



BULLETIN

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SPECIAL ISSUE: MEMORIAL TRIBUTES TO JANE B. OWEN AND JOHN E. SMITH

In this issue:

- News about the Annual Meeting in Atlanta
- Dues Are Payable for 2010
- In Memoriam: Tributes to Jane Blaffer Owen by William R. Crout and Marion H. Pauck
- Tributes to John E. Smith by Marion Pauck and Durwood Foster
- Roy Enquist Remembered
- Review of Richard Grigg, *Beyond the God Delusion: How Radical Theology Harmonizes Science and Religion* by Guy B. Hammond
- "Paul Tillich and the Twentieth Century Fichte Renaissance: Neo-Idealistic Features in his Early Accounts of Freedom and Existence" by Marc Boss
- "The New Atheism, the God Above God, and the Phenomenology of Wonder" by Richard Grigg
- "Response to Andrew Finstuen's *Original Sin and Everyday Protestants: The Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr, Billy Graham, and Paul Tillich in an Age of Anxiety*" by Terry D. Cooper
- "What God Is Ultimate? Contrasting Tillich's Different 'Gods' in Terms of Faith" by Daniel Boscaljon
- "The (Dis)Integration of Judaism in Tillich's Theology of Universal Salvation" by Kayko Driedger Hesslein
- "Tillich and Adorno: Two Approaches to a Theology of Correlation" by Christopher Craig Brittain
- A Scientist–Jesuit Friendship: Paul H. Carr and Donald P. Merrifield, S. J., (1928 – 2010), President, Loyola Marymount University (1969 – 1984) by Paul Carr

ANNUAL MEETING

Please mark your calendars for the 2010 Annual Meeting of the North American Paul Tillich Society. The meeting will be held on Friday, October 29, and Saturday, October 30, 2010 in Atlanta, Georgia. The American Academy of Religion and the “Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture Group” meets October 30 to November 2.

The annual banquet of the NAPTS will take place on Friday, October 29, at Pittypat’s Porch Restaurant, 25 Andrew Young International Boulevard. 404.525.8228. The restaurant is located between Peachtree Street and Spring Street, within easy walking distance from the convention hotels. It is also a block from the Peachtree Center Station of MARTA, the Atlanta subway line.

The distinguished speaker this year will be A. Durwood Foster. More information and reservations will be available in the fall issue of the Bulletin.

For registration, please contact the AAR website:

http://www.aarweb.org/Meetings/Annual_Meeting/Current_Meeting/default.asp

Housing information is available after registering for the meeting. You must be registered to secure housing. “Advance” registration rates are in effect until September 30, 2010. Check the Annual Meeting Program Planner for all the details, and [register and book housing online](#).

Annual Meeting Job Center preregistration is currently open for candidates and employers. Preregistration will close October 11. Register early to receive full benefits. For more information, see http://www.aarweb.org/programs/career_services/job_center.

DUES AGAIN

“What? Are dues due again? I thought I had just paid them,” one imaginary member of the NAPTS was overheard saying when downloading this summer Bulletin or opening the snail mail copy.

Where does a year go? Yes, dues for 2010 are payable with this issue. *See the back page of this Bulletin or the separate attachment with the e-Bulletin.* Dues are \$50, students \$20. If you are retired and the dues are a financial burden, please let the editor know. *Only non-US residents may use credit cards.*

If you know of a member *not* receiving the Bulletin, perhaps the editor has the incorrect address. Next year, we would like to publish an updated directory of the entire membership online and, of course, make it available to our colleagues in the other societies. Please help the editor correct addresses.

IN MEMORIAM: JANE BLAFFER OWEN

18 APRIL 1915 – 21 JUNE 2010

A candlelight prayer vigil for Jane Blaffer Owen was held from 9 to 10 PM Friday, June 25, 2010 at the Roofless Church in New Harmony, Indiana. Mrs. Owen, an arts patron, philanthropist, and champion of the historic town, died June 21, 2010, in Houston, Texas. The public laid flowers at the base of the Descent of the Holy Spirit sculpture under the dome of the Roofless Church.

Jane Owen’s life’s work was to preserve and revitalize New Harmony. From the moment she saw it in 1941, soon after her marriage to Kenneth Dale Owen (the third-great grandson of Robert Owen) she fell in love with the town. She immediately went to work founding the Robert Lee Blaffer Foundation and transforming the long-neglected town into a major cultural center and visitor attraction. In addition to preserving and rehabilitating numerous historic buildings, Owen created an extraordinary array of artwork and gardens as well as the New Harmony Inn and Red Geranium Restaurant. Furthermore, she commissioned widely acclaimed contemporary buildings from modern-day masters such as Philip Johnson, who designed the Roofless Church.

She was the recipient of an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from University of Southern Indiana at the first Commencement in 1971. She also received honorary doctorates from Northwood University, Ball State University, Kenyon College, Butler University, and Purdue University. She received the Sachem Award, which replaced the [Sagamore of the Wabash](#) as Indiana’s highest civilian honor, and the Louise E. du Pont Crowninshield Award, the national preservation movement’s highest accolade. She supported University of Southern Indiana programs including the New Harmony Gallery of Contemporary Art, Historic New Harmony, New Harmony Theatre, Historic Southern Indiana, USI Society for Arts and Humanities, RopeWalk Writers Retreat, and the USI Annual Fund.

**JANE BLAFFER OWEN:
A PERSONAL TRIBUTE**

It was from Paul and Hannah Tillich that I first learned of Jane Owen. Hannah telephoned in August 1963 urgently asking me to come to East Hampton for a week to help Tillich proofread galley proofs of the long-awaited third volume of the *Systematic Theology*. One day when we lunched on the lawn by the Tillichs' majestic copper beech, he opened a package just delivered. As Hannah and I looked on, he unfolded a large drawing of an unusual design that seemed to be an enormous fish half-encircling a shell-like structure. In a whispered tone, puzzled by the design, Tillich explained that this was the drawing for a "Cave of the New Being," which a friend wanted to build in a park to honor him. Then I heard the words "New Harmony" and the name "Jane Owen." The setting, the moment, and the words are vivid in memory.

It was years later, not until the Society's Conference of June 1999, that I had opportunity to meet and come to know this remarkable woman, to discover the historic town of New Harmony whose restoration had been her life's dream, and to make my own pilgrimage to Paul Tillich Park, its grove of trees beyond his Epitaph Stone now shading the intended site of the un-built structure whose design I had seen so long before. That memorable weekend was the beginning of a decade-long, cherished friendship as I came to know Jane Owen, her daughters Jane and Anne and their families, in three subsequent visits to New Harmony, in several summers as a weekend guest in Rhode Island, and in her two visits to Harvard, one with Janie for the Paul Tillich Lecture delivered by Ann Belford Ulanov.

Jane Owen was a woman of such effervescence, charisma, grace, and openness, such intellectual and spiritual vibrancy, that it is difficult for me, and perhaps for anyone, to grasp retrospectively how the dusty, languishing Indiana village of New Harmony could have had such an electrifying effect on this young bride of 26 when in August 1941 her new husband, Kenneth Dale Owen, introduced her to his birthplace, having taken a detour en route to Houston from their wedding at her parents' Ontario farm. Only a few years before, Jane Owen had been a glamorous debutante, captivating Houston and Eastern society. Her parents' marriage had merged two of the nation's largest oil fortunes. Her father, Robert Lee Blaffer, was a founder of Humble Oil Company, which became Exxon, and her mother's father

had signed the original charter of The Texas Company, the former Texaco. She grew up in the midst of immense wealth, and her horizons of privilege were limitless.

Jane Owen arrived in that sleepy, obscure village known to her world as a Houston oil heiress and socialite. She departed it known to herself, her husband, and soon to others as one "whom a dream hath possessed." How is that astonishing, life-changing discovery and encounter to be understood? This question has seized my imagination in the aftermath of her death. It is a compelling question, pointing to where the answer ultimately could only lie—in the depths of her being, her relation to God, and the mystery of divine purpose, a language that was her own.

In New Harmony, undercurrents of influences and motivations broke through in a transformative revelation. Converging were her father's German ancestry (an instant connection with the Harmonists, as it was much later with Tillich); her parents' example of ethical and religious idealism, including her father's knowledge and admiration of Robert Owen ("I read about Robert Owen before I met my husband"); her Mother's love of the visual arts (begun at the Louvre), inspiring her celebrated Texas art collection; Jane Owen's education in Houston and the East, unusual for that period—the Ethel Walker School in Connecticut, Bryn Mawr, the Washington School of Diplomacy—and her questioning, self-critical honesty, restless intellectual curiosity that absorbed everything, and her own incipient utopian idealism.

But decisive was her fierce, even rebellious, independent spirit and resistance to the constraints of a conformist, choreographed life in Houston society. She was longing for "a room of her own," a space even distinct from marriage, a space answering to the deepest yearnings and intuitions of her devoutly Christian, mystically-inward, and ecumenically religious self-understanding. These were defining elements in the person she was in her twenties and thirties as they were in her eighties and nineties. She was a biblically literate, faithful Episcopalian, worshipping at St. Martin's in Houston, St. Stephen's in New Harmony, St. Columba's in Rhode Island—and wherever she traveled, even as a January visitor in Cambridge donning her boots at 92 and trudging in eight inches of snow for early worship at the church nearest The Inn at Harvard.

