process of making pertinent laws and choices."[94] This agrees beautifully with Klein's view that "democratic politics...is a sphere in which—at least ideally—everyone has equal power. Unlike in markets where one person can hold exponentially more buying power than another, the ideal of democracy means one person, one vote."[95]

Klein correctly observes that tackling climate change necessitates major alterations of economic systems. Further, it will bring about tremendous costs to corporations which have most profited from procuring, selling, and consuming fossil fuels. This can only materialize if average citizens unite to

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[85] Blanchard and O'Brien, *Christian Environmentalism*, 114.
[86] Klein, "Capitalism vs. the Climate"; quoted in Blanchard and O'Brien, *Christian Environmentalism*, 114.
[87] MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 109.
[88] Paul Tillich, *Love, Power and Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), 60; MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 109.
[89] Tillich, *Love, Power and Justice*, 60; MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 109.

[90] Blanchard and O'Brien, *Christian Environmentalism*, 115.
[91] Blanchard and O'Brien, *Christian Environmentalism*, 115.
[92] Blanchard and O'Brien, *Christian Environmentalism*, 115-16.
[93] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. in 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 3:347; MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 174.
[94] MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 174.
[95] Blanchard and O'Brien, *Christian Environmentalism*, 115.

pursue political action for the purpose of remedying the abuses of the powerful few. Such a united corrective front constitutes the essence of democracy.[96] In line with Klein, Tillich contended that democracy play a corrective measure.[97] In any society, the ruling factions must be placed under "the demand of justice...in such a way that all groups are given the possibility of asserting their own demand for justice."[98] Since only democracy can meet this requirement, democracy constitutes a morally obligatory prophetic phenomenon and therefore possesses eternal significance. For this reason, democracy will necessarily face opposition from any individual or group longing for "a return to the powers of actual origin, including soil, blood, and social group."[99] In *Systematic Theology*, Tillich acknowledged democracy as "an element in the Spiritual Community and its justice" because "democracy makes it possible to fight for freedom in all realms which contribute to the historical movement by fighting for freedom in the political realm."[100] As I have recently written, democracy "becomes a fulfiller of *kairos*, taking advantage of every inbreaking of the unconditional by ensuring that all members of society find their potentialities more fully actualized."[101]

Latham, late professor emeritus of physics at the University of Manchester, and Salter, professor emeritus of engineering design at the University of Edinburgh, support harnessing the power of technology to reduce climate change. They promote the technique of marine cloud brightening, in which several artificial clouds would be generated over oceans to reflect a portion of incoming sunlight back into space, thus cooling the earth and counterbalancing the excess heat confined by greenhouse gases.[102] It would also result in a significant increase of ice thickness at the North Pole and a marginal increase of ice thickness at the South Pole.[103] Latham and Salter advise the construction of around 1500 unmanned Rotor (Flettner) ships powered by underwater turbines that would spray salty seawater mist into marine stratocumulus clouds, thus producing a cooling "which general circulation model (GCM) computations suggest could...have the capacity to balance global warming up to the carbon dioxide-doubling point."[104] Latham and Salter recognize that marine cloud brightening is not a panacea and needs to be done in conjunction with reduction of carbon emissions and reparation of natural ecosystems. Their claim is supported by a team of climate scientists led by Michael Diamond, who stress that reduction of carbon emissions and reparation of natural ecosystems will not be enough on their own:

> To avoid the worst impacts of climate change, it's paramount that we decarbonize the economy and preserve and restore natural ecosystems. Unfortunately, pledges made from countries thus far will not limit warming to below 1.5°C, even after accounting for the more ambitious targets set at the recent COP26 climate summit in Glasgow. Meeting the 1.5°C Paris Agreement goal will likely require a massive deployment of CO_2 removal technologies that remain unproven at scale. As a result, many scientists—including an expert panel recently convened by the US National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM)—have advocated for research into solar climate interventions that would offset some effects of greenhouse gas-driven warming by reflecting more sunlight back to space. This would temporarily cool the Earth, giving mitigation and adaptation efforts more time to scale up.[105]

The global cost of marine cloud brightening is estimated by the US National Research Council at

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[96] Blanchard and O'Brien, *Christian Environmentalism*, 115.
[97] MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 130.
[98] Tillich, *Socialist Decision*, 142; MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 130-31.
[99] MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 131.
[100] Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3:264, 347; MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 170.
[101] MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 131-32.
[102] John Latham et al., "Marine Cloud Brightening," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 370 (2012): 4217.

[103] Ibid., 4228.
[104] Ibid., 4257-58, 4217.
[105] Michael S. Diamond et al., "To assess marine cloud brightening's technical feasibility, we need to know what to study–and when to stop," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 119.4 (2022): https://www.pnas.org/doi/full/10.1073/pnas.2118379119.

between \$10 billion per year (for slow deployment) and \$100 billion per year (for rapid deployment).[106] Since it would occur beyond nations' territorial waters and would impact the environment of multiple nations and the oceans, marine cloud brightening would be regulated by international law, especially the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).[107] Assuming its risks do not outweigh its benefits, marine cloud brightening would be supported by Tillich's positive recognition of the "infinite possibilities" of "technological progress" and his principle of the "rational utilization of the earth's virtually unlimited productive possibilities" at the hands of the international social will.[108] Integrating the insights of the early Tillich's *Socialist Decision* with the later Tillich's *Systematic Theology*, the Spiritual Presence must animate and guide the social will: "The divine Spirit, cutting out of the vertical direction to resist an unlimited running-ahead in the horizontal line, drives toward a technical production that is subjected to the ultimate end of all life processes—Eternal Life."[109] Since marine cloud brightening, if viable, contributes to this ultimate end by protecting our global habitat, it would constitute an act of the Spiritual Presence. Tillich's envisaged coalition of democratic socialist governments worldwide could finance this project "in the service of humanity as a whole and all of its constituent groups" without threatening anyone with poverty.[110] This phenomenon would support my claim that "if religious socialism spreads across the globe, the leading groups of each nation, by virtue of their sharing a common outlook, will cooperate for planetary good by regulating the global productive system by socialist tenets."[111]

The conjunction of marine cloud brightening with the reduction of carbon emissions and reparation of natural ecosystems perfectly illustrates Tillich's view that "technological advancement may well play a role in true progress...but it must be governed by the increased sacramental joining of human beings with their creative ground."[112] In *Systematic Theology*, Tillich illustrated the theonomous use of technology: "Under the impact of the Spiritual Presence, even technical processes can become theonomous and the split between the subject and the object of technical activity can be overcome. For the Spirit, no thing is merely a thing. It is a bearer of form and meaning and, therefore, a possible object of *eros*...If the *eros* toward these objects is not corrupted by competitive or mercenary interests, it has a theonomous character."[113] The need for *tikkun olam*, which includes working to repair the environment so that humans are more and more connected with the depth dimension of reality—the dimension of meaning, value, and being—makes pragmatically imperative the project of developing the metaphysics of environmental ethics. Such a metaphysics, in the later Tillich's estimation, would emanate from metaphysical reflection on God as being-itself.[114]

For these reasons, it seems to me that Tillich's socialist program facilitates the solution of global climate change through the mutually necessary partnership of politics and technology. Our response to the present climate crisis represents a *kairos*. In *The Socialist Decision*, then, Tillich furnishes us with the religio-political underpinnings to respond in a courageous, faithful, and effective way to the climate crisis, potentially leading current history to take a positive rather than a negative turn and to draw us closer to the ground of our being. This, I believe, constitutes a significant part of the book's continuing legacy.

[106] National Research Council, *Climate Intervention: Reflecting Sunlight to Cool Earth* (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2015), 144.

[107] Alan Boyle, "Law of the Sea Perspectives on Climate Change," *International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law* 27.4 (2012): 831-38.

[108] Tillich, *Socialist Decision*, 156, 159; MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 149, 152.

[109] Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3:259; quoted in Francis Ching-Wah Yip, *Capitalism as Religion? A Study of Paul Tillich's Interpretation of Modernity*, Harvard Theological Studies 59 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 99; MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 149.

[110] Tillich, *Socialist Decision*, 159; MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 152.

[111] MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 152.

[112] MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 80-81.

[113] Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3:258-59; quoted in Yip, *Capitalism*, 100; MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 159.

[114] MacGregor, *Tillich and Religious Socialism*, 80.

Anxiety and Precarity In Paul Tillich's *The Courage to Be*

Teaha An

Introduction

In the continental philosophical tradition, starting from Søren Kierkegaard, it is common to distinguish anxiety from fear. The fundamental difference between these two is that anxiety does not have a specified object to which one's intentionality is directed, whereas fear involves the consciousness oriented toward definite objects.[115] It is possible to say that a person is "fearful of" something, but not "anxious of" something. The preposition "of" here specifies a particular situation or a "thing" apprehended as threat or danger. It does not apply to anxiety because the object toward which one's consciousness is directed cannot be specified as such. However, one can be anxious "about" or "concerning" something, because there is a quasi-intentionality toward an imaginary or anticipatory condition that is not yet known or cannot be known. It primarily pertains to the anxious person's relation to the object of concern, rather than the object. It is possible to raise several questions about anxiety and the way we can relate ourselves to this phenomenon, such as "what does anxiety signify about human existence?" or "does it mean anything to the human condition to exist?" These questions fundamentally pertain to the issue of whether anxiety signifies a *telos* of human existence. Other thinkers who have analyzed the phenomenon of anxiety have identified it as having either negative or positive teleology in relation to human existence. For example, Sigmund Freud saw *Angst* as a pathological reaction. On the other hand, Martin Heidegger focuses on the somewhat positive effects that anxiety has for one's relationship with "Being" (*Das Sein*) and Nothingness (*Das Nichts*).[116] Even for Kierkegaard, although he acknowledges the possible danger of losing one's subjective sense of being by succumbing to anxiety, there is an (implicitly) positive teleology of anxiety for faith since one is provoked to direct themselves toward infinity by the interruption of their identification with finitude.[117] Regarding the relationship between human existence and the phenomenon of anxiety, Paul Tillich answers or brings up possible ways to respond to these questions. Within his distinctive theological framework where God is not confined to a mere existent (*Das Seiende*) but equated to Being-as-such (*Das Sein*), Tillich places anxiety as an ontological marker in which one gets to encounter his or her finitude of *being* in facing *nonbeing*. In this regard, this paper does not aim to analyze Tillich's suggested methods of dealing with anxiety. Rather, I intend to enquire whether Tillich's phenomenological analysis of anxiety has any implicit or explicit teleology, as well as the significance of anxiety in ethics, which seems to be marginal in comparison with his emphasis on ontology.

Tillich's Existentialism and Theology

Tillich's theology demonstrates his efforts to reformulate Christian theology in dialogue with the advances and intellectual trends of his time. His choice of dialogical partner for theology and philosophy of God was ontology, especially existentialism of his contemporary stream of thought.[118] Tillich defines existentialism both as a "style" and "a way of looking at man" in the tension between what is essentially given and what exists in time and space.[119] It would be quite fair to see

[115] Søren Kierkegaard. *Kierkegaard's Writings, Viii, Volume 8: Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation On the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin.* Milwaukee, Wis.: Volunteer Services for the Visually Handicapped, 2004: 41-42.

[116] Martin Heidegger. "What is Metaphysics?", *Pathmarks*. trans. By McNeill, William. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (1998): 88-89.

[117] Kierkegaard, *Concept of Anxiety*, 154-155. Regarding how Kierkegaard's account of anxiety alludes to its positive function towards faith, see Stefano Micali. *Phenomenology of Anxiety*. Phaenomenologica Ser. ;

V.235. Cham: Springer International Publishing AG, 2022: 72-75.

[118] Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson. *20th-century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age.* Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, (1992): 113-114. Grenz and Olson point out that Tillich emphasized the dialogical, interdependent, and inseparable relationship between philosophy and theology.

[119] Paul Tillich and Carl E Braaten. *A History of Christian Thought, From Its Judaic and Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism.* New York: Simon and Schuster (1972): 539-540.

Tillich's effort to look for a theological response to existentialism as a reaction to the prominent post-WWII collective psychosis of anguish.[120] Was he an existentialist theologian? To this question, Tillich answers himself, "fifty-fifty".[121]

Throughout his works, including *Systematic Theology*, *The Courage to Be*, and *Love, Power, and Justice*, Tillich develops a thorough analysis of *Being* in dialogue with theology. Tillich's peculiar analysis of anxiety comes in this context of his inquiry of *Being*. As I have briefly introduced in the previous section, anxiety in the continental philosophical tradition concerns "nonbeing" or "nothingness" that is involved in this form of attunement. For Tillich, anxiety arises out of processing one's relation to *Being*. In this process of existential inquiry, one comes to realize their "finite, transitory, and temporal" status and faces the continuously occurring threat of nonbeing.[122] This encounter with nonbeing that reveals one's finitude has a theologically significant effect because this existential experience brings with it some kind of revelation of God's being. Tillich writes, "only those who have experienced the shock of transitoriness, the anxiety in which they are aware of their finitude, the threat of nonbeing, can understand what the notion of God means".[123] In his theological investigation of God's being, he uses "the question of the structure of being" provided by existential philosophy to develop an onto-theology.[124]

Tillich brings to the fore the immanence of God by placing God "above God". God is radically different from the "finite" beings that he created. Rather, he is the "ground of being" in which all beings' existence is sustained from falling into nonbeing. Tillich's theology echoes Heidegger's critique of Sartre's existentialism in which Heidegger accuses Sartre of misinterpreting his famous assertion: "the 'essence' of *Dasein* lies in its existence".[125] This statement of

Heidegger does not comprehend existence (*ek-sistence*) as opposed to essence. Heidegger clarifies that when it comes to the existence of *Dasein*, existence, which Sartre misunderstood as *existentia*, is not understood "in contrast to the meaning of *essentia* as possibility".[126] Rather, *Dasein*'s ek-sistence constitutes its ontological essence. Heidegger's ontology primarily concerned *Dasein*, his word for human beings, and theo-ontology was not his interest. However, I find it important to mention that Tillich's theology has a similar approach to existence, as it is not understood as mere 'actuality' in opposition to 'possibility' in discussing the existence of God. God is not confined to either existence or essence in Tillich's ontology. God transcends existence as manifested actuality, as God is being-as-such or being-itself. God also goes beyond any form of essence or possibility *to be.* God is conceived as "the ground of being" or "the power of being" that resists *nonbeing* or *nothingness*.[127] This power of being, God, cannot possibly "exist" because existence belongs to "finite beings" for which it is also possible *not to be* at the same time. God is neither the essence nor the underlying substance of "finite beings" that functions as a fountain of other beings. Because God is beyond every element of nonbeing present in "finite beings", God is therefore radically "other" from all beings.[128]

However, unlike Heidegger, who resists comprehending *ek-sistence* as *existentia* in explaining existence as a mode of human beings, Tillich seems to maintain the distinction between *existentia* as actuality and *essentia* as possibility in speaking of human existence. Human beings are actual (existential) beings that are concurrently possible (essential) *to be* and *not to be*. Human existence is therefore the estrangement from *being-itself*. However, in his theo-ontology, God's existence is neither actual nor possible. God cannot *be* because God is the "power of being" and the object of

[120] Ştefan Bolea. "The Courage To Be Anxious. Paul Tillich's Existential Interpretation of Anxiety". *Journal of Education Culture and Society* 6 (1) (2020), 23.
[121] Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought*, 541.
[122] Grenz and Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 118.
[123] Paul Tillich. *Systematic Theology. vol. I*. New York: Harper and Row; Evanston: University of Chicago Press, 1967, 62.
[124] *Ibid.*, 20
[125] Martin Heidegger. "Letter on Humanism", *Pathmarks*. trans. By McNeill, William. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1998): 250-251.
[126] *Ibid.*, 247-248.
[127] Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 235.
[128] *Ibid.*, 202-5.

ultimate concern. Therefore, for Tillich, God is not *a* being (*Das Seiende*) but *being-itself* (*Das Sein*). Tillich sought to overcome the finitude of God as traditionally conceived of as a person or a being by placing God "above God".

The Teleology of Anxiety and Human Existence

Tillich's phenomenology of anxiety eventually leads to a theology of anxiety. In his theological framework, which distinguishes God and his creation using the categories of "infinitude" and "finitude", anxiety is closely related to the nonbeing that constitutes finitude. Before exploring the position of anxiety within finitude, it is significant to remark that Tillich's theology is not solely focused on emphasizing the transcendence of God by making the distinction between "finitude" and "infinitude". Although God is never a mere existent that exists since he is "the ground of being" or "the power of being", God is participatory in everything that is, as its "ground and aim".[129] God is therefore immanent as well as transcendent. Tillich's fundamental interest here is in human finitude, within which anxiety reveals one's ontological orientation toward God who is their "ground and aim" of existence as finite beings.

Anxiety is an ontological marker of the structure of human finitude.[130] In his work, *The Courage to Be*, Tillich distinguishes anxiety from fear, similar to Kierkegaard, whom I mentioned at the beginning of this essay. Both Tillich and Kierkegaard seem to agree with each other in the idea that one can identify a definite object of fear, and it is possible to act upon it because fear can be "faced, analyzed, attacked" and "endured". In contrast, such action and reaction are not possible in facing anxiety.[131] The absence of an object in anxiety brings the "loss of direction" and "inadequate reactions".[132] The lack of intentionality, the lost directedness of

consciousness, experienced in one's anxiety, manifests the threat coming from "nothingness". Anxiety is not mere fear of the unknown that is yet to be known, but is the unknown that "cannot be known, because it is nonbeing".[133]

Such distinction between anxiety and fear, between *Angst* and *Furcht*, echoes not only Kierkegaard's thought but also Heidegger's elaborative description in *What is Metaphysics*? Heidegger differentiates anxiety from fear by asserting that fear always concerns "something in particular" because it is always contextualized by having traits of being "fear in the face of" and "fear concerning (something)".[134] On the other hand, the fundamental character of anxiety is its indeterminacy. Heidegger makes a unique claim that we "hover" in anxiety because, in anxiety, we are left hanging by the "slipping away of beings as a whole".[135] The totality of being, beings as a whole, slips away and manifests the nothingness, nonbeing. Heidegger clarifies that nothingness is revealed as a consequence of the slipping away of beings. Neither is it the annihilation of beings as a whole. Rather, nothingness is encountered "at one with" the totality of being, by "making itself known with beings and in beings expressly as a slipping away of the whole".[136] And nothingness does not "remain the indeterminate opposite of beings" but it discloses itself as a part of the totality of beings or as "belonging to the *being* of beings".[137] Just as Heidegger's account of anxiety attempts to tease out the interconnected relationship between the *being* of beings and existent entities by looking at the nothingness, the phenomenology of anxiety in Tillich's theological interpretative framework articulates the mutual immanence and transcendence of God and the world. God participates in every finite being as "the ground of beings" and "the power of beings", while the finite beings also participate in the *being* of beings, the totality of beings.

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129 *Ibid.*, 243-245.
130 "Anxiety about non-being is present in everything finite". Tillich, *Systematic Theology II*, 67.
131 Paul Tillich. *The Courage to Be.* with an introduction by Peter J. Gomes, New Haven: Yale University Press (2000), 36.
132 *Ibid.*, 36-37.
133 *Ibid.*, 37.

134 Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?", 88.
135 Heidegger writes, "[t]he nothing is neither an object nor any being at all. The nothing comes forward neither for itself nor next to beings, to which it would, as it were, adhere". *Ibid.*, 88-89, 91.
136 *Ibid.*, 90.
137 *Ibid.*, 95.

Anxiety is anticipatory and imaginative in many respects. There is an interplay between anticipation and imagination in which one comes to believe that a possible perception of something is already immanent in the present. But this perceptive event is not known. Because it cannot be known. This idea is present in Tillich's thought as well. Tillich articulates that fear and anxiety are not separated even though they are different: "the sting of fear is anxiety, and anxiety strives toward fear".[138] He gives a particular instance, the fear of dying, to elucidate this point. Fear of death consists of the anticipated event of "being killed by sickness or an accident" or "suffering agony and the loss of everything".[139] But when it comes to anxiety, no contents constitute the object to which one's intentionality is directed. Anxiety "in the face of" death situates itself toward nonbeing, the objectless nothingness. It is directed toward the "absolutely unknown" things that lie "after death".[140] Although human beings strive to turn anxiety into fear so that it can be faced with courage, it is impossible for "finite" human beings to embrace the "unimaginable horror" of anxiety, because anxiety "belongs to existence itself".[141] The anxiety of a "finite" being is about the threat of nonbeing: the anxiety about the possibility of nothingness. Nonbeing threatens human ontic, spiritual, and moral self-affirmations. Tillich distinguishes three types of "existential (not neurotic)" anxiety appearing in three forms: 1) the anxiety of fate and death, 2) the anxiety of meaninglessness and emptiness, 3) the anxiety of self-rejection and condemnation.[142] All these three types are interrelated with each other.

Tillich ultimately relates the anxiety of death with the threat of fate. The anxiety of death is interconnected with the anxiety of fate. Although death is a universal and predictable phenomenon, the fact that one cannot predict the exact time and space of death makes the anxiety of death continuously effective in every moment within existence.[143] The contingency of human existence produces anxiety by revealing the possibility of nonbeing. There could be nothing instead of something. Human existence is contingent in its temporal and spatial realms. The thrownness, *Geworfenheit* in Heideggerian term, signifies that no necessity determines the causes of our existence since they are not logically given. The awareness of contingency, full of absurdity and irrationality lacking ultimate necessity, in one's anxiety of death and fate brings the threat of nothingness that is already omnipresent within "every moment of existence".

The anxiety of meaninglessness and emptiness threatens one's spiritual self-affirmation to live creatively as a "participant" in created meanings. Tillich uses the term "ultimate concern" to refer to "a meaning which gives meaning to all meanings".[144] He explicitly states that "the anxiety of meaninglessness is the loss of an ultimate concern".[145] One experiences the anxiety of meaninglessness when finding a spiritual center from which to derive meaning in existence is no longer possible. When there is no possible way to find "an ultimate concern" in which and through which ultimate reality appears with manifestness of being, the anxiety of meaninglessness engulfs a "finite being". The anxiety of emptiness is related to this type of anxiety. It is engendered by the "threat of nonbeing to the special contents of the spiritual life".[146] In this type of anxiety, a "finite being" is faced with the unsatisfactory character of the concrete contents that seemed to give meaning to one's existence. The feeling of emptiness and void erupts

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[138] Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 37.

[139] *Ibid.*, 37-38.

[140] *Ibid.*, 38.

[141] *Ibid.*, 39.

[142] The three forms of anxiety listed by Tillich are different from Freud's categorization of pathological anxieties, such as phobic behavior and panic attack. Freud calls the pathological type of anxiety "neurotic" and insisted that there is a connection between sexual restraint and neurotic anxiety. Tillich's approach to anxiety is different from Freud's analysis as he focuses on the phenomenon of anxiety as such, whereas Freud attempted to find the origin of anxiety by looking at the development of libido and birth as the prototype of any pathological reaction. See Sigmund Freud, "Anxiety", Lecture XXV in *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, 3442-3457. It is available on freudianassociation.org. Accessed August 7, 2023. https://freudianassociation.org/en/wp-content/uploads/Sigmund_Freud_1920_Introductory.pdf.

[143] Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 43-45.

[144] *Ibid.*, 47.

[145] *Ibid.*, 47.

[146] *Ibid.*, 47-48.

and brings the "finite being" to search for an "ultimate meaning". However, since it cannot be produced intentionally, the anxiety of emptiness gets deeper and gives way to "the abyss of meaninglessness". The loss of meaning and value expresses the threat of nonbeing in spiritual self-affirmation. In this regard, Tillich and Heidegger both agree that anxiety has the effect of estrangement, estrangement from *Being*. Heidegger explains the feeling of estrangement by using the term "uncanniness".[147] Anxiety engenders the experience of things "turning toward us" and "the slipping away of beings as a whole", which constitute the uncanny estrangement. Tillich describes such an experience in anxiety as the awareness of finitude through the despair of emptiness and meaninglessness.[148] In this phenomenon, nonbeing threatens both ontic and spiritual self-affirmation by disintegrating one's relation to the meanings that shape their reality.

The third form of anxiety, the anxiety of self-rejection or condemnation, reveals the human condition of "finite freedom": being able to determine himself by making his own decisions.[149] Freedom is confined to their finitude: human beings are free "within" the contingencies of their finitude.[150] Tillich elaborates on this finitude by articulating the power of "acting against" the fulfillment to actualize what they potentially are. Nonbeing is intertwined with being in this exercising of freedom as "finite freedom" is subjugated by the ambiguity of determining good and evil. Tillich brings up the feeling of guilt to describe the anxiety coming from the awareness of this ambiguity. Moral self-affirmation is interrupted by nonbeing that creates moral despair.

As I have mentioned in the introduction, it is worth enquiring about the teleology of anxiety in Tillich's thought compared to other thinkers who imply some kind of *telos* toward which anxiety is oriented. The teleology of anxiety can be either negative or positive, although the differences may be subtle. For example, in Heidegger, anxiety brings *Dasein* to face their "*ownmost* possibility", which is death.[151] Anticipation of death, which comes together with existential anxiety, awakens *Dasein* to realize that they stand alone in facing death.[152] It is in this sense, anxiety has a positive teleology since it reminds *Dasein* of their interpretation of existence in confronting death and provokes *Dasein* towards the authentic existence. Anxiety makes *Dasein* realize that they are "held out into the nothing."[153] As a fundamental attunement of human existence, anxiety unveils the totality of *being-as-such* by bringing *Dasein* before nothingness.[154] And this naked encounter with nothingness brings the feeling of oppression and uncanniness. As such, Heidegger's phenomenology of anxiety has a positive teleology. Tillich's phenomenology of anxiety signifies that anxiety is fundamentally revelatory in its function; it reveals the problem of human existence rooted in finite conditionality.[155] It points to a kind of reference effect. Just as two years of social and systemic paralysis by Covid-19 reminded us of the value of unhampered daily life, one's experience of nonbeing through anxiety and the feeling of uncanniness concerning fate/death, meaninglessness/emptiness, and self-rejection/condemnation brings the awareness of *Being*, the infinite ground of all beings: God.

From Ontology to Ethics: Courage of the Precarious

Grenz and Olson mention that Tillich's extreme focus on ontology in his emphasis on the inseparable relationship between philosophy and theology faced

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[147] Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?", 88.
[148] Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 50-51.
[149] *Ibid*., 52.
[150] *Ibid*., 52.
[151] Martin Heidegger. *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. Oxford, Blackwell (2005), 307.
[152] Sang Woo Chi. "The Heideggerian Legacy in Paul Tillich's Ontology and Theological Anthropology." Order No. 3574843, Boston University School of Theology (2013): 264-265.

[153] Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?", 91-93.
[154] *Ibid*., 87-88.
[155] Anxiety is a shock of non-being and this encounter with nothingness engenders the question of Being. This idea is again similarly present in Heidegger's *What is Metaphysics?* Chi summarizes this idea as follows: "the question of Being is produced by the shock of non-being". See Sang Woo Chi. "The Heideggerian Legacy in Paul Tillich's Ontology and Theological Anthropology", 249-250.

many criticisms from both philosophers and theologians.[156] One of the arguments against his theological propositions was that Tillich reduces Christian theology into "ontological speculation". It would be pretty fair to assert that in discussing anxiety, Tillich only juxtaposes various ways to delineate the relationship between the self and *Being-itself*. Anxiety becomes an ontological condition that is only related to one's authentic constitution of the self. It appears to me that he overlooks the possibility to see the significance of one's existence in the face of "nothingness" in relation to other entities who share the same condition. In other words, the role of anxiety in the shift from ontology to ethics is not apparent in Tillich's work. Although anxiety is noted as the fundamental attunement that has a crucial role in ontological manifestation of human finitude and transitoriness that brings a person before the question of God, its role in ethics is rather glossed over. It seems that Tillich's main interest in anxiety lies in investigating its position only in relation to *Being*, "being-as-such" or "being itself", but not to other finite *beings* whose existence is upheld by *Being*, which include other human beings. Tillich's ethics in *The Courage to Be* revolves around the concept of "courage" as "a human act" and "a matter of valuation".[157]

Indeed, "courage", as an ethical notion, is interrelated with anxiety. Tillich highlights the affirming character of courage; although courage cannot eliminate anxiety, courage affirms being "in spite of" nonbeing.[158] Articulating the affirming character may imply ethical ideas regarding how one "ought to live". However, on my understanding of Tillich's concept of courage, it is more existential than ethical, because he speaks of "courage" primarily in the context of self-fulfillment through self-constitution and there is little elaboration concerning how it shapes one's relationship with other beings.[159]

Thus, I bring to the fore the question of anxiety in ethics because there is another revelatory function of

anxiety that can possibly open up a way to go beyond "ontological speculation". In my view, anxiety also reveals the vulnerability of human beings, the condition of affecting and being affected by others. Anxiety discloses the weakness and the necessity of dependence on something beyond one's existence. Anxiety reveals suffering, yet it is a particular form of suffering. It manifests the general existential suffering that one continues to experience simply by *being* in the face of *nonbeing*. As a form of suffering, anxiety is a particular type of effective agony that comes from imaginative and anticipatory encounters with uncertain and unknowable possibilities. Thus, anxiety not only reveals the necessary dependence of finite beings on the infinite "ultimate concern", but also demonstrates the human existential condition as being in need of "other(s)", external beings who can affirm one's being and prevent him or her from falling into the anxiety of fate/death, emptiness/meaninglessness, and guilt/condemnation. Tillich asserts "the courage to be", which is both the title and the central message of his book. The courage to be that he means here is "the self-affirmation of being in spite of the fact of nonbeing".[160] However, looking at the revelatory character of anxiety regarding the human condition of being vulnerable creates some space to see the potential "other-affirming" function of courage. The courage to accept one's own being makes it possible to see the imaginable anxieties experienced by others. This brings greater responsibility to "affirm" the being of others "in spite of" the nonbeing perceptible through the reality of suffering and anxiety. The courage to negate the negation of "*Being*" makes it possible to negate the negation of "beings". In other words, the courage to negate the negation of infinitude entails the power to negate the negation of other finite beings.

What anxiety can reveal is the singular yet not isolated aspect of human existence. Human beings are not mere parts of the greater whole that must be understood only in communal contexts. There is a clear sense of singularity and particularity of each individual inhabiting what is "always-already" given

[156] Grenz and Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 119.
[157] Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, 2-3.
[158] *Ibid.*, 66.
[159] *Ibid.*, 15.
[160] *Ibid.*, 155.

to them as the totality of beings. But this discovery of singularity in anxiety differs from the modern emphasis on autonomy, independence, and the actualization of self-governing power. It rather paves the way for communalization of precarious individuals in the form of solidarity and collective resistance. Facing the precarious condition of existence through anxiety confronts the self-other dialectics in other variants of humanism.