New Harmony's revelation in 1941 was to her a call from God like that to Abraham: To a new home,

to restore with her husband this ancestral town, to initiate there a cultural renaissance recovering its founders' innovations in science, education, economy, all to be grounded and encircled in art, religion, and culture. She knew she would need great minds, great spirits, and intellectual and spiritual giants to accomplish her goals, and she set about to find and bring them to New Harmony. Uniting art and religion was her highest aim, and for that, when she discovered him, Paul Tillich became crucial and "essential to my hopes for New Harmony." As the Paul Tillich Park was being prepared for his dedication on Pentecost 1963, she wrote him, "Do you feel some intention beyond our own wills here? I admit that I do..."

In 1950, when Jane Owen first learned from the sculptor Jacques Lipchitz of Paul Tillich, a theologian who understood art and what artists were trying to do, she instantly recognized him as "a second Colossus," a theologian whose thought united art and religion as the Greek Colossus united the two arms of the ancient Harbor at Rhodes. In her striking image, the "first Colossus" was the French Dominican priest Père Marie-Alain Couturier, who stood astride the separated arms of conventional Catholic churches and modern art, uniting them in his revolutionary invitation to renowned 20th century artists to adorn Catholic churches with their works of art. The magnitude and meaning of Jane Owen's extraordinary achievements proclaim her "a third Colossus," for she stood astride her two worlds of Houston and New Harmony, uniting them as she united past and future, art and religion, cultural forms and spiritual import in New Harmony, accomplishing this with breath-taking daring, dedication, vision, and aspiration.

I last saw Jane Owen in New Harmony in January 2009. She was as joyous, humble, and inspiring as ever, vigorously engaged in plans and expectations for the future. "I hope for ten more years," she told me, a hope repeated in one of our last telephone conversations. But it was not to be. Following a brief illness she died surrounded by her family on the day of the summer solstice, June 21st, "when the sun appears to stand still," smiling, accepting, peaceful.

Of the Paul Tillich Park she wrote, "[H]is blessing is there and shall remain." Blessed by that, as we are, may we know how blessed we are by her amazing, miraculous, triumphant life, giving thanks for her and giving thanks for her spiritual greatness.

—WILLIAM R. CROUT

JANE OWEN AND NEW HARMONY

Jane Owen was a tall, slender, perfectly coiffed and stylishly dressed lady. She used her great wealth to support great intellectual ideas and often befriended and helped the creators of those ideas. She met Paul Tillich late in his life and persuaded him to allow her to create a memorial site. Against the advice of most of his colleagues and close friends, he cooperated with her. He was partly influenced by the countryside where Mrs. Owen eventually built the Paul Tillich Park in New Harmony, Indiana. The landscape, he claimed, reminded him of Germany. At Mrs. Owen's invitation Tillich and his wife, Hannah, visited New Harmony, Indiana, a little village on the Wabash River twenty-nine miles west of Evansville.

Originally called Harmony, it had been founded in 1805 by a group of German pietists led by Georg Rapp. In 1816, Harmony was established on the banks of the Wabash River by Friedrich Rapp, the same year Indiana became a state. The rich farmlands that were created were sold in 1825 to a Scottish industrialist, Robert Owen, who aspired to provide a socialist intellectual community for the promotion of arts and science. He renamed the village "New Harmony." His scheme for creating a utopia did not succeed and he returned to England where he spent the balance of his life lecturing and writing.

In 1950, Mrs. Kenneth Dale Owen, or Mrs. Jane Owen, wife of Robert Owen's grandson, began to play an important role in the restoration of this tiny village. As director of the Robert Lee Blaffer Trust, established in memory of her father, a founder of the Humble Oil Company, she was eager to make New Harmony the center of a cultural renaissance. She commissioned Philip Johnson, the celebrated American architect, to build an interdenominational church. He designed a brick-walled flagstone terrace that came to be known as "the Roofless Church," although he himself thought of his creation as "art for art's sake." In place of an altar stands one of Jacques Lipschitz's masterpieces, a bronze statue of the Madonna. A huge gate stands in front containing Christian symbols and the Greek letters, Alpha and Omega. In place of a roof, there is the sky.

Tillich was deeply impressed by all of this, so much so that he referred to the church as justifying the entire century. And at this time, he also permitted Jane Owen to memorialize his name there through the presence of three great stones that bear quotations from his work. After his death in 1965,

Hannah Tillich scattered one third of his ashes on that ground. She scattered another third in East Hampton by the sea that he so deeply loved. The final third were handed over to the Dalai Lama.

Mrs. Owen sponsored a number of meetings of the North American Paul Tillich Society in New Harmony. On one occasion, twelve or more scholars under the aegis of James Luther Adams and Wilhelm Pauck met there to discuss a book sponsored by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Wilhelm Pauck, the main speaker on that occasion, and the designated guest of honor, sat next to Mrs. Owen's right at one end of the long dinner table. I had the great pleasure of being seated next to the learned and charming Catholic theologian, David Tracy, at the other end. A volume of essays about Paul Tillich was published a few years later. The North American Paul Tillich Society convened two other international meetings at New Harmony, one in 1993 and 1999; both were sponsored and supported by the generosity of Mrs. Owen, who served as a gracious host and participant on both occasions. Two volumes were published from these meetings: *Spirit and Community: The Legacy of Paul Tillich* (1995) and *Religion in the New Millennium: Theology in the Spirit of Paul Tillich* (2001).

We remember Jane Owen as a great lady whose own interest in the arts, philosophy, religion, and the people whose genius created original work in those fields, helped to preserve these great ideas and works of art. The North American Paul Tillich Society owes her a great deal; may those of us who knew her remember her with affection and preserve her memory for future generations.

— MARION HAUSNER PAUCK

IN MEMORIAM: JOHN E. SMITH

John Smith was esteemed by Paul Tillich as a friend and incisive scholar. He had concluded his studies at Union by the time I got there but was teaching at nearby Barnard and participated scintillatingly in the "privatissimum" Paulus conducted in his home, sometimes as often as monthly. John was also a favorite student of Richard Kroner and, of course, the authority for all of us on Josiah Royce. Compassing as he did Kroner's Kantianism and stress on the religious imagination, as well as the social eschatology of Royce, he brought distinctive notes into the conversations while always affirming profound empathy with Tillich too. After his move

to Yale, I lost touch with him but could never forget his brilliant mastery and sharp formulation of philosophical issues. His career is a fine witness to the creative interaction Paulus fostered between theology and philosophy.

—DURWOOD FOSTER

JOHN E SMITH: GENIUS TEACHER AND FAITHFUL FRIEND

John Edwin Smith, native of Brooklyn, New York, was a genius teacher and a faithful friend to his students and colleagues, a devoted husband and father. He was an unusually clear lecturer, never condescending, but always eager to convey the precise meaning of thought in his chosen field of philosophy and philosophy of religion. He was a gifted humorist in the style of Groucho Marx whom he met accidentally on a visit in the Ritz Hotel in London. In their hour-long encounter, John matched Groucho wisecrack for wisecrack, creating a symphony of laughter and mutual admiration John never forgot.

A small but eager band of philosophy majors (including the undersigned) at Barnard College where he taught after leaving Vassar, were often regaled by Smith's comic talent. The utter seriousness of philosophy grew heavy from time to time but Smith's gift of punning often saved the day. He took off on Biblical passages, for example: "Many are called, but few are chosen" became "Many are cold but few are frozen," in Smith's parlance. Thus, Smith's earnest dedication to the philosophy of religion and to Christianity during a time of philosophical materialism included the saving grace of wit and laughter.

During his undergraduate years at Union Theological Seminary, New York, he was Richard Kroner's assistant, and although he admired Kroner's scholarship, his own thought was more deeply influenced by Reinhold Niebuhr and especially Paul Tillich. In the early 1960s, at a Colloquium in Tillich's honor, the general discussion became frozen by argument about the meaning of a special Tillichian phrase. As the restlessness in the group grew, Smith spoke the defining word, "All of the speakers may not know what Tillich meant when he said 'was uns unbedingt angeht'/'ultimate concern,' but he is sitting in the front row and he does know." Everyone except for the earnest debaters laughed uproariously and Tillich nodded his head in approval.

In 1952, Smith joined the Yale University Phi-

losophy Department where he taught until 1991. He was appointed Clark Professor of Philosophy in 1972 and was the chair of the Philosophy Department for five years. He served as President of the American Philosophical Society, Eastern Division, the American Theological Society, the Metaphysical Society, the Hegel Society, and the C. S. Peirce Society. He was the founder and long time president of the Society of Philosophy in America. At a time when philosophy of religion was out of fashion, he established its permanence. His work on the American Idealist Josiah Royce was original and seminal. He transformed the aloof, ivory tower approach to American philosophy into a more democratic venture and helped revive interest in seminal American thinkers of the past, among them also William James, Charles Peirce, and John Dewey. His books include *Royce's Social Infinite: The Community of Interpretation* and *Reason and God: Encounters of Philosophy with Religion*. He was the chief editor of the multi-volume series *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, a collection of writings by that distinguished 18th century theologian.