The process of communalization often presupposes ethically binding norms for a specific community. However, as Judith Butler notes, such a view has the danger of being "parochial, communitarian, and exclusionary."[161] She challenges the communitarian efforts of delineating ethical obligations in the contexts of established communities by highlighting the "limited but necessary reversibility" of proximity and distance.[162] Reversibility is at the core of her proposal to conceive ethical obligation based on precarity. Perceiving the sufferings of others visible through "face-to-face" encounters in physical proximity or other means of communication in our globalized context goes beyond the presupposition of a community. As "social and embodied, vulnerable and passionate" and "interdependent" beings, we struggle "in, from, and against precarity", even when the encounter with the Other (as in Levinas' thought) is not a deliberately chosen event.[163] In opposition to the Hobbesian or Machiavellian point of departure to grasp social relations in and build ethics on intrinsically egoistic and self-governing human nature, Butler's position points out the need to establish political and economic relations that conceive of minimizing precarity as the common goal.

As such, precarity can be a moral agency when reversibility is recognized. My experience of precarity can be your experience, just as the experience of a precarious other based somewhere I have not even heard of can be one day experienced in my daily relation to the world. Tillich's account of anxiety demonstrates that each individual's fundamental relation to the world is experienced as precarious, thrown into the continuous annihilating threat of nonbeing. The imaginative and anticipatory aspects of existential anxiety make multi-local and cross-temporal "face-to-face" encounters possible, leading to the emergence of ethical demands for interpersonal "courage".

Actualizing such courage to affirm the *being* of others by negating their nonbeing can appear in various contexts. Pastoral care, providing others with attentive concern for their spiritual needs as a shepherd-like figure (Latin: *pastorem*), can be one of many ways in which we can find such courage to affirm the existence of others when they feel any type of anxiety categorized by Tillich. It is also possible to affirm others' being through political and social engagement. In many forms of persecution and violence organized by socially and politically patterned ways of behavior, the negation of other finite beings has always taken place, commonly expressed in dehumanization and exclusion. This was the case in Auschwitz, also in the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1990's, and still is the case in places like Iran, where the government negates the authentic existence of women.[164] Resistance against such violent and destructive forces requires arduous courage, and it often questions to what extent it can be actualized to negate the negation of other "beings". However, the courage to affirm the existence of other "beings", no matter how distant they are, would be the starting point to resist and react against the negating and sometimes annihilating forces of nonbeing, exercised by other human beings in some tragic situations.

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[161] Judith Butler. "Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation." *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy 26* (2) (2012): 138. Butler's more elaborate thought on precarity and grievability can be found in Judith Butler. *Precarious Life: the Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London: Verso, 2004. I found their ideas developing in comparatively and critically discussing Levinas and Arendt in the article more relevant to my present topic.

[162] *Ibid.*, 137.
[163] *Ibid.*, 150.
[164] Hannah Arendt gives a profound account of how totalitarian regimes transform men into "uncomplaining animals" to bring the numbing effects to both perpetrators and victims of violence. Hannah Arendt. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New edition with added prefaces. New York: Harvest Book, 1976, 439.

Conclusion

Paul Tillich develops a thorough analysis of *Being-as-such* within his larger theological framework. In his framework, anxiety plays a crucial role in developing his existential ontology in *The Courage to Be*. Throughout this paper, I intended to identify the *telos* of anxiety implied or indicated in Tillich's phenomenology of anxiety. Tillich inherits the Kierkegaardian (or continental in a broader sense) distinction between fear and anxiety and highlights the indefinite directedness of consciousness in the state of anxiety. The unknowable character of anxiety is accentuated by Tillich when he talks about the existential adherence of "unimaginable horror" to anxiety. This idea is clarified in his threefold distinction of different types of anxiety concerning 1) fate/death, 2) meaninglessness and emptiness, and 3) guilt and condemnation.

In comparison with other phenomenologists of anxiety, it seems appropriate to conclude that Tillich sees a sort of positive teleology in anxiety. Similar to Heidegger, who sees the awakening effect of anxiety for *Dasein* to realize their "*ownmost* possibility" toward death, Tillich understands anxiety as having a revelatory effect in encountering infinitude through facing the finite conditionality of human existence. In experiencing nonbeing and the feeling of estrangement from *being* through anxiety, one comes to be aware of "the ground" and "the aim" of all beings, which is God.

Tillich's existential analysis of anxiety is fundamentally ontological. Anxiety is elaborated in metaphysical terms such as "being" and "nonbeing", "finitude" and "infinitude", and so on. Thus, I attempted to figure out any shift from ontology to ethics in *The Courage to Be*. It was my intention to see how Tillich's approach to anxiety can enhance the way we can understand our relationship with other beings, not just with being-as-such. As the title indicates, *The Courage to Be* suggests "courage" to be seen at the center of affirming one's existence. Courage as an ethical notion, as "a human act" and "a matter of valuation", is seen together with anxiety. Tillich contends that courage has the power to affirm being "in spite of" nonbeing, typically manifested by anxiety. In this context, I suggested looking at another revelatory function of anxiety. Anxiety not only reveals the finitude of one's being, but also discloses the human existential condition as characterized by the need for an "external" affirmation of one's being. I highlighted the potential "other-affirming" function of courage that can be emphasized in affirming one's own being in the face of the repelling and overwhelming power of nonbeing experienced in anxiety. Facing one's own anxiety, which is already imaginative and anticipatory in its nature, and standing firm "in spite of" nonbeing, open the possibility to act in solidarity with other "finite" beings who exist in the midst of suffering and different forms of anxiety.

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On The Idea of a Theology of Neurodiversity: A Tillichian Reading of Ruth Dunster

Emil Lusser

The term 'neurodiversity' was first introduced in the mid-1990s by autistic sociologist Judy Singer. Initially, it was viewed as a supplement to the sociopolitical categories of class, gender, and race.[165] Three decades later, this rationale remains a fundamental tenet of neurodiversity studies, due to its alignment with other political categories. Consequently, the methodology of neurodiversity studies draws upon, for instance, critical race theory, queer theory, and feminist studies. While Singer's pioneering work on neurodiversity primarily focused on neurological differences, there is now a growing emphasis on neural differences that affect not only the brain but the entire body. This is clearly illustrated by the following definition of neurodiversity: "The concept of neurodiversity usually refers to perceived variations seen in cognitive, affectual, and sensory functioning differing from the majority of the general population or 'predominant neurotype', more usually known as the 'neurotypical' population. […] Those who share a form of neurodivergence – such as bipolar or hearing voices – may be referred to as a 'neurominority'."[166]

It is of the utmost importance to recognize that the dichotomy between neurotypical and neurodivergent individuals should not be interpreted in an essentialist manner. According to autistic psychologist Nick Walker neurotypical persons are those who are able and willing to conform to the standards of the dominant neuronormative culture in order to be considered 'normal' and receive neurotypical privilege.[167] This assumption is rooted in the neurodiversity paradigm, which, in contrast to the pathology paradigm prevalent in medicine, assumes that neural differences are not primarily a disability associated with the labels 'unhealthy,' 'unnatural,' and 'abnormal.' Rather, it posits that these differences are analogous to race, gender, and sexual orientation, and thus constitute a form of diversity belonging to the human species.[168] In contrast to Singer's concept of neurodiversity as a socio-political category, Walker advocates for "a cultural paradigm shift: a widespread supplanting of the pathology paradigm by the neurodiversity paradigm."[169] By examining neurodiversity from both a sociological and a cultural theoretical perspective, it becomes possible to pursue science, art, and other forms of cultural expression based on the neurodiversity paradigm.

In her book *The Autism of GXD: An Atheological Lovestory*, Ruth Dunster presents a theology of autism from the perspective of an autistic person. As she frequently refers to Paul Tillich's theology of culture, the question arises: To what extent can Dunster's theology of autism be understood as a radical evolution of Tillich's theology of culture? This paper will explore the answer to this question. In the initial phase, Dunster's autistic mythological hermeneutic will be delineated as a methodology for engaging with the clinical reports on autism as well as with the lived experiences of autistic individuals.

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[165] Cf. Judy Singer, *NeuroDiversity: The Birth of an Idea* (Kindle: Kindle eBook, 2017). 34: "The 'Neurologically Different' represent a new addition to the familiar political categories of class / gender / race and will augment the insights of the Social Model of Disability."

[166] Nick Chown, Hanna Bertilsdotter Rosqvist, and Anna Stenning, "Introduction," in *Neurodiversity Studies: A Critical Paradigm*, ed. Nick Chown, Hanna Bertilsdotter Rosqvist, and Anna Stenning (London, New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2020). 1.

[167] Cf. Nick Walker, "Defining Neurotypicality & Neurodivergence," in *Neuroqueer Heresies: Notes on the Neurodiversity Paradigm, Autistic Empowerment, and Postnormal Possibilities*, ed. Nick Walker (Fort Worth, TX: Autonomous Press, 2021). 57f.

[168] Cf. Walker, "Throw Away the Master's Tools: Liberating Ourselves from the Pathology Paradigma." 19f.

[169] Walker, "Making the Shift to the Neurodiversity Paradigm." 129.

This will be accomplished by reiterating the manner in which Tillich's cultural theology is reinterpreted by Dunster. The ramifications of Dunster's methodology for her comprehension of the Trinity and her concept of theology will then be demonstrated. This is achieved through the presentation of the autistic archetypes developed by Dunster and their mythologization. Finally, an outlook is provided on how Tillich's theology of culture could be reframed into a theology of neurodiversity.

<div align="center">I.</div>

Dunster aligns with the perspective of Steve Silberman, who in his book *Neurotribes: The Legacy of Autism, and How to Think Smarter about People Who Think Differently*, posits that neurodiversity should be defined as "naturally occurring cognitive variations with distinctive strengths that have contributed to the evolution of technology and culture rather than mere checklists of deficits and dysfunctions."[170] Against this backdrop, Dunster endeavors to dislodge autism from the pathological narrative and instead celebrates it as a contributor to diverse worldviews. Furthermore, Dunster echoes John Swinton's reflections on theology of disability as a means of giving "theological voice to people and experiences that have not been taken seriously in the construction of theology."[171] By analogy with Silberman's theory of neurotribes and Swinton's understanding of disability theology, Dunster constructs a 'neurotribal autistic hermeneutic' to enrich theology through an autistic view of the world, God, and texts. This is done from an atheistic perspective, which requires further discussion.

The concept of atheistic theology in Dunster can be most effectively elucidated by reference to her distinction between good and bad autism. She states, "A 'good autist' would approach a literal reading of Scripture and say, 'but this is nonsense; Gxd didn't make the world in seven days—the earth formed over billions of years.' A 'good autist' would most likely resemble what Paul Tillich calls the 'honest atheist.'"[172] Tillich's reflections from his sermon collection *Shaking the Foundations* provide the underlying context for this statement. In his work, Tillich posits that if theology makes God its object, it supports the escape into atheism because it is then easy for atheists to expose God as a doubtful thing. Tillich writes: For they are "perfectly justified in destroying such a phantom and all its ghostly qualities."[173] According to Tillich, honest atheism is an attitude of consciousness that recognizes that God is not an intelligible object. Once God is conceived as an object of cognition, God becomes one thing among many other things. While the 'good autist' is aware of this – that God cannot be a thing like others– according to Dunster's dissertation *Mindfulness of Separation: An Autistic A-Theological Hermeneutic*, "a 'bad autism' is a theological fundamentalism which 'takes words literally' without allowing for any need for other hermeneutic strategies, such as a poetic dimension of the text."[174]

In this context, Dunster's self-understanding as an atheist theologian is to be understood. This understanding is based on the premise that atheism does "not mean the rejection of the powerful Gxd-language, but exactly the opposite. Tillich's atheism is the expression of the majesty of Gxd, which is thought beyond theism"[175]. Given this understanding, Dunster situates herself within a theological tradition that emphasizes the transcendence of God. She designates this theological orientation as death of God theology, which is „certainly not simply atheism, but on the contrary, a deeply theologically thought response to secularism."[176] She perceives herself as aligned with (a)theologians such as Tillich, Mircea Eliade, and Thomas Altizer, whose thought is not secular but

[170] Steve Silberman, *NeuroTribes: The Legacy of Autism and the Future of Neurodiversity* (New York: Avery, 2015). 16.

[171] John Swinton, "Reflections on Autistic Love: What Does Love Look Like?," *Practical Theology* 5, no. 3 (2012). 260.

[172] Ruth M. Dunster, *The Autism of GXD: An Atheological Love Story* (Eugene/Oregon: PICKWICK Publications, 2022). 27.

[173] Paul Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations* (London: Penguin, 1963). 53.

[174] Ruth M. Dunster, "Mindfulness of Separation: An Autistic A-Theological Hermeneutic" (2017). 12f.

[175] Dunster, *Autism of GXD*. 27.

[176] Dunster, *Autism of GXD*. 217.

profane. Tillich's theology of culture is regarded by Dunster as 'a response to the threatenedness' posed by secularism. This perspective asserts that the human condition consistently prompts fundamental questions, which human cultures express through the prevailing styles of their artistic creations. Simultaneously, religious traditions provide answers to these questions through the medium of religious symbols.[177] Consequently, God symbolically reveals themself through culture.

Altizer, who was strongly influenced by Tillich, thinks the death of God one step further and thus arrives, in Dunster's reading, at the assertion that "art is not the question to which theology can respond, but art itself (in this particular enactment) is the mode in which theological thinking operates"[178]. Accordingly, art does not function as a medium of divine revelation, as it does for Tillich, but may be art for itself without needing a theological interpretation. What, then, is meant by the claim that art in its particular enactment is the mode in which theological thinking operates? At this point, Dunster can be understood as saying that it is in art as art that the functioning of theology is shown. When art is enacted as art, it means nothing other than that it is meant to be art by those who participate in it. Analogously, theological thinking is characterized by the fact that it appears as theology in the theological enactment. Dunster describes a hermeneutical circle in which texts are taken into account as theological texts due to their theological enactment by theologians.

To view culture as an enactment of the mode of theological thinking, Altizer draws on the distinction between profane and sacred. In this context, Altizer draws on the distinction between profane and sacred as outlined in Eliade's book *Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries*, where it is stated that "[i]n imitating the exemplary acts of a god or of a mythic hero, or simply by recounting their adventures the man of an archaic society detaches himself from profane time

and magically re-enters the Great Time, the sacred time."[179] In Eliade the profane and the sacred are understood as two distinct realities. In contrast, Altizer amalgamates them in the idea of the sacred profane, such that everything is considered sacred and everything is considered profane.[180] Against this canvas, the narrative of secular art and literature enacts itself as equally sacred as the biblical narrative. If all texts and works of art are sacred profane, then they function autonomously because of their enactment; they are, so to speak, for themselves. Given this, a pragmatic mutual appropriation between the theological and the poetic, as present in Tillichian thought, could no longer be justified. Instead, the sacred and the profane meet in such a way that theology silently listens to "the poetic as the discourse of its own being"[181]. From this concept, which Altizer terms 'living within metaphor' or 'sacred profane', it follows that theology is not concerned with God or religion per se, but rather with the manner in which it represents its own essence as theology.

In a subsequent step, Dunster applies the topos of 'living within metaphor' to the Christ event, stating that "[i]f it is true that the Christ event is incarnate in the poetic, this means that the poetic is not a metaphor for the theological. Instead, the poetic-theological simply 'is,' and there is no theistic referent for metaphor to 'carry between' the two."[182] This is what Dunster calls incarnational metaphor. What implications does this have for the interpretation of texts? The intermediary between the theological and the poetic is no longer available. Consequently, no symbolic meaning can be derived from the biblical narratives. Instead, during the process of reading, the reader becomes interwoven with the narrative, so that, for example, "the Exodus and consequent wandering in the desert is our own sense of exile, in whatever form"[183]. The term 'incarnational metaphor' refers to the act of entering into biblical texts in order to become part of the

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[177] Cf. Dunster, *Autism of GXD*. 217.
[178] Dunster, *Autism of GXD*. 220.
[179] Mircea Eliade, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*, trans. Philipp Mairet (New York: Harper Row, 1967). 23.
[180] Cf. Thomas J.J. Altizer, "The Sacred and the Profane: A Dialectical Understanding of Christianity," in *Radical Theology and the Death of God*, ed. Thomas J.J. Altizer

and William Hamilton (Indianapolis/New York/Kansas City: The Bobbs-Merril Company, Inc., A Subsidiary of Howard W. Sams & Co., Inc. Publishers, 1966).
[181] Dunster, *Autism of GXD*. 221.
[182] Dunster, *Autism of GXD*. 221.
[183] Dunster, *Autism of GXD*. 221.

narrative. This is a literal interpretation of the Bible, but not a fundamentalist one. The goal is not to gain a new understanding that changes one's view of the world or oneself. Instead, it is about recognizing that the historical or poetic meaning of the text becomes obsolete when one enters into the textual world of the Bible. The focus is on participation in the text. It is only through this process that the Word can become flesh and that we can, in a sense, live in the biblical metaphors.

In light of the aforementioned context, it becomes necessary to inquire as to the manner in which Dunster constructs her hermeneutic, which seeks to "rethink the death of Gxd as the autism of Gxd"[184]. The answer to this question can be found in the following statement: "[I]n our hermeneutic here (an autistic hermeneutic, a reading not of, but by autism), we are actually creating myth. In fact, we are developing a mythological hermeneutic which reads the clinical and lived experience as if it were myth. We are looking for the possibility of autistic traits as mythical archetypes."[185] However, what is meant by the term 'myth' in Dunster's context? According to Eliade, myths are defined as stories that provide meaning to a culture through ritual enactments. This occurs through entering into a mythical world of those attending the event. In contrast to everyday things, participation in myth is sacred and influences the way of life and worldview of those who have entered the myth. Eliade posits that myths emerge from the depths of the unconscious and are therefore not constructed.[186] In a similar vein, Tillich asserts that symbols are not invented but created unintentionally.[187] However, Dunster follows Altizer's theory according to which the profane and the sacred coincide and all is sacred and profane at the same time. This allows Dunster to create both myths and religious symbols. The yield of remythologizing autism and theology is that "[w]e can then see which kinds of theological thinking might embody existential truths which the autistic

myth articulates"[188]. This will be demonstrated by employing Dunster's remythologization of the three autistic archetypes, mindblindness, literal-mindedness, and fascination/obsession, as well as their unifying principle, autistic empathy.

II.

The first archetype, mindblindness, is defined by Dunster as the difficulty of empathizing with other people on a cognitive level. This difficulty arises from the inability "to discern what is happening in the mind of another person. Sarcasm, implied criticism, body language, and unspoken signs of emotion are all hard to pick up as the beliefs of others cannot be guessed."[189] Dunster's hermeneutic enables her to read the clinical findings about mindblindness mythologically. Within myth, mindblindness is revealed to be mindfulness of separation.[190] From Dunster's atheological perspective, mindfulness of separation describes the autistic awareness of the radical transcendence of God.[191] Based on an absolute mindfulness of separation the absence of God is expressed as a key moment of atheistic theology.

The second archetype, literal-mindedness, is closely related to mindblindness. It describes difficulties in dealing with linguistic ambiguity. For example, idioms or metaphors are understood literally because literal-mindedness does not allow various levels of meaning to coexist.[192] In Dunster's work, literal-mindedness advances to literal-metaphor, which "resurrects dead metaphor[s]."[193] The resurrection of metaphor through absolute autistic metaphor means the same as Altizer's sacred profane or living within metaphor. By engaging with texts, the reader enters an enacted myth, which no longer needs interpretation, but is simply in itself. In this regard, Dunster writes: "The Christ event in all its moments will be seen to occur as the baffling mysteries of Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection and

[184] Dunster, *Autism of GXD*. 216.
[185] Dunster, *Autism of GXD*. 89f.
[186] Cf. Mircea Eliade, *Le mythe de l'éternal retour: Archétypes et répétition* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985). 48–64.
[187] Cf. Paul Tillich, "Das religiöse Symbol," in *Ausgewählte Texte*, ed. Christian Danz, Werner Schüßler, and Erdmann Sturm (Berlin/New York: 2008). 183f.

[188] Dunster, *Autism of GXD*. 90.
[189] Dunster, *Autism of GXD*. 41.
[190] Cf. Dunster, *Autism of GXD*. 94.
[191] Cf. Dunster, *Autism of GXD*. 256.
[192] Cf. Dunster, *Autism of GXD*. 42.
[193] Dunster, *Autism of GXD*. 123.

Ascension."[194] The perplexity of the mystery of Christ denotes the incarnational metaphor, that is, the entering into the biblical myth as a living metaphor. While the mindfulness of separation addresses the awareness of the absolute absence of God, the autistic metaphor is used to describe the entry into a myth of autism.

The third archetype, fascination and obsession, is strongly related to the hyper-sensory nature of autistic persons. "Heightened sensory sensitivities are a feature of autism which can cause pleasure or distress."[195] Consequently, a fascination with certain sensory impressions can arise due to the experience of pleasure, to the extent that autists express themselves as merging with their perception. To illustrate this phenomenon, Dunster recounts the experience of an autistic child who was so captivated by the yellow hue of a sunflower that the child expressed, "I'm inside that yellow flower—it's the yellowness I'm inside."[196] Apart from sensory perceptions, such fascination can also manifest in the realm of thought as evidenced by an obsession with dinosaurs or trains.[197] This particular fascination, which can be observed in autists, and which also describes the entry to the myth of autism, Dunster understands as a "heightened sense of what is; a sense of presence and immanence"[198]. In contrast to the mindfulness of separation, which describes the absolute absence of God, the autistic fascination reveals an absolute presence of God.[199]

All three archetypes are held together by autistic empathy, which is defined as an above-average affective empathy. However, it cannot cognitively grasp why a counterpart has certain emotions.[200] Utilizing the neurotribal mythological hermeneutic, autistic empathy can be understood as autistic love, which can be referred to as "a sorrowful love, its loss of cognitive connection coupled with its heightened affective desire."[201] Once again, it is necessary to refer to good autism, which consists precisely in reading the Bible, knowing that it is not to be taken literally, is read by someone who is also incapable of reading the Bible according to its religious symbolic meaning. This is related to mindblindness and literal blindedness. However, this loss of cognitive connection in the case of a good autist is coupled with an affective desire to nonetheless enter into the myth. Autistic love thus represents an awareness of the impossibility of deriving a meaning for individual life from myth, while simultaneously exhibiting a desire to participate in the theological enactment of myth. For theology, it follows that it must operate in the awareness that it can only be theology by itself.

III.

Utilizing her neurotribal mythological hermeneutic, Dunster constructs a theology of autism from the standpoint of an atheistic autistic theologian. This allows Dunster to describe theology through a remythologizing approach to the clinical and experiential accounts of autism as a discourse on its own being. In this way, she eliminates any claim by theology to make statements about a transcendence or transcendental connection of human beings. Dunster thus understands her theology as a further development of the theology of culture, which has already been transformed by Altizer, but which goes back to Tillich. But to what extent is Tillich's original idea of a theology of culture still present in Dunster's theology? In his 1919 speech, *On the Idea of a Theology of Culture*, Tillich defines the task of the theologian of culture as "to construct a religious system of culture by separating and uniting the existing material in accordance with their theological principle."[202] In light of the previous observations, Dunster remained faithful to this concern by using the clinical autism model as 'existing material,' according to her theological principle of remythologization, for the construction of a theological system that describes its own functioning.

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[194] Dunster, *Autism of GXD*. 124.
[195] Dunster, *Autism of GXD*. 43.
[196] Dunster, *Autism of GXD*. 94.
[197] Cf. Dunster, *Autism of GXD*. 44f.
[198] Dunster, *Autism of GXD*. 97.
[199] Cf. Dunster, *Autism of GXD*. 254–257.
[200] Cf. Dunster, *Autism of GXD*. 49–52.
[201] Dunster, *Autism of GXD*. 99.
[202] Paul Tillich, "Über die Idee einer Theologie der Kultur," in *Ausgewählte Texte*, ed. Christian Danz, Werner Schüßler, and Erdmann Sturm (Berlin/New York: DeGruyter, 2008). 33. (Translated by the author).

It is necessary to consider the extent to which Tillich's theology of culture can be reframed as a theology of neurodiversity. After all, it was Dunster's theological principle that demonstrated how Tillichian thought can be applied to neurodivergent theology. In his 1919 programmatic writing, Tillich expands his understanding of cultural theology to the effect that its task also consists in "designing a normative system of religion from a concrete standpoint based on the categories of philosophy of religion and by embedding the individual standpoint in the confessional and the general history of religion and the history of ideas in general"[203]. Dunster's account can thus be considered a theology of culture from an autistic point of view. A theology of neurodiversity must therefore engage in a process of relating neurodiverse (including neurodivergent and neurotypical) theological perspectives to one another in order to maintain the discourse about the essence of theology.

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The (Queer) New Being: Synthesizing Paul Tillich and Judith Butler's Approaches to Ontology

J.J. Warren

Introduction

Ontology is perhaps both the greatest and the most despised concept within philosophy and theology. One could say it is the greatest for many reasons: both the ancient Greek philosophers and German Idealists prioritized ontology in their ponderings, and today some womanists have prophetically proclaimed the sacredness of Black female bodies and the Black female being of God.[204] One could, with equal validity, call for the dissolution of ontological imaginings—a tearing of the thin veil of ontology that has hung perilously between the real and the "really real," calling into question the validity of the latter, which is asserted by the philosopher and the theologian alike, but is conveniently beyond one's ability to comprehend. Feminists and queer

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[203] Tillich, "Über die Idee." 27. (Translated by the author).

[204] See Christena Cleveland, *God is a Black Woman* (New York: HarperCollins, 2022).

scholars, such as Judith Butler's early works, condemn ontology as a "normative injunction that operates insidiously by installing itself into the political discourse as its necessary ground."[205] Black nihilists, such as Calvin Warren, call for an annihilation of ontology, demanding that the structures of ontology itself are inherently dehumanizing of Black persons for they force Black being to function as the incarnation of metaphysical nothing.[206] While my dissertation will engage with the necessary critiques of these scholars, today I name them to assist us in seeing just the disturbed surface of the troubled waters I'm attempting to wade into.

Tillich's Ontology

For Tillich, a theologian must concentrate themselves on that which is of "ultimate concern," by which he means "that which determines our being or not-being," where "being" is understood as "*the whole of human reality*, the structure, the meaning, and the aim of existence."[207] Since God is the ground and abyss of being, through which the meaning-making process is possible, the theologian must take

up the ontological question, *the question of the meaning of being*.[208] Therefore, ontology is theological within the Tillichian system because it is the study of the depth from which cultural and religious forms find meaning; it is the study of God. And here I'd like to interject, in postpluralist fashion, that the "us" Tillich refers to ought to be restricted to Christian communities and, therefore, it makes no demands on persons outside of the embodied form of communication that is Christianity. In other words, the theologian must ask *What is the meaning of existence* for Christians, *which is mediated through one's experience of the ecstatic grasping of the God beyond the God of theism*?[209] Or, as the German-Austrian Tillich scholar, Christian Danz, calls it, "the inner reflexivity of consciousness," that is, of consciousness becoming aware of and grasping itself as its own presupposition.[210]

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[205] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York; London: Routledge, 1990), p. 203.

[206] In his book, *Ontological Terror: Blackness, Nihilism, and Emancipation*, Calvin Warren asserts that "black being incarnates metaphysical nothing, the terror of metaphysics in an antiblack world. Blacks, then, have *function* nut not *Being*—the function of black(ness) is to give form to a terrifying formlessness (nothing)… How, then, does metaphysics dominate nothing? By objectifying nothing through the black Negro." Cf. Calvin Warren, *Ontological Terror: Blackness, Nihilism, and Emancipation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), pp. 5 – 6.

[207] I Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Volume I* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 14, emphasis added.

[208] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Volume I*, p. 22.

[209] Citing Tillich, I have used the word "meaning" several times without clarifying what is meant by meaning. Steven Cassedy explores the various uses of "meaning" in Tillich's works, noting that the change in language from German to English necessarily involved a change in vocabulary, some of which continues to reflect the German word *Sinn*, which is occasionally translated into English as "meaning," but with "a peculiar history in German" that distinguishes it from the English word. In conclusion, Cassedy extrapolates that "In his English writings Tillich used

meaning in the following senses (among others): the nexus of "comprehensibility," "value," "direction," from existential philosophy (what is missing when life is meaningless); "ultimate concern" (the "meaning which gives meaning to all meanings"); in the plural, something undefined that man "lives in"; the thing that grasps us when we are in the state of faith; and "God." See Steven Cassedy, "What Is the Meaning of Meaning in Paul Tillich's Theology?" in *Harvard Theological Review* 111, no. 3 (2018): 307-32.

[210] Danz writes that for Tillich, "religion is understood as a particular kind of consciousness. Religion is the consciousness for which the inner reflexivity of its own self-relatedness has become transparent. Therefore, faith is a consciousness of history which has become reflexive. Tillich has a special name for the contingent self-understanding of consciousness in its historicity: he calls it "paradox", and he connects paradox in this sense with religion and the theological standpoint." See Christian Danz, *The Theology of Paul Tillich: Contexts and Key Issues* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2024), p. 32 [forthcoming publication]. Cf. also Christian Danz, "Theology, Religion, Culture: Reflections on Systematic Theology Following Paul Tillich," *Correlatio* 20, no. 2 (2021), pp. 103-142, https://www.metodista.br/revistas/revistas-metodista/index.php/COR/article/view/1036687/8111.
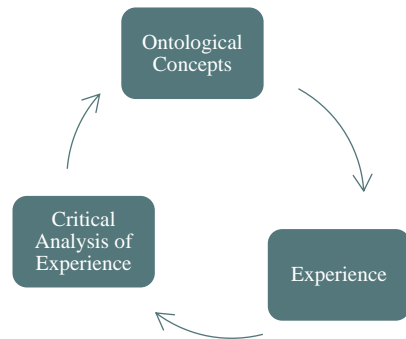
A. Ontology and Epistemology: The Christological Key

Figure 1: Tillich's Ontological Scheme

Operating behind these questions is a theory of epistemology and its critical relation to ontology: how does one come to know what one knows—about God, consciousness, or anything at all? In describing the epistemological character of ontological concepts, Tillich writes that ontological concepts are *a priori* insofar as they "determine the nature of experience."[211] This does *not* mean, however, that ontological concepts are "known prior to experience," but rather that "they are products of a critical analysis of experience"[212] (see Figure 1). As such, ontological concepts are open to critique and change. While ontological concepts have changed, and will continue to change, Tillich asserts that there persists "a structure of experience which can be recognized within the process of experiencing and which can be elaborated critically."[213]

To say, as Tillich does, that Christ is the *telos* of existence[214] is to assert a *qualitative* end of history so that the strict ontological separation between God and humanity is transformed through the presence of the New Being.[215] The New Being is not simply an empirical fact about a man who was crucified and then resurrected in the first century of the Common Era; rather, the New Being, which Jesus as the Christ symbolizes, is both an *event* and the *reception* of that event by religious communities such that both the event and its reception are necessary components of the qualitative transformation, that is, the New Being.[216] The ontological structure transforms from a strictly divided subject-object model and becomes an embodied repetition of the narrative of Jesus as the Christ—a new, *communal being* that brings about an important shift in ontological paradigms.