Smith's first marriage to Grace McGraw, a fellow student at Union Theological Seminary, New York, ended in divorce. His marriage to Marilyn Schulhof, also a philosophy teacher, ended with her death in 2006. Their beloved daughters, Robin Smith Swanberg, of Wellesley, Massachusetts, and Diana Smith of Arlington, Virginia, his son in law Charles, and his grandson, Tyler, survive him. We remember John Smith with affection and take pride in his lifetime achievement.

—MARION HAUSNER PAUCK

IN MEMORIAM: ROY J. ENQUIST

The Rev. Roy J. Enquist, 83, a Lutheran minister who became a college professor and later held the position of canon at the National Cathedral, died April 13, 2010 at the Washington Home Hospice. He resided in the District of Columbia and was a long-time member of the NAPTS.

In 1980, Dr. Enquist was named director of a Washington-based educational program of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg where he taught until the early 1990s. Since 1995, he had been teaching at the Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria.

In 2000, after a reciprocal arrangement between the Lutheran and Episcopal churches, Dr. Enquist became a canon at the National Cathedral. In 2002

and 2003, he was the cathedral's canon ecumenist, responsible for interfaith ministries.

Roy John Enquist, a native of Couer d'Alene, Idaho, served as a Japanese language specialist in the Army in the 1940s. He graduated from Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois, and in 1952 received a divinity degree from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia. He received a master's degree in 1953 and doctoral degree in 1960 in theology from Union Theological Seminary in New York.

Dr. Enquist was pastor of a church in Oregon and a campus minister at the University of Chicago and later taught religion and ethics at Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio, and Texas Lutheran University. In the 1970s, he also taught in South Africa and Namibia.

He wrote several books, including *The Courage to Believe: How Human Life May Flourish* (2010), and was active in the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington and the Center for Immigration Law and Practice.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

On Tillich or by Members of the NAPTS

Roy J. Enquist. *The Courage To Believe. How Human Life May Flourish*, with a Foreword by Nicholas Beale. El Paso, Texas: Hansen – McMenemy Books, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-9822655-2-9. 164 pages. (See above.)

Francis Ching-Wah Yip. *Capitalism as Religion? A Study of Paul Tillich's Interpretation of Modernity*. Harvard Theological Studies, no.59. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010. ISBN: 9780674021471. 215 pages.

For further information:

<http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674021471>.

REVIEW OF RICHARD GRIGG, *BEYOND THE GOD DELUSION: HOW RADICAL THEOLOGY HARMONIZES SCIENCE AND RELIGION* (MINNEAPOLIS: FORTRESS PRESS, 2008)

GUY B. HAMMOND

Richard Grigg, a past President of the North American Paul Tillich Society, is the author of *Symbol and Empowerment: Paul Tillich's Post-Theistic System* (Mercer University Press, 1985), among

other works. Though the present essay, *Beyond the God Delusion*, may have been given impetus by the recent spate of books defending scientific atheism, Grigg's focus is not primarily that of providing a detailed critique of these books (though one of them, *The God Delusion*, by Richard Dawkins, gave rise to Grigg's title). Rather, Grigg takes the occasion of the atheism debates to provide a new assessment of the old debate between religion and the natural sciences, with particular attention given to the issue of divine action in the world. These sciences have made it increasingly clear, Grigg contends, that the law of the conservation of matter/energy rules out the possibility of the insertion of energy (i.e., causation) from outside the natural order, hence ruling out the possibility of external divine intervention in the course of natural or historical events.

The problem of divine action in the world is not new. Grigg suggests that 20th century progressive theologians (along with a number of prominent scientists, e.g., Stephen Jay Gould) had earlier arrived at a near consensus on the problem, namely, that scientists and theologians are talking about different matters, about different dimensions of meaning, in different languages. Consequently, there is, or can be, no overlap or conflict between them. Grigg takes Paul Tillich to be a prototypical representative of this "separatist stance." He quotes Tillich to this effect: when it comes to the relationship between religion and science, Tillich unequivocally embraces the separatist stance, at least if his *Dynamics of Faith* is a reliable guide: "Scientific truth and the truth of faith do not belong to the same dimension of meaning. Science has no right and no power to interfere with faith and faith has no power to interfere with science. One dimension of meaning is not able to interfere with another dimension" (Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* [New York: Harper and Row, 1957], 81, quoted by Grigg, 29-30).

Grigg proceeds to dispute the separatist position as it relates to divine action in the world. On this matter, he argues, the dimensions *do* intersect, since "the effects of [the] alleged divine activity must be public property" (31-32). This critique, of course, applies to a supernaturalist, external deity, understood as "a personal God who self-consciously acts within the world of nature" (31). Grigg knows that Tillich does not hold this view of God. Nevertheless, perhaps because of ambiguities in Tillich's view of how the divine *may be* said to act in the world, Grigg lets stand the implication that his critique of

separatism applies to Tillich. We will return to this point later.

Grigg also critiques those scholars (John Polkinghorne, Nancey Murphy, Ian Barbour, et al.) who move beyond the separatist position and, taking account of new developments in the sciences, attempt once again "to harmonize God's action in the world with science" (35). While respecting their efforts, Grigg draws the conclusion that these thinkers fail to find a way to conceive of energy being inserted into the system of nature, and that therefore traditional theism has become increasingly indefensible from a scientific standpoint. He asks: "Could it be that Christian thought will, finally, prove unable to deal with the regnant intellectual achievement of our culture [i.e., the scientific worldview]?" (36). His answer: a more radical concept of God is required, one that can be more "productively" harmonized with science.

Grigg proceeds to glean insights from a group of theologians—Sallie McFague, Mary Daly, Gordon Kaufman, and Ursula Goodenough (the latter a biologist as well as a theologian)—whom he considers, in varying ways and to varying degrees, to be radical in their departures from traditional Christian theism. In summary, what Grigg finds in these thinkers is an acknowledgement that the universe, as science reveals it to us, is our ultimate frame of reference. Making use of Tillich's concept of ultimate concern, he asserts that all of them "wager that the universe revealed to us by modern science is a fully legitimate candidate for our ultimate source of orientation in life" (68). And, further, we will "press the symbol of God into service when we are looking for a way to concretely symbolize the universe in its special role as the object of our ultimate concern" (73). Thus, Grigg's radical theology is a pantheistic theology, stressing immanence, reason, contemporaneity, universalism, and humanism (cf. 48-50; 71-76). Here there is no longer a need to defend the idea of the insertion of energy from beyond the one, encompassing universe. At the same time, Grigg asserts, through this theological reconstruction the human need for self-transcendence through participation can effectively be met (cf. 66-71).

Can the natural cosmos "bear the weight of ultimate concern," hence of providing meaning and purpose for human life (68)? Grigg's God, like Sallie McFague's, is an empowering rather than an ordering or controlling God (53). If personification is needed, Grigg proposes that figures like Jesus can be viewed as "personal [microcosmic] manifestations

of the ultimate” (Grigg’s seeming endorsement of the description of Jesus as “a uniquely powerful microcosmic manifestation of the universe” is a bit puzzling here, since other religions too may provide “a personal portal to the universe taken as object of spiritual concern” [85]).

In this reviewer’s opinion, Grigg is undertaking what should be regarded as the essential task of theology: to reconstruct traditional doctrine in the light of modern knowledge. Readers of this *Bulletin* will recognize that Paul Tillich set himself to this task with the method of correlation—theology attempts to answer the questions posed but not fully answered by the various aspects of contemporary culture, in the case at hand by contemporary natural science. It may be argued that Grigg too readily assumes that the “separatist stance,” enunciated in Tillich’s *Dynamics of Faith*, is his final answer to problems posed in the faith-science dialogue. Tillich holds elsewhere that science and religion intersect in the realm of philosophy, science ultimately posing philosophical questions that it cannot answer. Grigg’s approach presupposes the elimination of this philosophical middle ground; he maintains in effect that

science does not need metaphysics, and that faith can take science up into, not a metaphysical “but, rather, a pragmatic existential framework” (106-107).

Grigg poses an important question here: how crucial is some version of Tillich’s idealist/existential ontology (an ontology that proceeds through human nature)? Various answers might be given. This reviewer wishes that Grigg had provided further discussion of Tillich’s “pantheistic” theology, that does not require external divine intervention, but does require an ontology. For Tillich, it is the freedom of the creature to turn away from its creative origin, and the freedom of the origin to turn to the creature with reconciling power—these freedoms, and thus this ontological structure—that make pantheism (in the usual sense) impossible. Does Grigg’s framework provide for “the distance of moral demand” and for the possibility of reconciling divine grace?

In sum, Grigg’s book is a significant and provocative contribution to contemporary theology.