When Christian communities participate in the New Being, "the estrangement of [their] existential from [their] essential being is conquered in principle, i.e., in power and as a beginning. The term 'New Being,' as used here, points directly to the cleavage between essential and existential being—and is the restorative principle of the whole of this theological system" – "in him has appeared what fulfillment qualitatively means."[217] The New Being is Tillich's solution to the ontological problem raised by his contemporaries.

Tillich proffers that in the New Being the estrangement of humanity from the unconditioned is overcome, though only partially because of the conditions of existence.[218] Through the New Being, humanity is healed—in principle—of its existential estrangement; the New Being offers salvation.[219] In

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[211] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Volume I*, p. 166.
[212] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Volume I*, p. 166.
[213] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Volume I*, p. 167.
[214] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, *Volume II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 119.
[215] See Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, *Volume II.II* "The Reality of the Christ." Tillich defines the New Being as "essential being under the conditions of existence, conquering the gap between essence and existence. For the same idea Paul uses the term 'new creature,' calling those who are 'in' Christ 'new creatures. … It is new in two respects: it is new in contrast to the merely potential character of essential being; and it is new over against the estranged character of existential being. It is actual, conquering the estrangement of existence,'" pp. 118-119.
[216] While Tillich refers to this moment as "fact" and "reception," throughout his system Tillich also took into account the ways in which the connotations of certain terminology changed during his lifetime. Therefore, while

Tillich referred to the New Being in his time as "fact" and "reception," today I recognize that many would misinterpret "fact" as a "historical fact" and believe that Tillich is making a claim about the historical Jesus, which he is not. Therefore, I use "event" and "reception."
[217] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, *Volume II*, p. 119.
[218] For a complete union, we must look to eschatology, but that is beyond the purview of the current question of ontology. Tillich writes, "But, quantitatively considered, the actualization of the New Being within history is drawn into the distortions and ambiguities of man's historical predicament. This oscillation between 'already' and 'not yet' is the experience which is symbolized in the tension between the first and second comings of Christ" *Vol. II*, p. 120.
[219] Tillich clarifies that "With respect to the original meaning of salvation (from *salvus*, "healed") and our present situation, it may be adequate to interpret salvation as 'healing.' It corresponds to the state of

these ecstatic moments of union within community, the subject-object divide partially dissolves and one understands and experiences the momentary unity of their being with the ground of being itself—without completely losing their individuality.[220] As the symbol of the New Being, Jesus as the Christ brings about a new ontological paradigm—a new knowledge of the meaning of being—and with it, a new knowledge of knowing, a new epistemology. The New Being momentarily overcomes the traditional Western epistemological divide between subject and object, and between God and humanity, because it occurs within an ontological structure that recognizes God as being-itself. Therefore, every act of knowing God is self-reflexive for it is God, the ground of being, who breaks into consciousness and perceives itself as its own ground— "knowledge is an event within the totality of events."[221] The New Being, therefore, reveals simultaneously a deeper unity between humanity and the unconditioned while maintaining the individuality that is proper to persons as centered selves.

B. Ontology and Revelation

Despite all of this talk about the New Being, Tillich's theology worked counter to a Christo-centric theology in which it is only through Jesus the Christ that is God revealed and nowhere else. There is a relationship between *ontology* and *revelation* that Tillich brings to the fore and expands, and this relationship determines the value of all creation, including humanity's creative acts—which, as I will assert, includes our gender and sexual identities.

Because God is the ground of being cultural creations can be regarded within Christian communities as valid mediums of revelation, for everything participates in the abysmal ground. What Jesus as the Christ provides is a symbolic representation of the act of reflexivity—that is, of becoming transparent to the ground of being, pointing beyond oneself toward God. Therefore, this paper follows Tillich's onto-theology to ask the following series of questions: What can the proliferation of gender and sexual identities, which have long been silenced by the Church, reveal to us about the nature of God? What does the great diversity of gender and sexual identities reveal to us about the meaning of being and the subject-object divide? And once more, if one is beyond all this "God talk," then the question can be phrased another way using Christian Danz's phrase, "the inner reflexivity of consciousness." What does the plethora of sexual and gender identities teach us about consciousness's quest to grasp itself? We shall return to these questions in the conclusion after taking up the problem of ontology from a gender studies perspective.

Gender Trouble: From Gender Essentialism to Post-Structuralist "Ontology"

In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler utilizes a wide array of critical methodologies and disciplines to interrogate the concept of gender and, as a result, Butler radically shifts the epistemological paradigm of gender from one of traditional ontology (that is, of substance) to one of *social temporality* (that is, constituted in time) and identity.[222] Rather than thinking of gender as an expression of an internal

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estrangement as the main characteristic of existence. In this sense, healing means reuniting that which is estranged, giving a center to what is split, overcoming the split between God and man [sic.], man and his world, man and himself. Out of this interpretation of salvation, the concept of the new being has grown. Salvation is reclaiming from the old and transferring into the new being." Cf. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, *Volume II*, p. 166.

[220] Tillich further clarifies that "Only if salvation is understood as healing and saving power through the New Being in all history is the problem put on another level. In some degree, all [humanity] participate in the healing power of the New Being. Otherwise, they would

have no being." Cf. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Volume II*, p. 167.

[221] For Tillich, "the 'knowledge' of knowing" (epistemology) is a part of "the knowledge of being" (ontology), "for knowing is an event within the totality of events." Cf. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Volume I*, p. 71.

[222] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 191. Butler's ontology, or lack thereof, and its evolution is a contested topic. In an article on "Vulnerability and Ontology," Susan Heckman notes that Butler's works from 2004 onward begin to examine ontology more deeply. Cf. Susan Heckman, "Vulnerability and Ontology" in *Australian Feminist Studies* 29, no. 82 (2014): 452 – 464. Heckman writes, "It is an ontology that departs radically from the

fact (for example, that one's anatomy or clothing expresses some inner core that is gendered), gender ought to be considered a "corporeal style" of sorts, a repeated act, like a ritual, that is performed by bodies under the compulsory regulation of heterosexual reproduction.[223] Simply put, when conceiving of gender, the movement of influence is reversed for Butler: cultural norms are compulsorily *thrust upon* bodies that perform/seek to perform the very thing they were told was *within* them all long: a gendered self/identity. And yet, as their later work shows, an identity—a gendered I—is necessary for social existence. But how does Butler systematically arrive at their earlier paradigmatic reversal? And, furthermore, how might Butler's theory of social temporality be compatible with Tillich's ontology?

A. Destabilizing Substance: Critical Genealogy of Gender

This paradigmatic shift follows Michel Foucault's methodology of a "critical genealogy" in his *History of Sexuality*, and Butler uses it to describe how the myth of gender as an expression of an inner identity casts a veil over gender's own genesis. Butler poignantly summarizes their appropriation of Foucault's theory as follows:

> In the place of an original identification which serves as a determining cause, gender identity might be reconsidered as a personal/cultural history of received meanings subject to a set of imitative practices which refer laterally to other imitations and which, jointly, construct the illusion of a primary and interior gendered self or parody the mechanism of that construction.[224]

Seen in this light, one begins to understand the legitimate concerns that Butler voices regarding ontology and its oppressive use in justifying "gender

essentialism" in which "[t]he presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it."[225] Cultural assumptions about gender and its relations to sex, where sex is regarded as a fixed and "natural" substantive fact, function to restrict both sex and gender, and thereby limit the potentialities that can be actualized by a person (to use Tillichian language). Therefore, the essentialist concept of gender and sex must be challenged.

Butler, however, reconceptualizes sex and gender in the following way: rather than regarding gender as a social construction that is applied to natural sexes, gender must be understood as "the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established;" therefore, "[t]his production of sex as the prediscursive ought to be understood as the effect of the apparatus of cultural construction designated by *gender.*"[226] Genealogically, the social construction of gender creates the fiction of natural binary sexes—and not the other way around. Gender, then, becomes the condition for the possibility of social existence. The "I" only comes to be an I when it is gendered. Though working within different disciplines and regarding different topics, Butler and Tillich are, effectively, taking a similar course of action: using epistemology to challenge the failures they recognized in the ontological schemes of their contemporaries. The essentialist ontological concept of binary genders could be said to be *a priori* insofar as it determines the nature of one's experience. If one is regarded by one's society to be a man, for instance, they are very likely to be paid more for the same work than someone who is socially categorized as a woman.[227] Both Tillich and Butler recognize the impact of ontological concepts on the lived

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ontology of the essentialist subject prior to discourse, but it is an ontology nonetheless. I would even go so far as to say that, for Butler, there is a there there, a subject who resists norms and 'undoes' gender; but it is a subject who cannot be thought outside the norms that constitute it. The resistance itself is performed inside those norms and is made possible by them. Most importantly, it is a subject whose ontology, whose being, is dependent on those norms," p. 456.

[223] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 190.
[224] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 188.
[225] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 9.

[226] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 10 (author's emphasis).
[227] The Pew Research Center notes, "The gender pay gap – the difference between the earnings of men and women – has barely closed in the United States in the past two decades. In 2022, American women typically earned 82 cents for every dollar earned by men. That was about the same as in 2002, when they earned 80 cents to the dollar." Cf. Pew Research Center, "The Enduring Grip of the Gender Pay Gap," (accessed December 13, 2023) https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2023/03/01/the-enduring-grip-of-the-gender-pay-

experiences of persons, Butler's early work, however, uses a critical genealogy in an attempt to discredit any positive relationship between ontology and gender. But what is lost and what is gained in this approach? Is it necessary to do away with ontology altogether? Could Tillich offer a theological way forward for constructing an ontological paradigm that affirms LGBTQIA+ persons without perpetuating essentialist categories?

1.

Conclusion: An Ethical, Symbolic Ontology

Etymologically, one could say that ontology necessarily involves substance[228]—but as a *theological* discourse about the meaning of being, the substance that is our subject is not a literal one or even an essence; it is a symbolic statement. This is so because any statement about God (the ground of the ontological structure itself) is a symbolic one for Tillich. Therefore, within theological discourse, gender and sexuality need not be essentialized or contorted into substantive identities—indeed to do so would be *demonic* (that is, to elevate something partial and ambiguous into the impartial and unambiguous reality of God)! Rather than limiting gender, a Tillichian theological understanding of ontology affirms the sacredness of gender and sexual identities as creative forms through which religious content, the ontological ground beneath all identities, can be expressed and experienced. And, at the same time, such an approach would negate the absolute validity of these same forms—one could not draw definitive boundaries around an identity, as has recently been the case within "radical feminist" discourse and its exclusion of trans women.[229] Perhaps this is why the term "queer" remains elusive: it is both something and nothing, pointing to those of us considered sexually "strange" within

heteronormative cultures while not positing a singular, absolute identity.
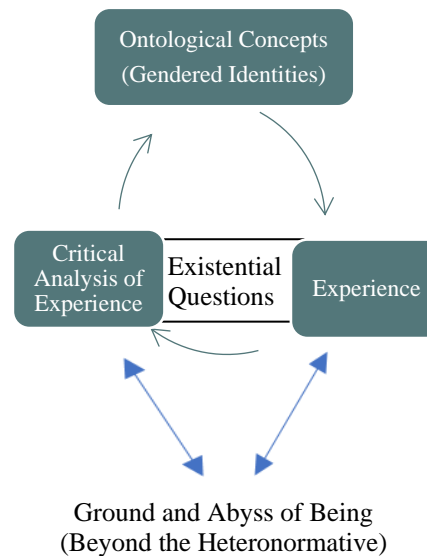
An Ethical Ontology

Figure2: Integrating Gender into Tillich's Ontological Scheme & Method of Correlation

To begin bringing into focus the queer (strange; counter-normative; non-linear) method of this paper, one could say that the norm and expectations of a masculine essence determines the nature of one's social existence—of one's embodied being—even before one knows these norms exist, and in that way, they are *a priori*. As one comes to analyze one's social existence, however, one comes to recognize the role and failure of these ontological concepts in one's lived experience. Now, in his articulation of a Tillichian ethical framework, Nimi Wariboko, writes that this ethics is the striving toward that which enables individuals to flourish, to actualize their potentialities; it is the orientation of the functions of life toward the ground of being.[230] If human flourishing entails an orientation toward the ground of being, then determinations about the ground of being have ethical and theological implications. Tillich's ontology is part of his method of correlation, in which existential questions and theological answers are in mutual interdependence. And so, I propose that our questioning after the nature of

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gap/#:~:text=The%20gender%20pay%20gap%20%E2%80%93%20the,80%20cents%20to%20the%20dollar.
[228] The English term "substance" comes from the Latin word *substantia*, meaning something that stands under or grounds things, which is a translation of the Greek term *ousia*, which means being. Cf. Howard Robinson, "Substance", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2021/entries/substance/.

[229] As just one example that provides an overview of recent tensions between feminists and radical feminists over the inclusion of trans women, see Michelle Goldberg, "What is a Woman," in *The New Yorker* (July 28, 2014), https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/08/04/woman-2.
[230] See Nimi Wariboko, "Emergence and 'Science of Ethos': Toward a Tillichian Ethical Framework," in *Theology and Science* 7, no. 2 (2009): 189-206.

gender and sexual identity presupposes a theological response. Said differently, the proliferation of gender and sexual identities reveals something to us about the nature of God/consciousness.

In an article on "Vulnerability and Ontology," Susan Heckman notes that Butler's works from 2004 onward begin to examine ontology more deeply. Heckman writes,

> It is [their] ontology of the subject that gives Butler an opening into the realm of ethics. If identity is a necessity and some individuals are denied an identity, an 'I', because their society precludes their being, then this is an ethical challenge. If the subject is denied being, possibility, then our ethical imperative is, as [Butler] puts it here, to seek a path towards a more ethical kind of being.[231]

And so, even for an antifoundationalist scholar such as Butler, ontology can play a role in ethics and need not, as in Butler's earlier work, be totally disregarded.

B. The Fruits of this Synthesis

By synthesizing Tillich and Butler's approaches to ontology, the following three conclusions can be made: Firstly, gender norms have ontological significance; they are the condition for the possibility of social existence. It is through gender that the subject emerges as an intelligible subject. Secondly, critical analysis, which is integral to both Tillich's ontology and Butler's genealogy of gender, becomes the necessary protest against absolutization within the ontological structure itself. While gendered norms constitute the subject, these norms can and must be constantly critiqued. In Butlerian language, the norms that constitute the subject also provide the very means for their undoing. Thirdly, for Christians all of our identity questions take place within Tillich's method of correlation—i.e., both the proliferation and challenging of gender and sexual norms and gender essentialism is part of the very process through which God is revealed. Our existential questions about the meaning of gender and sexuality presuppose a "mystical a priori," as

Tillich calls it, "an awareness of something that transcends the cleavage between subject and object."[232] Perhaps feminism, queer theory, and queer theology are critiquing the gender binary in order to call us beyond these unnecessary divisions and deeper into a diverse unity of being—into the (Queer) New Being.

In conclusion, Christian discourse has ontological significance for its participants for it determines whose being matters—whose being is revelatory, whose identities, or actualized potentialities are expressions of a Christian ground of being that is beyond the heteronormative gender binary. Thanks to Tillich's concept of the New Being, theology already has the language to understand ontologically based identities in a socially constructed way: the New Being is manifest within a diversity of persons of various gender, class, and cultural identities and is realized through their collective repetition and embodiment of this narrative. The New Being is the site of the new in history and is the restorative principle of the whole system. Accordingly, the continual proliferation of gender and sexual identities—the fact that we have LGBTQIA+ as an ever-growing acronym—is, within a Tillichian paradigm, the "site of the new in history," which is intrinsic to the (Queer) New Being. As Tillich wrote in the first volume of the *Systematic Theology*, "Without the element of openness, history would be without creativity. It would cease to be history."[233] This site of the new is the *nunc eternum* or "eternal present" for Tillich and is therefore analogous to the fluidity and openness of gender and sexual identities where old forms and understandings of the human are opened to new possibilities in the present, possibilities that not only reinterpret and re-open the past, but which also open and anticipate future potentialities through their present embodiments.

Therefore, because Butler stands outside theology Butler claims in *Gender Trouble* that there is no ontological ground that gender or sexual identities express. As a work of theology, I am hereby re-connecting the concepts of gender and sexuality with ontology by asserting that there *is* a ground,

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[231] Susan Hekman, "Vulnerability and Ontology," 457.
[232] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Volume I*, p. 9.

[233] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Volume I*, p. 276.

and that this ground is God within Christian discourse. This does not mean, however, that there is a static or literal queer substance that one either possesses or lacks. Rather, what I mean is that the ontological structures from which meaning is derived for Christian communities transcends the binary and phantasmatic constructions of compulsory heterosexuality—*there is something about being itself (and/or consciousness itself) that cannot be mediated through the binary confines of heteronormativity*. And the critical analysis of experience by LGBTQIA+ persons demonstrates this and accordingly critiques the ontological structures themselves, offering an alternative: the (Queer) New Being. In this way, queerness is both an ontological concept and a critical principle within the study of being and its meaning for Christian communities, which my dissertation takes up.

Revisiting Paul Tillich's Christology

David H. Nikkel

Contending that some of Paul Tillich's Christology is too abstract, even disembodied, I will discuss what to retain, modify, or eliminate. In the final analysis, I find a dualism between the "historical fact . . . to which the name of Jesus of Nazareth points"[234] and the reception of the picture of Jesus as the Christ which brings the New Being.[235] Tillich attempts to paint these sides of the revelatory event as equally necessary and valid. If theology ignores historical facticity:

> It ignores the basic Christian assertion that Essential God-Manhood has appeared within existence and subjected itself to the conditions of existence without being conquered by them. If there were no personal life in which existential estrangement has been overcome, the New Being would have remained a quest.[236]

At the same time, Tillich consigns all research that offers a picture of the "historical Jesus" to doubt. "At best," these portraits of the flesh-and-blood Jesus offer "more or less probable results" that cannot serve as a basis for faith.[237] So what is the basis of faith? "Faith itself is the immediate (not mediated by conclusions) evidence of the New Being . . . No historical criticism can question the immediate awareness of those who find themselves transformed into the state of faith."[238]

Tillich senses the tension here between the inescapable doubt of any and all historical evidence relative to revelation and the certainty of faith in the picture of Jesus as the Christ, perhaps feeling somewhat boxed in. But he believes he can avoid contradiction by recourse to analogy: "there is an *analogia imagines*, namely, an analogy between the picture and the actual personal life from which it has arisen." That this analogy allows only "indirect, symbolic, mediated . . . knowledge does not diminish its truth-value," Tillich asserts. Yet nothing "concrete" is guaranteed "in respect to empirical factuality." All Tillich's eggs of certainty appear to be on the receiving-side basket, on "the reception of the New Being and its transforming power on the part of the first witnesses" and its continuing transformative power.[239]

It will be instructive I think to examine how Tillich handles other aspects of the human revelatory connection with God in comparison to the picture of Jesus as the Christ and the bearer of New Being. For Tillich, there exists in human beings an immediate awareness of the divine.[240] Tillich sometimes uses the term "mystical a priori" to refer to this immediate awareness and point of identity. While I do not share that belief with Tillich, I'll proceed with my examination. This awareness for Tillich also entails a "certainty,"[241] indeed, "an unconditional certainty,"[242] though not always recognized as of the divine.[243] When it comes to the substance or content of the revelation of divine being-itself, our knowledge must always be symbolic, because the divine transcends the distinction between subject

[234] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Volume 2, p. 98.

[235] Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Volume 2, p. 99.

[236] Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Volume 2,* p. 98.

[237] Tillich, *Systematic Theology,* Volume 2, p. 103

[238] Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Volume 2, p. 214

[239] Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Volume 2, p. 115

[240] Tillich (1959). *Theology of Culture*. Ed. Robert C. Kimball. New York: Oxford University Press, 10, 16, 22

[241] Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, p. 10.

[242] Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, p. 23.

[243] Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, p. 14.

and object as well as the distinction between potentiality and actuality. (I accept divine transcendence of the first distinction but not the second.) In general, Tillich recognizes that our symbolic takes on the divine are fallible, subject to distortions, idolatry, destructiveness, even to the point of becoming demonic. Yet for Tillich, it would seem that we possess a certainty with respect to being-itself. With respect to the ethical imperative that is part of human awareness of the divine, a certainty pertains, but our choices, our actions, involve risk and may be wrong. Even when all concrete manifestations or symbols of the divine fall into an abyss of doubt, anxiety, and despair, Tillich offers the hope of absolute faith in the God above God, which seems to cling to an utterly contentless certainty "which says Yes to being;"[244] and is the "power of being"[245] carrying the hope of the "potential restitution" of particular meanings.[246]

I do find inconsistency here, with fallibility for the receiving side except with the picture of Jesus as the Christ. While Tillich maintains the fallibility of any particular evidence for, as well as a gestalt of, the historical Jesus, the picture of Jesus as the Christ possesses a kind of certainty other revelations do not. Tillich wants to have his cake and eat it too. The picture of Jesus as the Christ, which is obviously a particular revelation supposedly not backed up by any particulars, has certainty because of the supposed certainty by some that they have been transformed. This seems to me to be a case of special pleading. This results in a dualism leaving anything and everything of the historical Jesus in doubt, while maintaining the certainty that some experienced the New Being in relation to Jesus as the Christ of faith. Looking at this certainty from the divine side, we come back to an immediate awareness of the divine depth dimension lacking any specific content. As I concluded more generally elsewhere, "A dualism obtains between the plane of mystical, ontological awareness of the divine and the plane of the meaning of our embodied existence vis-à-vis the

divine."[247] (2018: 37). Christologically, this dualism effaces the embodied reality of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, a Jewish human being embodied and embedded in first-century Palestine, who taught and preached in pithy sayings and parables, whose actions according to the perspectives of some resulted in healing of their bodies, and who was crucified by the Romans.

Nevertheless, I believe we can resuscitate something of the historical Jesus, by drawing on and reconfiguring what Tillich rejects as "elaborat[ing] a *Gestalt* while leaving the particulars open to doubt."[248] I propose something other than an all-or-nothing approach, other than a kind of dualism between a credible gestalt and dubious particulars. Rather, I believe we can discern a coherent picture of Jesus' teachings found in the synoptic gospels (two of which drew on Q, which later influenced the gospel of Thomas), despite the uncertainty of Jesus' historical utterance of some particulars. That is to say, there exist enough instances of congenial sayings and parables about the kingdom of God or heaven forming a pattern that can be trusted beyond a reasonable doubt in my judgment. Admittedly, some more radical New Testament scholars come to a different conclusion. What might that coherent, I believe trustworthy, pattern and portrait include? Jesus taught divine inclusive and forgiving love that humans should imitate, extending even to one's enemies. Jesus taught that the most important criterion for entering the realm of God consisted of beneficent action, done out of loving intent rather than to enhance one's prestige. Jesus warned against the human tendency to self-righteousness. He preached a reversal of status, wherein the poor, the powerless, and the repentant sinner were more kingdom-worthy than the rich, the powerful, and the self-righteous. Likewise, I find no good reason exists to doubt that his first followers believed that Jesus embodied the love he taught, that he practiced what he preached. In terms of human relationships to other human beings, other sentient creatures, and

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[244] Tillich (1952). *The Courage to Be*. New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 189, 212.
[245] Tillich, *The Courage to Be*. 187.
[246] Tillich, *The Courage to Be*. 186.

[247] David H, Nikkel, (2018). "Embodying Ultimate Concern." In *The Body and Ultimate Concern: Reflections on an Embodied Theology of Paul Tillich*, eds. Adam Pryor and Devan Stahl, p. 248.
[248] Tillich, *Systematic Theology Volume 2*, p. 103.

larger meanings, we cannot expect to find some abstract, absolute, unmediated truth. Instead, as human mindbodies embedded in natural-social environments, as embodied human beings, the most we can and should hope to find is truth we can rely on.

Tillich is right that the patristic understanding of "nature" was abstract essentialism.[249] Yet I contend we can speak meaningfully about human nature apart from the Hellenistic substance philosophy of an unchanging essence. Today we can consider human nature in terms of the biology that sets the ranges for embodied human life and culture that arises from embodiment in natural-social worlds. While Tillich's analysis of the ontological polarities offers much of value for understanding the human condition, I question whether his use of them is fruitful for the picture of Jesus as the Christ. The payoff with respect to the polarities is that Jesus purportedly lived his life without the polarities ever becoming separated. Jesus lived with an unbroken unity of the polarities and an unbroken unity with God; he "resist[ed] the attempts within existential estrangement to disrupt" the unity of the polarities and with God.[250] Tillich advocates replacing "divine nature" with eternal divine-human unity, to use more inclusive language than "Eternal God-Manhood."[251]

I accept that what I believe we can know about the historical Jesus is generally consistent with his holding together the polarities and unity with God. However, there is a grand exception to this unity in the biblical portrait of Jesus as the Christ, namely, Jesus' cry of dereliction on the cross. I grant that we do not have historical evidence for this cry, as bystanders were not permitted to come near victims of crucifixion according to Roman policy. On the other hand, I find it quite plausible that Jesus did feel forsaken, abandoned by God during some of his agony on the cross. Tillich recognizes Jesus' "doubt about his own work—a doubt which breaks through most intensively on the Cross"; but he adds that this doubt "does not destroy his unity with God."[252]

Perhaps not at the moment of his death, which would be in keeping with the gospel accounts. Yet for some time during his tortuous death, I deem it likely that Jesus did experience estrangement from God. This estrangement can be regarded as involving some break between freedom and destiny and between form and dynamics, though not through any fault of Jesus in my estimation.

I believe we can find a more fruitful way to understand the incarnation and Jesus as the Christ by retrieving "human nature" with a more embodied notion of our nature. We can agree with the formula of Chalcedon that Jesus was "fully human" in mind, soul, and body—which are not fundamentally different realities but ways of talking about one human mindbody, to use the coinage of religionist William Poteat.[253] When it comes to the other side of the Chalcedon coin, I can affirm "fully divine," but only so in a manner consistent with being fully human. So, I opt for a low Christology rather than either a traditional metaphysical superiority for Jesus as divine or a Tillichian insistence that the eternal divine-human unity must have happened within history in order for individuals to have an experience of transformation and new being.

Full divinity for a human being would mean actualizing qualitative attributes of the divine, namely, the divine benevolence, in particular the divine all-loving nature. I do reject a kenotic Christology where the Logos empties itself of the quantitative divine attributes relating to universal scope of interaction while retaining qualitative attributes in the incarnation in Jesus, because that would compromise any indeterminate free will, which in my anthropology would mean that Jesus was not fully human. Of course, for an individual human being, only some creatures can be the recipients of love from that person because of the limits on our scope of interaction. In addition, this loving nature must be understood as entailing justice wherever justice is a necessary aspect of a loving response. My Christology affirms the confession of

[249] Tillich, *Systematic Theology Volume 2*, p. 147-150.
[250] Tillich, *Systematic Theology Volume 2*, p. 143, 138.
[251] Tillich, *Systematic Theology Volume 2*, p. 148.
[252] Tillich, *Systematic Theology Volume 2*, p. 134, 132.

[253] William H. Poteat, (1985). *Polanyian Meditations: In Search of a Post-Critical Logic*. Durham: Duke University Press.

the church that Jesus Christ was without sin—that as he grew up and his understanding of the needs of others increased, he always made the optimally loving choice in relation to caring for himself versus caring for others. To introduce another polarity, for Jesus his acting on his desire for self-preservation was always in proper balance with his pro-social feelings and understandings. This proper balance could and did ultimately result in his sacrificing his life out of love for others. In keeping with my Methodist heritage, rather than Tillich's Lutheranism, I claim that Jesus always realized perfection in love. (Relative to an issue mentioned above, if Jesus did feel abandoned by God on the cross, for however long or short a duration, this would not in my judgment diminish his perfection in love.)

On what basis do I make the assertion that Jesus was thus sinless? On the basis of faith. Tillich rightly holds that, when we make symbolic assertions about the divine, we are in the realm of myth. And I freely admit I am in the realm of myth when I make this claim. I cannot claim objective evidence of all the relevant details of Jesus' life. Instead, I accept the tradition of the church. What if someone were to challenge my faith by asking, "what if you're wrong?" I'd answer, "so what?" Again, drawing on my Wesleyan tradition, I see no reason why someone cannot become perfect in love. There is the realization in that tradition that we are not so transparent to ourselves so as to have certainty of one's perfection in love. It would seem that only God could know for sure. And, by the way, if Jesus did not know whether or not he was perfect in love, I do not find that problematic. As Mark has Jesus declare to the rich young ruler, don't call me good, for God alone is good. Of course, in Christian tradition, it is not kosher for followers of Jesus to entertain the possibility that one has been perfect in love one's whole morally responsible life. Yet I see no reason in principle to rule this out as a human possibility. For we who confess that we have sinned, we can experience transformation and new being, as we strive for perfection in love—even if our faith that

Jesus was perfect in love every relevant moment of his life could be wrong.

In Tillich's perspective, for a symbol to constitute final revelation, it must be transparent to the divine, crucially meaning that it makes no claim of ultimacy for itself in its particular finitude over against the divine, which would be idolatrous. Thus, Jesus as the Christ can be final revelation only as he surrenders or sacrifices himself as a particular finite individual. As Tillich puts it in *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*: "It is a personal life, the image of which, as it impressed itself on his followers, shows no break in his relation to God and no claim for himself in his particularity. What is particular in him is that he crucified the particular in himself for the sake of the universal."[254] We need to unpack this idea. In one sense when a person dies, so does everything that made them a particular sentient being, including their personality, character, and memories. Clearly Tillich is not thinking of Jesus as being dead. Rather, his concern lies with Jesus and the possibility or prospect of his dying in taking on his mission and in his process of dying—from the perspective of "his followers." Tillich characterizes his "acceptance of the cross, both during his life and at the end of it, as the decisive test of his unity with God."[255] While the synoptic gospels have Jesus disabusing his disciples of the disciples' notion of Messiah-hood as involving victory without suffering and dying, scholars employing historical methods are unanimous that this reflects theology after the fact rather than a historical reality. Some such passages have Jesus saying that he will rise from the dead, presumably retaining something of his character, personality, and subjectivity as Jesus. Regarding his dying, we have no historical evidence as to what Jesus may have said or what actions he took while being crucified, per the Roman policy of no bystanders. Nevertheless, as he suffered on the cross, there is no way that Jesus could erase the reality that he was born to Mary and Joseph, that he grew up in the Jewish faith, that he taught in parables and cogent sayings about the kingdom of God, and that he attempted to heal folks. Nor do we have reason to

[254] Tillich, (1963). *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 81.