**PAUL TILlich AND THE TWENTIETH
CENTURY FICHTE RENAISSANCE:
NEO-IDEALISTIC FEATURES IN HIS EARLY
ACCOUNTS OF FREEDOM AND
EXISTENCE¹**

MARC BOSS

In his intellectual autobiography *On the Boundary* (1936),² Paul Tillich briefly mentions that when he was a student at Halle, Fritz Medicus was his “teacher in philosophy.”³ To present the work of this “highly revered teacher”⁴ to his American readers, he describes it as having “initiated the rediscovery of Fichte’s philosophy at the turn of the [twentieth] century that ultimately led to a general renaissance of German idealism.”⁵ How does Tillich evaluate this neo-Fichtean retrieval of German idealism promoted by his philosophical mentor?

Tillich’s relationship to what he calls the “renaissance of German idealism” has mainly been scrutinised hitherto through the prism of his interpretation of Schelling.⁶ To a lesser degree, Tillich’s discussion of Hegel has also been a focus for his commentators.⁷ But, for many decades almost no attention had been given to Tillich’s reception of Fichte. Newly discovered archival material documenting

this reception was made available by Gert Hummel and Doris Lax in 1998 and Erdmann Sturm in 1999; until then, documentary evidence was missing and, consequently, the topic was altogether ignored in the secondary literature.⁸ Moreover, Tillich’s later accounts of the history of German idealism did little or nothing to correct the impression that Fichte was but a minor figure in his philosophical pantheon. In *Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology*, for instance, Hegel and Schelling are each treated in a specific section; Fichte has no such privilege. Hegel and Schelling are portrayed as titans braving each other by championing the rival causes of essentialism and existentialism;⁹ Fichte is only mentioned as one mediator among others between Kant and the romantic tradition.¹⁰

In asking what part Fichte and his interpreter Medicus play in Tillich’s reception of German idealism, this paper aims at reappraising Tillich’s accounts of freedom and existence in the light of their neo-idealistic genesis. The first part examines the neo-Kantian background of the “Fichte-renaissance.” The second evaluates the impact of this renaissance on Tillich’s earliest known assessment of Fichte. The third appraises the persistence in Tillich’s work of his early understanding of freedom as a concept in which Fichtean autonomy and Lu-

theran justification coincide; the fourth and final part argues that no “existential turn” can be localised in Tillich’s intellectual journey—whether after World War I or before—and that his later insistence on the complementariness of essentialism and existentialism was from the beginning constitutive of his neo-idealistic construal of the Fichte-Schelling relationship.

(1) The neo-Kantian background of Tillich’s neo-Fichteianism

In 1905, Fritz Georg Adolf Medicus published a collection of thirteen lectures on Johann Gottlieb Fichte (*J.G. Fichte, Dreizehn Vorlesungen gehalten an der Universität Halle*¹¹). Medicus’s friend, the philosopher Emil Lask, praised the book as the first successful attempt to show the underlying unity and internal coherence of Fichte’s work in a way that does not submit it to an alien point of view.¹² Medicus construed Fichte’s work in the light of his philosophy of religion and underscored its connections with Jacob Böhme’s and Sebastian Franck’s so-called “protestant mysticism.”¹³ In addition, Medicus greatly contributed to awaken a new interest in Fichte in German philosophy and theology by publishing a six-volume edition of his work between 1908 and 1912, followed by a biographical introduction in 1914.

In a richly documented study published in 2004, Friedrich Wilhelm Graf and Alf Christophersen show how the neo-idealistic movement of Halle is connected with the southwestern branch of German neo-Kantianism represented in Strasbourg by Wilhelm Windelband and Paul Hensel.¹⁴ Medicus became their student as he spends the summer semester of 1897 in Strasbourg.¹⁵ At Windelband’s seminar, he met with Emil Lask who later contributed to the Fichte renaissance in his own way, most notably with his *Habilitations-schrift* entitled *Fichtes Idealismus und die Geschichte*.¹⁶ Even more significant is the long lasting relationship Medicus establishes in Strasbourg with Paul Hensel, whose lectures he attended with special interest. Medicus will later dedicate his *Dreizehn Vorlesungen* on Fichte to this mentor and friend.¹⁷ As a former pupil of Windelband, Hensel was a pure product of neo-Kantianism and yet he dared describe himself as a disciple of Fichte. According to Medicus, Hensel’s work was a substantial contribution to the reawakening of the post-Kantian philosophy of German idealism.¹⁸

Hensel’s example suggests that neo-idealism was actually an outgrowth of neo-Kantianism. And

so does Medicus’s own example. His doctoral dissertation (*Kants transcendente Ästhetik und die nicht-euklidische Geometrie*, Jena, 1898) and his *Habilitationschrift* (*Kants Philosophie der Geschichte*, Halle, 1901) were both dedicated to Kant and not to Fichte. Furthermore, when Medicus after his habilitation became active in Halle as a Privat Dozent,¹⁹ he worked at the same time as a private secretary for Hans Vaihinger. With Vaihinger—who had already imposed himself as an independent but influential figure on the scene of German neo-Kantianism—Medicus contributed to the foundation of the *Kant-Gesellschaft* in 1904 and he subsequently played a significant part in the edition of the *Kant-Studien*.²⁰ For Medicus in Halle, as for Hensel in Strasbourg, neo-Kantian studies, circles and institutions provided so to say the nurturing soil on which the plant of neo-idealism has grown.²¹

How does Tillich relate to this whole movement? Let us first notice that in his “Autobiographical Reflections” he describes Fichte’s work as playing a significant part in his early philosophical education. “Long before my matriculation as a student of theology, I studied philosophy privately. When I entered the university, I had a good knowledge of the history of philosophy and a basic acquaintance with Kant and Fichte.”²² *On the Boundary* confirms this claim by Tillich’s mentioning his discovery of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* and Fichte’s “first”²³ *Wissenschaftslehre* in “the last years of his secondary education.”²⁴ Tillich observes that “[t]hese works, especially that of Fichte,” of which he was eager to copy various passages “with exactitude” (so he says in the German version of 1962²⁵), “introduced [him] to the most difficult aspects of German philosophy.”²⁶ Tillich’s early interest in Fichte’s thought would soon be fostered and amplified in the course of his studies. After one semester in Berlin and one in Tübingen, the 19 year-old Tillich moved to Halle for the two following years. His first registration in Halle took place in the winter semester of 1905, the very same year Medicus publishes his *Dreizehn Vorlesungen* on Fichte.

In Halle, Medicus’s teaching had a considerable impact on Tillich and on his older friend Friedrich Büchsel. Its influence on the two friends may have been counter-balanced by the rival influences of Martin Kähler and—plausibly to a much higher degree of Wilhelm Lütgert.²⁷ But the Fichte Renaissance associated with Medicus appeared in their discussions as the expression of an epochal turn that was to lead to a new spiritual situation; they saw it

as the first signal of a much wider renaissance of German idealism that was expected to transfigure a cultural landscape which, in philosophy *and* theology, had been dominated for half a Century by the various schools of neo-Kantianism.²⁸ A letter Büchsel addressed to Tillich on October 2, 1907 reveals that, at the time of their studies at Halle, they took the Fichte portrayed by Medicus to be “the greatest of all opponents.”²⁹ Not only the greatest, but also the quintessential one, since he recapitulates all the others in himself.³⁰ To be sure, Büchsel says he has now some doubts about such hyperbolic descriptions of Fichte’s significance.³¹ Yet he still writes this in a letter, which, from beginning to end, is but a long critical debate with Fichte and Medicus or, better, said, with Fichte read through Medicus. As we shall see, Tillich’s writings of the same period show a similar ambivalence in their attitude toward Medicus’s teaching. As they were students in Halle, Tillich and Büchsel were not Medicus’s unconditional followers, nor were they Fichte devotees. They were theologians—or theologians to be—who saw the Fichte renaissance as the most significant philosophical movement of their time and they were looking for an appropriate theological answer to it.

Tillich mentions the influence of Medicus in several autobiographical accounts. But Tillich’s most clearly formulated statement about the Fichte renaissance is to be found in the introduction of his so-called *Monismusschrift* (*Welche Bedeutung hat der Gegensatz von monistischer und dualistischer Weltanschauung für die christliche Religion?*), an essay he wrote in 1908 at the age of 22.

As after Hegel’s death, materialism became a dogma of natural sciences and German idealism an object of ignorant mockery, it was hard to anticipate that half a century later a new reversal would take place. And yet the distinctive mark of our spiritual situation is the renaissance of German idealism. The necessity to move beyond Kant (*über Kant hinuszugehen*), which is also acknowledged by a majority of neo-Kantians, appears finally as a necessity to move toward Fichte. The sudden rejection of idealism in the 1840s and 1850s was not a real overcoming but an escape. Therefore, it had to come back.... The same destiny awaits the theology that has been called speculative in reference to the idealistic systems of reference to which it was related. And for the same reason its renaissance is also to be expected....³²

It is interesting to notice that the young Tillich saw the philosophical renaissance of German idealism as a prelude to its not yet accomplished theological renaissance. It is also remarkable that he does not present the neo-idealistic turn that he calls for as a sheer break away from neo-Kantian philosophy and theology. In Tillich’s story of the historical destiny of idealism, of its momentary dismissal, and of its final retrieval, the renaissance of German idealism appears as the ultimate consequence of a move that neo-Kantianism has already accomplished. The story told by Tillich might well be read as a rhetorically dramatised version of the actual history of neo-idealism as it has been reconstructed by Graf and Christophersen.

(2) Tillich’s earliest known appraisal of Fichte’s work

In 1906, at the age of 20, Tillich wrote a short essay on the relationship between Fichte’s philosophy of religion and the Gospel of John (*Fichtes Religionsphilosophie in ihrem Verhältnis zum Johannesevangelium*). It is not only Tillich’s earliest known assessment of Fichte’s work, but also his most extensive discussion of its theological significance. The editors claim it was written in the context of a seminar on Fichte given by Medicus in the winter semester of 1905-1906;³³ whether this claim is consistent with their observation that it is Lütgert and not Medicus who annotated the essay must remain an open question.³⁴ But in any case, Tillich’s essay is deeply indebted to Medicus’s *Dreizehn Vorlesungen* on Fichte.

In his appraisal of Fichte’s reception of the Gospel of John, Tillich highlights the contrasts more than the resemblances between the philosopher and the Evangelist. He disagrees for instance with Jacobi’s statement that the Prologue of John contains *in nuce* the whole science of knowledge.³⁵ In Tillich’s view, this statement can only claim to be true if we amend it with important restrictions.³⁶ From the point of view of their metaphysical foundations in particular, the analogies between Fichte and John are rather superficial. To be sure, both place the concept of life at the centre of their doctrine of God and both see the divine life as “absolute grasping [*Erfassung*] of its own content, which is the good.”³⁷ But Tillich stresses that John determines the good as love and that Fichte does not follow him on this crucial point for the simple reason that he cannot accept the personalist implications of the Johannine doctrine of love. “He takes the ‘Thou’ toward God to be

immoral. Only the I is God.”³⁸ In Tillich’s view, this difference between Fichte and John concerning the doctrine of God determines also their understanding of the relationship between God and the world.

For Fichte, the world proceeds from the essence (*Wesen*) of God and aims at the revelation of his existence (*Dasein*). For John, the world is created by the will of God and aims at the revelation of his love.³⁹

This evaluation of Fichte’s Johannism in light of its scriptural model is based on what Tillich calls the writings of the third period of Fichte’s philosophy of religion, especially *The Way towards the Blessed Life*.⁴⁰ Following Medicus, Tillich distinguishes this third period of Fichte’s philosophy of religion from a first period characterised by the overwhelming influence of Kant and from a second period dominated by the accusations of atheism against which Fichte had to defend himself. The growing importance of the part played by religion determines the progression from one period to the other. In the first period, religion is but a casual addendum to morals; in the second, it becomes equal to morals in import and dignity; in the third, Fichte shows a hitherto unknown concern for positive religion by claiming the legacy of the Johannic tradition.⁴¹ The third period is decisive for Tillich’s reception of Fichte’s philosophy. Because they reconcile Fichte with positive religion in the form of Johannism, the writings of this third period concern the religious life in its objective and subjective aspects. “Until then,” Tillich says, “Fichte was only concerned with the subjective aspect since he tried to show how the human being gets to God. Now he asks himself how God gets to the human being.”⁴²

In *The Way towards the Blessed Life*, Fichte defines God as life. As Tillich notices, “life” is the term Fichte uses for “the self-comprehension of the absolute” [*das Sich-Selbst-Erfassen des Absoluten*],⁴³ which possesses both being and existence (*Sein und Dasein*) and out of which nothing is nor truly exists (*ausser welchen nichts ist, noch warhaftig da ist*).⁴⁴ Fichte’s doctrine of God implies, therefore, a distinction between God’s Being (*Sein*) or essence (*Wesen*) and God’s Being-there (*Dasein*) or existence (*Existenz*).

As the one who is [*der Seiende*], God is the Supra-temporal, the immutable, the eternally one [*der Überzeitliche, Unwandelbare, ewig Eine*], standing at the ground of every phenomenon. The phenomenon in which the self-revelation of God takes place is in and through

God only [*nur in und durch Gott*]. And yet the phenomenon is not identical with God. In the phenomenal world, there is living and dead existence (*totes und lebendiges Dasein*). Dead existence is in itself nothingness. It stands in front of God as the non-I, the pure object of action and thought. Without the divine life, it could not even exist.⁴⁵

Without the self-revelation of the divine life, the human being is pure nothingness. To be sure, our vocation as human beings is to dominate nature by our moral deeds, but we cannot accomplish this task as individuals, for as individuals we belong to the non-I. As any other phenomenal reality, we can only accomplish our vocation if we are united with the absolute, with the supra-individual God in whose self-revelation dead existence is changed into living existence.⁴⁶

Tillich observes that Fichte’s doctrine of the divine life is a doctrine only about truth, whereas its Johannine model conceives the divine life as truth and grace at once.⁴⁷ Yet, Tillich also admits that as far as their concept of truth is concerned, Fichte and the Johannine tradition show more than one similarity. For both Fichte and John, truth is not an epistemological formula, it is not an object that the understanding [*Verstand*] can grasp, but the objectivity located beyond any individual reality in the divine essence (*Wesen*). Of course, John holds truth to be revealed while Fichte sees speculative reason as the only way of access to truth, but Tillich shows that this difference should not be overemphasised. For Fichte, after all, God is not related to reason as a *heteron* that would illuminate it from outside, but it is precisely from within reason that God’s existence or *Dasein* manifests itself.⁴⁸

It is interesting to compare this judgment about Fichte to the judgment Büchsel articulates in his already mentioned letter of October 12, 1907. Both Tillich and Büchsel depend entirely on Medicus in their construal of Fichte’s intellectual journey, and both criticize Fichte’s philosophy from a personalistic point of view. Even more explicitly than Tillich, Büchsel castigates Fichte for having grounded his doctrine of God in the concept of being rather than the concept of personality; and, consequently, for finding no place in his system for such personalist notions as prayer and guilt.⁴⁹ Yet, Büchsel seems less charitable than Tillich in his evaluation of Fichte’s third period. Büchsel observes that Fichte starts with the I and makes God the correlate of the I.⁵⁰ Büchsel knows this move to be reversible and he admits that

the old Fichte also starts with the absolute I, that is, with God. But Büchsel takes this reversal to be merely “formal” and “external.”⁵¹ On Tillich’s view, this very same reversal is to be taken seriously. Though he opposes the completeness of John’s concern for truth and grace to Fichte’s somewhat unilateral concern for truth only, Tillich admits that there is room for a manifestation of grace immanent to human reason itself. Though Tillich does not draw the last consequences of this statement in 1906, it forms the conceptual background of his later assessment of Fichte’s doctrine of freedom.

(3) Autonomy and justification: Tillich’s theological interpretation of Fichte’s doctrine of freedom

In the Fall of 1911 (September 25-27), Tillich met with Büchsel and a few other Wingolf acquaintances⁵² at a small conference organized in Kassel by their friend Hermann Schafft. Tillich made a substantial contribution to this conference with a series of 128 theses and a paper (“Die christliche Gewissheit und der historische Jesus”) in which he comments on them. I shall refer to both texts as Tillich’s “Kassel lecture.”

In Kassel, Tillich formulates for the first time what he will later call his “radical” position about the historical Jesus; this central issue of the lecture has already attracted much scholarly attention and Tillich himself has, so to say, oriented the research toward the historical-critical problem in his 1936 autobiography.⁵³ Less attention has been given to the philosophical background of his Kassel lecture and to the fact that it boldly identifies the unique principle on which Christian dogmatics must be grounded with the principle that Fichte and the young Schelling placed at the foundation of their “system of freedom.”