[255] Tillich, *Systematic Theology Volume 1*, p. 136.

suppose that Jesus regretted these facets of his experience, identity, and character. In attempting to support the uniqueness of Jesus as the Christ, Tillich asserts that, "unlike many martyrs and many ordinary people . . . he sacrifices everything in him and of him which could bring people to him as an 'overwhelming personality'."[256] I confess that I'm not entirely clear what Tillich means by this. In dying I don't think Jesus denied or regretted that he had a charismatic personality. On the other hand, that he wasn't claiming any ultimacy for his personal charisma in competition with God would be consistent with Tillich's overriding idea on this matter. Nor do I doubt that Jesus had no desire to make an idol of himself. Clearly Tillich wants to affirm some connection, some analogy, between the "personal life" of Jesus with its identity and character and his crucifixion as the Christ. Again, he wants to have his cake and eat it too. Yet we are back to the same problem as with the historical Jesus versus Jesus as the Christ more generally. The revelation from the divine as received through the faith of others seems to do all the heavy lifting, while the embodied particulars of Jesus' life seem secondary at best. Finally, we have a more Alexandrian than Antiochian Christology relative to Jesus' death and more generally. To speak of Jesus' Christhood as consisting primarily of his refusal to claim ultimacy himself, epitomized in his willingness to be crucified, is an abstraction that undermines the constellation of historical particularities that enabled Jesus' life and death to become revelatory. I will address below Tillich's assertions of Jesus' uniqueness as the final revelation, as the Christ, and as the bearer of the New Being at more length versus his more pluralistic tendencies. However, Tillich's focus on Jesus' supposedly sacrificing all his particularity on the cross from the perspective of his followers has implications—not favorable —for his insistence on Jesus' uniqueness. Given Tillich's refusal to rely on any embodied historical particularities to support Jesus supposedly sacrificing his own finite particularity in transparent unity with rather than in competition with the divine, I see no reason to deny the claim of followers on behalf of any religious martyr who died attempting to follow God's will, the mandate of heaven (Tian), et cetera, that said martyr also succeeded in sacrificing all of their own finite particularity in transparent unity with rather than in competition with the divine.

With regard to the resurrection of Jesus, the earliest experiences involved visions of Christ exalted, a tradition Paul relates. (Later traditions entailing Jesus' appearance in a physical body are of dubious historicity). We can fruitfully connect Tillich's understanding of eternal life and the elevation of temporality and history into eternity with this early tradition. To refer to eternal life Tillich also uses the terms the transcendent kingdom of God.[257] and resurrection of the body (flesh), this latter being highly symbolic, with Paul's "Spiritual body" much less subject to misinterpretation.[258] Ordinarily the lifting of a human life into eternity involves the purging of the negativities in that life. This includes frequent imbalances with respect to the ontological polarities, along with sin, selfishness, and estrangement from God and finite beings. In the case of Jesus Christ, the elevation of his life and sacrificial death into eternity involved no need to purge negativities. Jesus realized essentialization without the normal divine judgment upon and negation of the negative. Tillich characterizes "Eternal Life [as] the life of universal and perfect love."[259] Of course, for my Christology Jesus' perfection in love in his earthly and bodily life plays a pivotal role. Therefore, the realization of perfect love in eternal life for Jesus requires no purging and supplemental essentialization. So, what can we say about the resurrection of Jesus from my appropriation of Tillich's concept of eternal life: that those who envisioned the exalted Christ were sensing that Jesus' life had been incorporated into the life of the divine eternally in an exalted, exemplary, and perfect manner. To thus understand Jesus' resurrection or exaltation does not commit one to accept the interpretation of the first followers that Jesus subjectively acted to appear to them at particular temporal moments, only to affirm that they grasped the momentous truth that Jesus' life and death had been taken up into the divine life eternally in a superlative way. To borrow some words from Tillich,

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[256] Tillich, *Systematic Theology Volume 1*, p. 136.
[257] Tillich, *Systematic Theology Volume 3*, p. 394.
[258] Tillich, *Systematic Theology Volume 3,* p. 412.
[259] Tillich, *Systematic Theology Volume 3,* p. 402.

to say significantly more than this one must speak poetically.

I will conclude this piece by arguing that the tension between Jesus as the unique manifestation of human-divine unity versus the apparent openness of what could function as "final revelation" for different cultures must be decided in favor of pluralism, especially in light of Tillich's late interfaith excursions. In "The Reality of Revelation" in Volume 1 of the *Systematic Theology*, Tillich offers some strong words about the decisiveness of final revelation in Jesus as the Christ: "Final revelation means the decisive, fulfilling, unsurpassable revelation, that which is the criterion of all the others."[260] Moreover, Jesus as the Christ, insofar as it is final revelation, is universally valid.[261] Indeed, "Jesus as the Christ is the center" for the "historical continuum" in which we live.[262] On the other hand, in keeping with the need to avoid idolatry if a revelation's particularity, Tillich stipulates that "Christianity as Christianity [as a religion] is neither final nor universal. But that to which it witnesses is final and universal."[263] Therefore, any religion, including Christianity, should "negate itself as a religion."[264]

In Tillich's final lecture, he uses the term "Religion of the Concrete Spirit" to refer to a religious moment where mystical and ethical elements are united in a sacramental manifestation of the Holy, which is both concrete and universal. (1966:86-87). We can understand this as another way of describing final, unsurpassable revelation, which for Christians of course happened with Jesus as the Christ (1966: 88). Wanting again to avoid idolatry, Tillich opines that Religion of the Concrete Spirit cannot be identified with any actual religion, even Christianity (1966: 87). Interestingly, Tillich judges that Religion of the Concrete Spirit has happened only fragmentarily in Christian history,[265] while at the same time granting that it happens fragmentarily in other world religions "not historically or empirically connected with the [event of the] cross."[266]

At the beginning of his final lecture Tillich seems to raise the possibility that one manifestation of Religion of the Concrete Spirit might come to be regarded as the final revelation for all the major world religions:

> [T]here may be—and I stress this, there *may* be—a central event in the history of religions which unites the results of these critical developments in the history of religion in and under which revelatory experiences are going on—event which, therefore, makes possible a concrete theology that has universal significance.[267]

If that were to happen, Tillich would hope that all religions would come to accept Jesus as the Christ as final revelation. Tillich's own words stress the very hypothetical nature of the ultimate unity of the world religions. I would go further and call it quite implausible. For this to happen, each world religion would need to make continuous with its own history of revelation—a history which would now be preparatory revelation—the one final revelation, let us say, in Jesus as the Christ. Such a prospect loses sight of the embodied history of different cultures, embedded and acting in their respective social-natural worlds. This is not to deny interactions among different cultures. However, to take up Tillich's phrase, "historical continuum," it is more accurate to say that major cultural traditions each have their own historical continuum than that they have engaged the other cultural traditions in a significant or deep way. To cut to the chase, the logic of Tillich's system allows in principle for different cultures and different religious traditions to have different final revelations. Tillich makes clear his position that a religious practitioner can only hold to one final revelation, which is regarded as unsurpassable. In my take on the logical structure of Tillich's system, this allows practitioners of the major world religions to regard their revelation as final and unsurpassable. Unsurpassability is quite compatible with pluralism, as each practitioner holds to their final revelation as unsurpassable, without claiming

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[260] Tillich, *Systematic Theology Volume 1,* p. 133.
[261] Tillich, *Systematic Theology Volume 1,* pp. 107, 137 and *Volume 2*, p. 151.
[262] Tillich, *Systematic Theology Volume 2,* p. 101.
[263] Tillich, *Systematic Theology Volume 1,* p. 134.

[264] Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions*, p. 97.
[265] Paul Tillich, (1966). *The Future of Religions.* Ed. Jerald C. Brauer. New York: Harper & Row, pp. 88-89.
[266] Tillich, *The Future of Religions*, p. 89.
[267] Tillich, *The Future of Religions*, p. 81.

theirs surpasses others' respective final revelations. Tillich does assert that "where there is revelation, there is salvation,"[268] as well as the fragmentary presence of Religion of the Concrete Spirit in Christianity and other world religions—without ranking them, abjuring attempts to convert practitioners of other faiths to Christianity.[269]

In *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions*, Tillich does criticize Hinduism and Buddhism for overemphasizing the mystical at the expense of the ethical or prophetic polarity; in the same work, Islam gets rather short shrift as a "simplified religion"[270] effective in accommodating "primitive" folks,[271] but inadequate for dealing with "personal problems of sin and grace.[272] However, as indicated just above, Tillich in his final work, places Christianity together with the world religions in only fragmentarily actualizing Religion of the Concrete Spirit. Tillich also has a more positive word about Islam, averring that its lack of emphasis on sin taken in conjunction with Christianity's emphasis on it "can enlarge our understanding of man."[273] From Tillich's last words on the matter, it would not be too much of a stretch to credit the major world religions with a "rough parity" in transforming practitioners from "self-centeredness" to "Reality-centeredness," to employ the language of John Hick.[274] Or at least we can say that Tillich ultimately had no interest in ranking world religions in terms of transformation to Reality-centeredness or New Being. Thus, I would conclude that a Christology that takes the best of Paul Tillich's insights should not make a claim that the revelation in Jesus as the Christ is unique or superior to the revelatory claims of the other major world religions.

This conclusion adds to my admission of advancing a low Christology. Yet it does affirm the divinity of Jesus Christ as far as humanly possible, that Jesus' perfect has been elevated into the divine life eternally, and that Jesus as the Christ can bring

ultimate transformation and New Being. We have seen Tillich's concern about certainty based on an immediate connection with the divine. What is the genesis of this concern for certitude? As Poteat argues, following Merleau-Ponty,[275] Renaissance paintings, where all appears crystal clear in foreground and background, reveal a "controlling picture" of modernity: the reasoning subject can reach a place of absolute privilege beyond enabling structures such as the human body, language, and tradition,[276] a God's-eye view, as it were. Of course, these paintings belie how our embodied vision actually works. Descartes heralds this concern for clarity and certainty philosophically. While several scholars have noted the anxiety about being deceived and failing to achieve certainty in the late Renaissance and early Enlightenment (Karsten Harries [2003], Susan E. Schreiner [2003], Barbara Fuchs and Mercedes García-Arenal [2020]), this anxiety shows the pull of the ideal of absolute certainty. Later, the inability of explicit reason to establish universal truths became commonplace. Then Romanticism, most notably for our purposes, German Romantic Idealism, turned to intuition and/or feeling for the locus of certitude. For human beings embodied and embedded in our environment, certainty in ultimate matters is a quest we should abandon. And specifically relating to Jesus as embodied and embedded in his natural-social world and to followers of Jesus embodied and embedded in our world today, I believe a low Christology is requisite.

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[268] Tillich, *Systematic Theology Volume 2*, p. 166.
[269] Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 56-57, 94-95.
[270] Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions*, p. 22.
[271] Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 37, 87.

[272] Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions*, pp. 22.
[273] Tillich, *The Future of Religions*, p. 93-94.
[274] John Hick, (1982). *God Has Many Names*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press.
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Participation In AI: Towards a Tillichian Reading of AI Produced Images

Eric Trozzo

In this paper, my concern is whether AI-generated images have the capacity to grasp us into an experience of participation in the Spiritual Presence. In other words, I wish to turn to Paul Tillich's theological interpretation of art as a method for understanding contemporary human engagement with AI and whether through it there is an opening to the unambiguous life. To focus the discussion, it is helpful to engage a specific recent project using a specific form of AI. With that in mind, I particularly wish to highlight Jens Knappe's image series "Genesis." He used DALL E 2 to create the series. He calls the image series "a subjectively colored creation story" created by "confronting the AI system with big themes and questions" while also signifying a beginning of a major technological development.[277] The resulting collection of images traces a path from cosmic origins through early microbial life to dinosaurs, ancient human cultures, through science fiction images of intelligent androids and space-travelling humans.

AI and Creativity

A significant critique of AI image generation is that it is not truly creative.[278] Rather, it is a "remix" of images already available. That is, because it draws from the full internet archive of images, what AI generates is a composite of photographs, paintings, and other images already archived in online databases. From this point of view, there is nothing creative about synthesizing already existent works; AI images are understood as incapable of creating truly new insights. The images generated are not novel but rather composite of what has previously been done, and so cannot be considered art.

The philosopher Margaret Boden is influential in the field of AI for her work on the nature of creativity. She defines creativity as "the ability to come up with ideas or artefacts that are *new, surprising, and valuable.*"[279] Boden identifies three types of creativity. She frames creativity within what she calls "conceptual space." These spaces refer to a structure of thought. It is a worldview, generally inherited from one's context. The first level of creativity, exploratory creativity, refers to producing novelty within an already existent conceptual space. Such novelty is making a new connection or invention within the confines of existing structures of thought. The second level, meanwhile, is combinatorial creativity. This comes from contrasting one conceptual space with another. The third form of creativity, then, is transformational. This level is the most profound form of creativity, as it is the creation of a new conceptual space. Such creation is never completely new, but it is sufficiently novel to allow ideas or artifacts that were previously impossible. Transformational creativity is experienced as a disruption.

Recognizing those who refute that computers can ever be creative, Boden brackets that question and

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[277] Jens Knappe, *Genesis*. (Berlin: Gamut Verlag, 2022), 41.

[278] Margaret A. Boden, *Creativity and Art: Three Roads to Surprise* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 36.

[279] Ibid, 29. Author's italics

holds that AI can at least *appear* to be creative. AI pattern recognition and data mining can make connections within a conceptual space that are beyond human capacity to calculate and recognize. This allows for at least the appearance of both exploratory and combinatorial creativity. Transformational creativity for AI would mean the ability of the algorithm to override or change its own rules. This capacity has become much more possible within the past few years, as advances have come more rapidly than anticipated.

Yet can AI truly break out beyond the frameworks of its algorithms, or is it always confined by the human conceptual spaces that initially defined it? This question is at the heart of the debates over the nature of AI creativity. More fundamentally, I would suggest it is a debate over the capacity of AI to produce meaning versus its role in recognizing patterns of relationship. It is thus precisely here that Tillich's theological interpretation of art is relevant. Boden's importance within the philosophy of AI has centered discussions of AI-generated images around creativity. I turn to Tillich because I suspect that Boden's framework is too narrow. Rather, I suggest that Tillich's sense of participation is a more effective conceptual space for engaging these images.

Tillich's Theology of Art

In his lecture "Existential Aspects of Modern Art," Tillich lays out four levels of painting based on the relationship between its style and content.[280] By content, he means that which is depicted. Meanwhile, he describes religious style as the "over-all form which, in the particular forms of every particular artist and of every particular school, is still visible as the over-all form; and this over-all form is the expression of that which unconsciously is present in this period as its self-interpretation, as the answer to the question of the ultimate meaning of its existence."[281] Religious style, then, is a wrestling through the artistic work with the question of ultimate meaning. He sees such style as a depth or

transcendence erupting to the surface of the artwork. In this he is speaking of it being religious in a broad sense rather than a narrow one. The narrow sense of religion, he explains, engages a set of symbols such as a divine being or beings and speaks symbolically about these symbols and their activities. Religion in the broader sense, meanwhile, is an expression of ultimate concern, even if it is not engaging traditionally religious symbols. Artistic expression can be religious in this broad sense insofar as it is able to express ultimate concern. A religious style, then, is one that expresses ultimate concern as a particular context understood as questions of meaning and ultimacy. Non-religious style would be one that cannot mediate such depths.