What is meant here by “system of freedom” is the system of “idealism” in contrast to “dogmatism” and the “system of necessity.”⁵⁴ In Fichte’s *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* and in Schelling’s early essay, *Über die Möglichkeit einer Form der Philosophie überhaupt*, the system of freedom rests on a first principle defined by the proposition $I = I$ (*Ich = Ich*).⁵⁵ The *Grundlage* claims that “the absolutely first and utterly unconditioned principle of every human knowledge... must express the act [*Thatandlung*] by which any conscience is grounded and made possible.”⁵⁶ This first principle expressing the radically original “act” by which the I posits itself in a living unity of subject and object

can be described as “identity of consciousness” or as “autonomy.” As the young Schelling puts it in *Über die Möglichkeit einer Form der Philosophie überhaupt*—which Fichte praised as a good introduction to his own work⁵⁷—“nothing can be radically posited if it is not that by which everything else is first posited; nothing can posit itself if it is not an original self, radically independent.” Such radical freedom or autonomy is only to be found in the I that is originally posited by itself. “The I is posited radically, its being posited is determined by nothing external, it posits itself (by virtue of an absolute causality), it is posited, not because it is posited [by something else], but because it is itself the one that posits [*das Setzende*].”⁵⁸

In his Kassel lecture, Tillich takes the proposition “ $I = I$ ” (“*Ich gleich Ich*”) to be the ultimate criterion with which any claim to certitude is to be evaluated. By considering the proposition $I = I$ as the highest principle of certitude, Tillich makes no mystery of his debt toward Fichte. Thesis 102 says: “Insofar as the proposition $I = I$, or the identity of consciousness, constitutes the principle of certitude, no cognitive principle can be higher than the autonomy of the I which posits itself.”⁵⁹

Though the proposition $I = I$ seems to refer to Fichte’s early writings of the Jena period, Tillich—under the influence of Medicus⁶⁰—construes it in the retrospective light of *The Way Towards the Blessed Life*. It is only insofar as the I as “absolute spirit” (i.e., ‘God’) “actualizes itself” in the I as “individual spirit” that a relationship of identity can be established between I and I; these are the premises of Tillich’s theological ratification of Fichte’s determination of the “principle of certitude” as “identity of consciousness” (thesis 110). In Tillich’s descriptions of this principle of certitude, the proposition $I = I$ appears indistinctively as principle of autonomy or as principle of identity. Insofar as autonomy is defined as identity of consciousness, autonomy and identity are to a certain extent overlapping notions (thesis 109). How, exactly, do they relate to each other? Tillich’s theological plea for autonomy rests on his conviction that we are radically incapable of producing identity between ourselves and the absolute by means of our own intellectual works. Extending the logical structure of the *justificatio impiorum* from the field of moral action to the field of doctrinal reflection, Tillich rejects any heteronomy that could escape the investigative activity of our critical reason and he consequently disallows any sacrifice of our autonomy on the altar of established author-

ity, whether we ascribe such authority to the Pope (as Catholics do), to the Bible (as orthodox Protestants do) or to the historical Jesus (as liberal Protestants do). Thesis 111 of the Kassel lecture draws from these premises the conclusion that autonomy is threatened each time “the individual as such, apart from his identity with the absolute, has to produce the conditions of this identity.”⁶¹

Some four decades later, Tillich’s introduction to *The Protestant Era* reformulates in more classically theological terms the consequences of these ideas he first developed as a student in Halle:

You cannot reach God by the work of right thinking or by a sacrifice of the intellect or by a submission to strange authorities, such as the doctrines of the church and the Bible. You cannot, and you are not even asked to try it. Neither works of piety nor works of morality nor works of the intellect establish unity with God. They follow from this unity, but they do not make it. They even prevent it if you try to reach it through them.⁶²

What Tillich called “Identität mit dem Absoluten” in 1911 is what he called ‘unity with God’ in 1948. While the vocabulary changes according to the different contexts, “identity with the absolute” or “unity with God” are both construed as expressions of a certain form of divine immanence. How are we to understand this immanence? Tillich stresses that it does not pertain to the order of nature. Before and after World War I, he repeats time and again that German idealism does not understand the principle of identity as a mere natural unity of the absolute and the relative, but as a paradoxical immanence of the former in the latter.⁶³ The idealistic principle of identity has therefore the same paradoxical structure as the Protestant principle of justification by grace alone. It means that the divine judgement declares the relative to be absolute just as it declares the sinner to be saint.⁶⁴ Tillich construes the idealistic principle of identity in the light of Luther’s ‘paradoxical’ formula of justification as a “judgement making everything and everyone at the same time absolute and relative, perfect and vain, eternal and earthly.”⁶⁵ This is how thesis 115 can equate “autonomy” with “justification.” Since, “in the realm of thought,” autonomy is to be understood as identity of consciousness and since identity is to be understood as justification by grace alone, autonomy itself may ultimately be said to coincide with justification.

In their editorial introduction to “Die christliche Gewissheit und der historische Jesus,”⁶⁶ Renate Al-

brecht and René Tautmann show that various vestiges of this early lecture can be found in Tillich’s later work, but they contend that his attempt to address the Christological issue with a philosophy of identity expressed in the categories of Lutheran theology has been abandoned after World War I. As an example of this short-lived philosophy of identity, Albrecht and Tautmann mention thesis 115: “Autonomy is justification in the realm of thought.”⁶⁷

According to what recently published archives reveal from Tillich’s early years of teaching, it is difficult to maintain that the idea of an intimate acquaintance between post-Kantian autonomy and Lutheran justification as it has been articulated in the Kassel lecture disappears from Tillich’s work after World War I. It would rather seem that the definition of autonomy as “justification in the realm of thought” lies at the heart of his theology of culture as illustrated in various essays and lectures he wrote in Berlin during the two years following the end of World War I and the German Revolution of November 1918.⁶⁸ Grant that Tillich’s autobiographical accounts of his intellectual journey repeatedly depict World War I as the cataclysm that crushed the delusive hopes of the early twentieth century “renaissance of German idealism.”⁶⁹ But as far as the relationship between autonomy and justification is concerned, a comparative reading of his pre-war and post-war writings shows no evidence of a watershed between the two. The case can be made indeed that none of the two “turns” that have been associated with World War I—either by Tillich himself or by his interpreters—affects the basic tenet of a paradoxical coincidence between autonomy and justification. These turns might be described best by the key words “socialism” and “meaning theory.”

The “socialist turn” appears as the most obvious of the two. The connection between Tillich’s involvement in the revolutionary outcomes of World War I and his subsequent socialist commitments can hardly be overlooked. The impressive amount of political essays produced after the war has no significant counterpart in his pre-war writings. Are there any major theological corollaries to these changes? Though the targeted audience of Tillich’s discourse is not the same in the two periods, his theological fundamentals remain surprisingly stable. Before the war, Tillich’s argumentative strategy was mainly directed toward the groups of free-thinkers that Ernst Haeckel had managed to federate by creating the German *Monistenbund* in 1906.⁷⁰ After the

war, socialists become Tillich's main partners of conversation. Yet Tillich urges that "religious socialists" must, in terms of religious justification, acknowledge those principles that the proletarian revolution shares with the bourgeois revolution, the most emblematic of which being the principle of rational autonomy.⁷¹ The neo-idealistic theological fundamentals elaborated in confrontation with free-thinkers and monists are therefore still adequate to the new spiritual and cultural situation.

The so-called "meaning theory turn" has attracted much deserved attention in the German Tillich studies of the last decade under the impulse of a group of scholars including Ulrich Barth, Christian Danz, and Folkart Wittekind.⁷² It contends that Tillich, in the course of his correspondence with Emanuel Hirsch between November 1917 and July 1918, profoundly reshaped his philosophy by rejecting his idealistic "theory of truth" in favour of a "theory of meaning" articulated in critical dialogue with contemporary neo-Kantianism and phenomenology. Such a "meaning theory turn" is unmistakably discernible in Tillich's post-war theory of knowledge. Yet, as far as I can see, it leaves untouched his earlier theological claims about the coincidence of autonomy and justification. The 1919 version of "Rechtfertigung und Zweifel," for instance, provides a remarkable combination of Tillich's new epistemological insights with his older definition of autonomy as "justification in the realm of thought."⁷³

While the socialist and the meaning theory turns seem to have no significant impact on Tillich's earlier concept of freedom as autonomy, the more general changes to which they refer are nevertheless solidly documented. As I shall argue in the next section, no such documentary basis can be produced for Tillich's alleged "existential turn," i.e. his putative conversion from pre-war idealism to post-war existentialism.

(4) Essence and existence: the thesis of an "existential turn" disproved

Construed as a shift from the rational or negative philosophy of "Schelling I" to the positive philosophy of "Schelling II," Tillich's so-called "existential turn," has been time and again associated with his experience of the tragic in World War I. Resting on a selective reading of autobiographical statements scattered throughout Tillich's later work,⁷⁴ this well established historiographical tradition initiated half a

century ago in Stephen Crary's dissertation *Idealistic Elements in Tillich's Thought* (1955)⁷⁵ has already undergone significant revisions in subsequent scholarship. Yet these revisions provide a puzzling account of Tillich's alleged break from his idealistic starting point. Gunther Wenz, for example, rightly stresses that Tillich was already concerned with Schelling II in his doctoral dissertations of 1910 and 1912,⁷⁶ but then he seems embarrassed to explain why the Kassel lecture (1911) still exhibits Tillich's "unbroken dependence on the philosophy of transcendental idealism."⁷⁷ By suggesting incidentally that the influence of Schelling I fades progressively while the influence of Schelling II grows, Wenz shows that his revision of the Tillich-Schelling relationship is only concerned with the chronological location of Tillich's existential turn, not with the more basic assumption that there must be such a turn. It is my contention that it is thoroughly vain to search for an existential turn in Tillich's work.

In a letter he writes to Hirsch on February 20, 1918, Tillich mentions his earlier turn from one Schelling to the other, but not in the way nor in the order Crary or Wenz have assumed. Tillich declares quite unexpectedly that in the years of his theological training he enthusiastically discovered Schelling I *after* Schelling II and that he consequently decided to interpret Schelling II in the light of Schelling I. First there was "the obscure force of the 'positive philosophy'"; and "then came the ratio."⁷⁸ The letter to Hirsch does not specify at what moment exactly this process took place, but as early as 1910 Tillich claims that Schelling I provides the hermeneutical key to Schelling II insofar as "autonomy," the principle of "rational" or "negative philosophy," is a "precondition" for the doctrine of freedom upon which "positive philosophy" is meant to rest.⁷⁹

This does not mean that Schelling I is being given the last word on Schelling II. In his first Schelling dissertation of 1910, Tillich articulates the thesis of a dialectical continuity between negative and positive philosophy, the latter being the accomplishment of the former—not its repudiation.⁸⁰ Tillich refuses to subordinate the negative philosophy to the positive, or the positive to the negative. If he insists that the positive philosophy must be read in the light of the negative, it is not to reduce Schelling II to Schelling I but to affirm their mutual dependence. This can be observed for example in "Gott und das Absolute bei Schelling," an essay written in 1910 that remained unpublished until 1999. While Tillich's first Schelling dissertation stresses the im-

portance of autonomy in the positive no less than in the negative philosophy, this essay symmetrically insists on the decisive part played by justification by grace in the negative no less than in the positive philosophy: "If by justification we mean the exclusively divine activity upon our salvation, Schelling's religion is faith in justification in both periods of its evolution," the "grace of the intellectual intuition" being the counterpart in the first to what the "grace of the personal God" is in the second.⁸¹

Interestingly enough, Tillich uses the term "positive philosophy" in reference to Schelling exclusively, whereas he applies the term "negative philosophy" to Fichte as well. In *Die Freiheit als philosophisches Prinzip bei Fichte*, the lecture he delivered on August 22, 1910, for his promotion as a Doctor in Philosophy at the University of Breslau, Tillich distinguishes two contrasted sides in the philosophy of German idealism.

On the one side we find Fichte and the principle of his system, freedom as the self-positing of reason. On the other side we find Schelling and the principle of his philosophy of religion, freedom as the power to contradict oneself.... The one is explanation of the 'what' (*Was*) or negative philosophy; the other is explanation of the 'that' (*Dass*) or positive philosophy.⁸²

In his works of maturity, Tillich has often described Schelling's distinction between negative and positive philosophy as the conceptual matrix of his own distinction between essentialism and existentialism. Yet, his early formulation of the distinction between negative and positive philosophy reveals at least two remarkable contrasts with his later accounts of the distinction between essentialism and existentialism: in 1910, it is Fichte—not Hegel—who embodies with Schelling I the standard representative of essentialism or negative philosophy; and the existentialism or positive philosophy advocated by Schelling II is clearly *not* construed as a break away from German idealism. When illustrated by Fichte's definition of freedom as autonomy or identity of consciousness, negative philosophy is not to be equated with German idealism as such but only with its rational side, the "system of reason which can explain the 'what' of the world, but not its 'that.'" On its rational or negative side, German idealism shows that *if* there is a world, its history must be the process of the self-positing of the I.⁸³ On its irrational or positive side, German idealism is concerned with the "that" of the world; it meditates the not-deducible evidence that there is a world and

"elevates" this irrational given "from the sphere of reality (*Tatsächlichkeit*) into the sphere of freedom." Tillich insists, however, that both sides are held together by the principle of "freedom as act" and that "this is Fichte's work."⁸⁴

The rational and positive sides of German idealism are furthermore held together by the principle of identity—whose intimate connection with Fichte's concept of freedom we have already noticed. In the preface of *Der Begriff des Übernatürlichen*, the dissertation Tillich wrote for his *habilitation* at the University of Halle in 1916, the principle of identity is defined as the "basic epistemological principle of the living unity of subject and object, concept and intuition (*Anschauung*), absolute and relative."⁸⁵ Tillich argues that this principle characterises the philosophy of German idealism from its origins in Kant's criticism to its late developments in Schelling's second period. A sharp distinction must therefore be drawn between the "philosophy of identity"—which is but the culminating point of negative philosophy—and the "principle of identity" which is operative in both negative and positive philosophy.

These are the reasons why the very notion of an "existential turn" in Tillich's intellectual trajectory seems highly doubtful to me. Since he wrote his first doctoral dissertation on Schelling in 1910, Tillich has always taken negative and positive philosophy to be the two complementary sides of German idealism correctly understood. If an evolution can be observed in the young Tillich's thought between 1905 and 1910, it rather appears as a move from the kind of personalism he initially shared with Büchsel toward a theologically motivated acquiescence with Fichte's definition of autonomy as identity of consciousness—which is also the distinctive mark of "negative philosophy." This might be the process Tillich emphatically describes to Emmanuel Hirsch as his early move from Schelling II to Schelling I.

How, then, are we to understand the harsh critiques of German idealism that are displayed throughout Tillich's later work? What he later castigates as the shortcomings of idealism (its unilateral essentialism and its corollary blindness to the givenness of existence and history, its *hubris* and its delusive ambition to speak from the point of view of the end of history, etc.) is what he already criticizes in his pre-war writings in the name of idealism itself.⁸⁶ To the young Tillich and to his friends, the end of the story of German idealism has not yet been written. Its crisis and downfall are but sobering and purifying episodes in a grand narrative whose heroes are

not only Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, but also Medicus and his pupils. Tillich's pre-war essays do not provide a mere descriptive account of what German idealism used to be in the systems of its historical proponents; they rather articulate Tillich's own theological vision of what idealism as a living tradition ought to be.

¹ This article is a revised version of a paper pronounced at the annual meeting of the North American Paul Tillich Society (Montreal, the 6th of November 2010) under the title 'The Neo-Idealistic Genesis of Paul Tillich's Theology of Culture'. In what follows all translations from the German are ours; the abbreviations GW and EGW refer to the series *Gesammelte Werke* (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1959-1975) and *Ergänzungs- und Nachlassbände zu den Gesammelten Werken Paul Tillichs* (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1971-); GA refers to Johann Gottlieb Fichte's *Gesamtausgabe der bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Reinhard Lauth, Hans Jacob *et alii*, eds. (Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt: Frommann, 1962-).

² "On the Boundary. An Autobiographical Sketch," in *The Interpretation of History* (New York/London, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 3-73. *On the Boundary. An Autobiographical Sketch* was republished separately in a significantly revised edition (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966). In what follows the two editions will be referred to as "On the Boundary" (1936) and *On the Boundary* (1966).

³ Tillich, *On the Boundary* (1966), 47.

⁴ Tillich speaks of Medicus as his 'highly revered [*hoch verehrten*] teacher and guide toward Fichte and Schelling' in 'Schelling und die Anfänge des existentialistischen Protestes' (1955), GW IV, p. 137.

⁵ Paul Tillich, *On the Boundary* (1966), p. 47. It is worth noticing that when Tillich was called to the philosophical faculty of the University of Frankfurt, Medicus himself had proudly presented his former pupil to the readers of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (March 19, 1929, 'Zu Paul Tillichs Berufung nach Frankfurt', GW XIII, pp. 562-564) as 'the 'rising man' [*der kommende Mann*] in philosophy' (p. 564) and—less emphatically yet more significantly perhaps—as the initiator of the contemporary 'Schelling Renaissance' (p. 562).

⁶ For a recent review of the literature on Tillich's Schelling-reception, see Georg Neugebauer, *Tillichs Frühe Christologie. Eine Untersuchung zu Offenbarung und Geschichte bei Tillich vor dem Hintergrund seiner Schellingrezeption* (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), pp. 25-34.

⁷ See Erdmann Sturm, 'Historical Introduction', in *Vorlesung über Hegel (Frankfurt 1931/32)*, EGW VIII, pp. 12-22; Young-Ho Chun, 'Tillich, Hegel and the Dialectics', in Peter Haigis, Doris Lax, eds., *Brücken der Versöhnung. Festschrift für Gert Hummel zum 70. Geburtstag* (Münster: Lit, 2003), pp. 66-77; Joachim Ringleben, 'Tillich als Denker des Seins – zwischen Hegel und Kierkegaard. Eine philosophische Perspektive', in Christian Danz, Werner Schübler, Erdmann Sturm, eds., *Wie viel Vernunft braucht der Glaube? Internationales Jahrbuch für die Tillich-Forschung, vol. 1*, Wien 2005, pp. 101-118.