Within this scheme, the first level includes images that have no religious content or style. These are simply depictions. The second has no religious content but has a religious style. There is nothing explicitly religious in the artwork and yet it bears the capacity to mediate the transcendence of ultimate concern. The third level has religious content such as an image of Christ but is non-religious in style and intention. Despite the outward religiosity of such art, its style is not religious. The fourth level is art in which religious style and content are united. This level of art is the most obviously religious in nature because it is religious in both the narrow sense and the broad sense.[282]

AI-generated images can certainly produce religious content. What is at issue, then, is whether AI generated images have the capacity for style, as it is style that presents the capacity for revelation. Specifically, within this framework, it is the second and fourth levels of art that have revelatory capacity. The religious style is something that has the capacity to disruptively grasp the viewer of the painting with a sense of transcending depth. Tillich holds that the revelation found in style can be an encounter of the full dimensionality of the person, or "experiences in which an answer to the question of the meaning of existence impressed itself on human beings in the

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[280]Tillich later changes this terminology from "levels" to "dimensions." For the sake of consistency and clarity as Tillich discusses other types of dimensions I have retained the use of "levels."

[281]Paul Tillich, "Existentialist Aspects of Modern Art" in *On Art and Architecture,* John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger, eds. (New York: Crossroads, 1987), 92.
[282]Ibid, 92-93

totality of their being, individually and socially."[283] This disruptive encounter dislodges the ego and allows for immediate participation in that work of art. Such participation is an opening to the answer to the question of ultimate meaning that roils within that artwork.

Such "expressive style" is where art's revelatory capacity can be identified. The expressive style is what separates an image from art. Artistic validity is found in the work "expressing dimensions of reality which cannot be expressed in any other way."[284] Art is found in this symbolic expression of reality in order to open otherwise inexpressible aspects of reality.[285] Being grasped by such symbols is the revelatory experience of religious style. It is participation with the painting as well as the artist of the painting and the society surrounding that artist and their individual and collective symbolic response to questions of ultimacy and full dimensionality. It is being grasped by the vitality of the power of being.[286]

This sense of participation is worth briefly noting in Tillich's theology more broadly. In the third volume of his *Systematic Theology,* for instance, participation is a major theme, especially in his discussion of transcendent unity. Transcendent unity, he explains, is a quality of the unambiguous life. Participation in that unity has two key aspects: faith and love. These two manifest transcendent union created by the Spiritual Presence in the human spirit. Faith is being grasped by ultimate concern that leads to willing participation in the Spiritual Presence that opens us to full engagement with all dimensions of life; ambiguously now but with anticipation of a final unambiguous participation.[287] Love, meanwhile, is the drive toward uniting that which has been separated; it seeks to overcome what is preventing full participation in the Spiritual Presence.[288] Love, I would add, is known in the drive towards bringing healing and tending to suffering.

A final topic within Tillich's thought to incorporate before returning to issues of AI-generated images is the role of the demonic in art. His reflections are primarily with the boredom elicited by images of heaven and the inability to adequately symbolize blessedness, while representations of the demonic are more compelling. The demonic is ambiguous, with both creative and destructive elements, so that it is the ground of creativity but can turn destructive. Humanity, however, is better able to describe the impact of such negative forces than the blessedness of pure creativity. In terms of art, the symbolic presence of the demonic is what allows participation in the revelation of ultimate meaning because it highlights the ambiguity of existence that is overcome in transcendent unity.[289]

The discussion of the demonic returns us to the questions of AI creativity. Discussions of creativity without a grounding in the depths of meaning may be intellectually interesting but existentially bland. This is the limitation of Boden's philosophy that I suggest Tillich's thought can enhance. Tillich's theology of art brings creativity into connection with the ground of being and our capacity to be ecstatically grasped by it through art. The question of whether AI-generated images are creative is secondary to whether they are capable of grasping us into participation with the full dimensionality of being.

Machine and Human Creativity

Mathematician Marcus du Sautoy wrestles with many of these questions, employing Boden's three types of creativity. He is among the more optimistic of those asking whether AI can be truly creative. He holds that AI has shown at least glimpses of true creativity.

AI creativity, though, is different from human creativity; it is more computational in its approach. It is based on calculating the interaction of rules. For

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[283]Ibid.

[284]Tillich, "Visual Arts and the Revelatory Character of Style" in *On Art and Architecture,* John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger, eds. (New York: Crossroads, 1987), 132.

[285]Ibid, 133.

[286]Tillich, "Existential Aspects," 94.

[287] STIII, 133.

[288] Ibid, 134.

[289] Tillich, "The Demonic in Art," in *On Art and Architecture,* John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger, eds. (New York: Crossroads, 1987),106

transformational creativity, he argues: "There is a meta rule for this type of creativity: start by dropping constraints and see what emerges. The creative act is to choose what to drop – or what new constraint to introduce – such that you end up with a new thing of value."[290] He notes that this approach is dangerous because it might collapse the system, but the embrace of the potential of failure is necessary to produce creativity. He holds that machine learning models do allow for meta-algorithms that can take these risks.[291] He argues, then, that in the advances in machine learning AI the potential is present to overcome the criticisms for why machines cannot be creative in the full range of types of creativity.

Yet du Sautoy does not see AI reaching true creativity in the near future. AI does not have an innate desire or drive to be creative, which he sees as central to creativity – and implicitly as central to the production of art in its highest forms. Further, he does not see in AI the capacity for an engagement with others in creativity. He wonders about the role of an audience for art, speculating that it requires a level of creativity to appreciate artistic creativity that leaves room for its audience to engage the work of art. We might see echoes of Tillich's sense of the ecstatic aspect of participation in the work of art in this sense of mutual creativity. Even more, I would add that du Sautoy is sensing that, without an aspect of mediating the depth dimension of meaning, creativity on its own is unsatisfying. Finally, du Sautoy suggests that creativity is intertwined with mortality. Finitude is a key motivator in the drive for creativity because it is a driving force for identifying meaning.[292]

For du Sautoy, true AI creativity could only be possible if a machine becomes conscious. He suggests that whatever machine consciousness might be, it will be different from human consciousness. Yet he adds, "I'm sure it will want to tell us what it's like" to have machine consciousness.[293] At this point, he suspects, the conscious AI will gain a creative drive to express its existence to humanity (or, I might add, to other machines). This would create participation. Undoubtedly conscious AI would also experience some sort of finitude.

While du Sautoy may be correct about the eventual need for machine consciousness for true AI art, does this matter for the question of whether AI images have the revelatory capacity that Tillich describes? Such AI art would be an expression of the question of meaning for AI existence. It could certainly be an expression of the vitality of the ground of being, but it may be existentially too distant from human questions of meaning for the human viewer to fully participate in that revelation. As humans are not fully separated from machine[294] there would likely be some and probably a great deal of overlap, but if AI consciousness is quite different from human consciousness there could be quite a difference in the context of the answer to the question of meaning revealed.

With current AI, however, the drive for creativity comes from a human. The human input is essential to the image produced. With DALL E 2, crafting the text prompts to start the image creation process is essential in shaping the output. Yet the human who does this does not fit traditional constructs of the artist as author or generator of a piece of art produced. AI is not a tool of art creation in the same way that a brush and paint are tools of creating, or even as a camera as a technological tool for art. AI does considerably more generation of the image than those other technologies. Yet the human creative role in setting parameters and opening possibilities remains considerable.[295]

The text prompts that are human created can certainly ask such questions and to a degree include insights into answers. Yet the output is more

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[290] Marcus du Sautoy. *The Creativity Code: Art and Innovation in the Age of AI*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 10.
[291] Ibid, 280.
[292] Ibid, 285. The point here is not the reality of finitude but consciousness of that finitude (an iPhone has a limited life span but does not realize it, for instance).
[293] Ibid, 286.
[294] I have in mind Haraway's sense of cyborg existence here.
[295] Sofian Audry, *Art in the Age of Machine Learning* (Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 2021), 159.

questionable. Some see AI-generated images as an opportunity to explore the collective unconscious. Because machine learning is drawing from the full image stock of the internet, it draws from the full range of human experience collected in online sources. In a sense, then, AI can take a prompt that raises a question of ultimate meaning and bring the full range of human perspectives to bear on its symbolic representation of that question through the image it generates. Yet I am suspicious of the capacity of composite answers to induce the startling grasping of participation in the full dimensionality of being. Participation in the unambiguous life found in transcendent unity requires more than a composite image.

A further point of concern with AI-generated images is a sense of the role of the artist as having a sensitivity to the suffering of others. This includes an awareness of contemporary suffering as well as histories of suffering and responding to suffering. I have in mind here Tillich's role for the demonic in art as well as of love as an expression of unambiguous life that seeks to overcome that which prevents participation in the Spiritual Presence. A challenge for understanding AI images as being capable of containing a religious style is whether AI is capable of this kind of sensitivity to suffering.

Knappe's Genesis Project results

Returning to Knappe's "Genesis" project, it can be understood as an attempt to test DALL E 2's ability to participate in creating art. He crafted text prompts designed to provoke the AI to create images in response to questions of meaning and participation in the ground of being. Knappe reports significant praise for the images that he included in the final collection, finding novelty and insight in what was produced.

Yet there were also some significant limitations to the images produced. For instance, pictures of astronauts are nearly exclusively of white men. In general, the number of women depicted was disproportionately small, with almost none in modern work environments. Similarly, while some

creation myths produced many results, few results came from indigenous cultures. Generally, the accumulation of racism, sexism, violence, and misogyny deposited within online images forms a significant piece of the curriculum of machine learning about reality, and so its output includes all of those things.

Additionally, because image creation is based in learning the relationship between text and image, the languages used for tagging also shape the conceptual space of the AI. The less commonly typed a language is the less the AI is able to learn its relationships to images, let alone the language's ways of thinking. This leads to an absence of minority and marginalized people and perspectives.

Given the dark corners of the internet, companies releasing AI image generators place restrictions on how much of the internet is drawn from in producing the images. This provides something of a safeguard against some of the worst stereotypical images. At the same time, Knappe reports that quality of the images produced by the publicly available DALL E 2 is significantly lower than the pre-release test version that he used for "Genesis," which did not have those restrictions. The lessened participation lessened the creativity, even as it eliminated the worst tendencies.[296]

Conclusion

Looking at Knappe's work and the theories of AI creativity, the images in "Genesis" can be said to display creativity in Boden's sense. The creativity is not based in the work of AI alone however. There is a cooperation from a human artist who frames prompts and culls the images created, retaining only the best. The AI contribution is significant to the creativity, but it does not supply the intention or desire to communicate or make the final decision on what to include. The AI is a creative tool in the artistic process.

More central to my concerns is the issue of revelatory capacity. Can these images or any AI-generated images cause a grasping effect of being drawn into

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[296] Knappe, 43.

immediate participation in the image in such a way that an answer to questions of meaning be experienced? There is an attempt on the part of the human artist to wrestle with questions of meaning through the AI images. Yet the limitations on the participation due to the limits on language and the problematic history of images included mean that full and unambiguous participation in all of the dimensions of life is not possible.

To return to Tillich's stages of art, I suspect that level one is potentially within the capacity of AI-generated images. I would also include level three as possible as well. Neither of those levels has religious style and so do not need to have the depth dimension of capacity for revelation. Levels two and four are the ones with religious style. To have religious style requires a degree of desire for expression of self as well as a concern to transcend oneself in order to speak to questions of deep meaning. I would further add the concern for sensitivity to suffering to this requirement, as found in Tillich's reflections on the demonic and symbolizing blessedness, but even more in his understanding of love as being brought into the Spiritual Presence that overcomes the ambiguity of the demonic. These are not within the current capacities of AI-generated images. They require a level of mutual participation and creativity between artist, image, audience, and the symbol of the unambiguous life that cannot be reached through computation. I daresay that the current models of machine learning meet a limitation in this type of participation.

Member Publications and Activities

Rachel Sophia Baard, ed. *The Political Theology of Paul Tillich*. Lexington Books, February 2024. Contributors Include Rachel Sophia Baard, Gary Dorrien, Ronald H. Stone, Mark Lewis Taylor, Scott Paeth, Andre L. Price, Rubén Rosarío Rodríguez, Michele E. Watkins, Sigríður Guðmarsdóttir, Ilona Nord, Verna Ehret, Mary Ann Stenger, Ben Siu-pun Ho, Matthew Lon Weaver.

Keith Ka-fu, *Paul Tillich and Sino-Christian Theology*. Routledge Taylor & Francis Publishing, May 2023.

Ted Ferris, [*My Grandfather Paul Tillich: The Unbelieving Theologian*](#)**, Aeon, March 2024.**

Taylor Thomas, Tillich Today Podcast, available through YouTube. Access all episodes [here](#).

In Memoriam

Robison James

Robison James, Cousins Professor Religion Emeritus at the University of Richmond, was a past president of the NAPTS and a cornerstone of the Society. His 2003 *Tillich and World Religions* has been widely used by other scholars in their own work and in classrooms. He was a prolific scholar, a preacher, a member of the Virginia House of Delegates, and a musician over the course of his life. Like Tillich himself, Rob did not hide from the world in the Ivory Tower. He engaged it in a multitude of ways. The testimonials from colleagues in the Society show not only the wide-ranging impact of his work on Tillich scholarship, but also the mentorship and support he provided for others. Mary Ann Stenger wrote, "He was a mentor to me when I did my very first paper, on Tillich, when I was still a graduate student, and later my co-chair of the AAR Tillich Group." Fred Parrella added, "Rob James was a luminary of the North American Paul Tillich Society for decades. His passage into eternity brings sadness to all of us." A rigorous scholar, he was also open to lively debate. Rob brought energy and often exciting engagement with colleagues and friends. I have fond memories of some of those debates that I witnessed when I was still a student member of the Society. He passed peacefully in February 2024. His loss is felt deeply in the Society.

David Klemm

David Klemm, Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies at the University of Iowa, was a long-time member of the NAPTS and mentor to many current

members. Most of his graduate students found themselves intersecting with the Society, some of us for years. His last book, *Religion and the Human Future: An Essay on Theological Humanism* was published in 2007 and co-written with William Schweiker. The impact of this book sparked recurring groups at both the American Academy of Religion and the International Society for Religion, Literature, and Culture. Due to a long-term illness, David's active participation in the NAPTS ended many years ago. His brilliance was matched by his kindness and generosity of spirit. After he retired from the University of Iowa he continued to publish and to give talks at the local Buddhist Center in Iowa City. The impact of his work will continue to be felt for generations. He passed peacefully in March 2024.

Forrest Clingerman

Forrest Clingerman, Professor of Religious Studies and Philosophy, and Director of the Honors Program at Ohio Northen University, was a student of David Klemm's and had a long relationship with the NAPTS. Forrest served as a mentor in the inaugural class of Tillich Fellows for the Society. Forrest's work in religion and ecology was an outstanding example of "thinking with" the great thinkers of the past from Bonaventure to Tillich as well as contemporary innovations in theology and philosophy. His final essay, "Qualified Hope and the Ethics of Planetary Boundaries," was published in April 2024. Forrest had a sharp mind, a quick wit, and a comforting gentility. Through the various edited volumes and collaborative projects he took on over the years, he helped build the careers of countless other scholars. He had a gift for connecting people who did not initially see the intersections of each other's work. He passed suddenly in April 2024, but the power of his work will continue to influence new scholarship.

Future Issues

The next issue of the North American Paul Tillich Society *Bulletin* should come out in late December 2024. If you presented at a recent meeting and have not published your essay with the *Bulletin* already, please send it by early December. Because this is a Society journal, publishing here does not prevent you from also publishing the essay elsewhere. If you have any member notes, recent publications, or other Tillich related activities, please send those as well to vehret@mercyhurst.edu. The program for the November meeting will be available in early fall on the NAPTS website, https://www.napts.org/.