⁸ Of special importance were the essay 'Fichtes Religionsphilosophie in ihrem Verhältnis zum Johannesevangelium (1906)', EGW IX, pp. 4-19, a hitherto unknown version, annotated by Medicus, of 'Welche Bedeutung hat der Gegensatz von Monistischer und dualistischer Weltanschauung für die christliche Religion (1908)', EGW IX, pp. 94-153, and the 'Breslauer Promotionsvorlesung' entitled 'Die Freiheit als philosophisches Prinzip bei Fichte (1910)', EGW X, pp. 55-62. For subsequent accounts of the Tillich-Fichte-Medicus relationship in the secondary literature, see Marc Boss, *Le principe de l'autonomie chez Paul Tillich. Ses sources kantienne et postkantienne* (Diss. University Laval, Quebec, 1999), pp. 5-6, 163-173, Erdmann Sturm, 'Historische Einleitung. Paul Tillichs Berliner Vorlesungen', EGW XIII, pp. XXXI-LII, especially the section entitled 'Tillichs Kulturtheologische Debatte mit Fritz Medicus', pp. XXXIII-XXXVI; Friedrich Wilhelm Graf and Alf Christophersen, 'Neukantianismus, Fichte- und Schellingrenaissance. Paul Tillich und sein philosophischer Lehrer Fritz Medicus', *Zeitschrift für neuere Theologiegeschichte* 11 (2004), pp. 52-78; Georg Neugebauer, *Tillichs Frühe Christologie*, pp. 146-158; Ulrich Barth, 'Religion und Sinn', in Christian Danz, Werner Schübler, eds., *Religion-Kultur-Gesellschaft. Der frühe Tillich im Spiegel neuer Texte (1919-1920)*, (Münster: Lit, 2008), pp. 197-213, especially pp. 209-210; two more significant contributions (Christian Danz, 'Theologischer Neidealismus. Zur Rezeption der Geschichtsphilosophie Fichtes bei Friedrich Gogarten, Paul Tillich und Emmanuel Hirsch' and Georg Neugebauer, 'Freiheit als philosophisches Prinzip. Die Fichte Interpretation des frühen Tillichs') are expected to be published soon in the proceedings of the 2006 'Hallenser Fichtekongress'.

⁹ Tillich, *Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology*, Carl E. Braaten, ed., New York/Evanston/London: Harper & Row, 1967, pp. 114-135, 141-152.

¹⁰ Tillich, *Perspectives*, p. 81.

¹¹ F.G. Fichte, *Dreizehn Vorlesungen gehalten an der Universität Halle* (Berlin: Reuther & Reichard, 1905).

¹² Emil Lask to Fritz Medicus, April 9, 1905 (ETH-Bibliothek Zürich Hs 1377 :26), quoted by Graf and Christophersen, 'Neukantianismus', p. 66.

¹³ Medicus, *Dreizehn Vorlesungen*, p. 225.

¹⁴ This renewed interest for Fichte's highly technical 'Science of knowledge' among professional philosophers coexists with a more 'popular' enthusiasm for his alleged nationalism encouraged by various intellectuals such as Wilhelm Stapel, Arthur Bonus, Friedrich Gogarten or Emanuel Hirsch, who will illustrate themselves in the following decade as committed supporters of the National Socialist regime. On this ambivalence of the early twentieth century neo-Fichteanism, see Marino Pulliero, *Une modernité explosive : la revue Die Tat dans les renouveaux religieux, culturels et politiques de l'Allemagne d'avant 1914-1918* (Genève : Labor et Fides, 2008), 615-637.

¹⁵ Graf and Christophersen, 'Neukantianismus', 61.

¹⁶ Graf and Christophersen, 'Neukantianismus', 65.

¹⁷ Medicus, *Dreizehn Vorlesungen*, iii: 'Paul Hensel zugeeignet in Dankbarkeit, Verehrung, Freundschaft' ('To Paul Hensel in gratitude, reverence, and friendship').

¹⁸ Fritz Medicus, Art. Hensel, Paul Hugo, in *Neue deutsche Biographie*, vol. 8 1969, 561-562; quoted in Graf and Christophersen, 'Neukantianismus,' 61. Neugebauer, however, suspects this claim to be somewhat overstated by Graf and Christophersen for he takes the 'systematic' content of Hensel's influence to be scarcely identifiable ('Freiheit als philosophisches Prinzip', n. 6).

¹⁹ Medicus stays in Halle from 1901 to 1911. On April 21, 1910 he is made *Titularprofessor* of philosophy at the University of Halle and in the following year he accepts a call of the *Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule* in Zurich, Switzerland, where he will teach 'philosophy and pedagogy' until his retirement in 1946.

²⁰ Graf and Christophersen, 'Neukantianismus', p. 65.

²¹ Hensel and Medicus are certainly not isolated examples of this intimate connection between neo-Kantianism and neo-idealism. Hermann Lübke observed a similar connection in the work of Heinrich Rickert, who studied with Windelband in Strasbourg and became later his successor in Heidelberg. Whereas Rickert is rightly regarded as one of the most emblematic advocates of South-Western neo-Kantianism, the Fichte renaissance has found a major impulse in his threefold insistence 'that truth and reality are values,' that a logical priority is to be ascribed to what *ought to be* over what merely is, and, consequently, that reality only constitutes itself in an act of the subject. See Hermann Lübke, Art.

'Neufichteanismus', in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (RGG) third edition, vol. IV (1960), 1410-1411. In the previous edition of the same encyclopaedia, Medicus himself provides an equally positive appraisal of Rickert's contribution to the Fichte-renaissance, though he insists that Fichte's achievement is not merely the continuation of Kant's work, as Rickert claims, but the conquest of its shortcomings. See Fritz Medicus, Art. 'Neufichteanismus', in RGG; second edition, vol. IV, p. 498-499.

²² 'Autobiographical reflections,' in *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall, eds. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), p. 10.

²³ The mention of Fichte's 'first' *Wissenschaftslehre*, which is only to be found in the German version (GW XII, 31), refers to the *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* (GA, I, 2, pp. 173-451).

²⁴ *On the Boundary* (1966), 46.

²⁵ 'Genauere Exzerpte, namentlich der Fichteschen Wissenschaftslehre, führten mich in das schwerste vom schweren der deutschen Philosophie' (GW XII, p. 31).

²⁶ *On the Boundary* (1966), 46.

²⁷ *On the Boundary* (1966), 47. Neugebauer suggests that Kähler's influence has been overemphasised in the secondary literature on the basis of Tillich's later autobiographical accounts. He compellingly argues that these accounts are 'stylised' reconstructions which are not corroborated by the pre-war writings; by contrast, he shows Lütgert and Medicus to have exerted a decisive influence on the young Tillich (*Tillichs frühe Christologie*, p. 152).

²⁸ GW III, 101; GW X, 28.

²⁹ EGW VI, 15.

³⁰ EGW VI, 15.

³¹ 'Hierbei möchte ich anmerken: ob 'Medicus'-Fichte der größte, der einzige, d.h. die Konsequenz aller Gegner ist, wie wir damals feststellten, ist mir zweifelhaft, jedenfalls ist er der, den ich am besten kenne' (EGW VI, p. 15).

³² EGW IX, p. 28. See also the 9th proposal of Tillich's 'Thesen für die Disputation' in 'Mystik und Schuldbewußtsein in Schellings philosophischer Entwicklung', in *Main Works/Hauptwerke 1* (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter/Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1989), p. 25: 'The cultural (*geistige*) and religious reawakening of German idealism in the present time becomes historically understandable if we consider the fact (*Tatsache*) that the so-called breakdown of idealism was caused by external dismissal (*äussere Abwendung*) rather than internal overcoming (*innere Überwindung*)'.

³³ Gert Hummel and Doris Lax, "Zur Textgeschichte," EGW IX, 1.

³⁴ See Graf and Christofersen, 'Neukantianismus', 52.

³⁵ EGW IX, p. 18.

³⁶ EGW IX, p. 18.

³⁷ EGW IX, p. 11.

³⁸ EGW IX, p. 12.

³⁹ EGW IX, p. 12.

⁴⁰ EGW IX, p. 8.

⁴¹ EGW IX, 7-8.

⁴² EGW IX, p. 8. Medicus writes: 'Dementsprechend finden wir in Fichtes Johanneischer Periode den Gedanken durchgeführt, daß der Mensch nicht von sich aus zu Gott kommen kann, sondern daß Religion dadurch entsteht, daß Gott zum Menschen kommt.' (*Dreizehn Vorlesungen*, p. 212)

⁴³ EGW IX, p. 11.

⁴⁴ EGW IX, p.11 n. 25.

⁴⁵ EGW IX, p. 12.

⁴⁶ EGW IX, p. 12-13.

⁴⁷ EGW IX, p. 16.

⁴⁸ EGW IX, p. 17.

⁴⁹ EGW VI, p. 15.

⁵⁰ EGW VI, p. 15.

⁵¹ EGW VI, p. 15.

⁵² Gerhard Heinzelmann, Hans Balke, and Hermann Strathmann. See Renate Albrecht, Werner Schüßler, *Paul Tillich. Sein Leben* (Frankfurt am Main : Peter Lang, 1993), pp. 31-32.

⁵³ See Renate Albrecht's and René Tautmann's introduction to the lecture in EGW VI, pp. 28-31.

⁵⁴ 'Versuch einer neuen Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre', GA, I, 4, pp. 188-189 ;

⁵⁵ The same proposition is indifferently formulated *Ich = Ich, Ich gleich Ich or Ich bin Ich*.

⁵⁶ GA, I, 2, p. 255.

⁵⁷ GA, I, 2, p. 165

⁵⁸ Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *Historisch-Kritische Ausgabe* I, 1 (Stuttgart : Fromann-Holzboog, 1976), p. 279-280.

⁵⁹ EGW, VI, p. 43. Büchsel utterly dislikes the abstraction of the proposition I = I and suspects that his friend Tillich has now adopted a position dangerously close to that of Medicus himself. Nevertheless, Büchsel's criticism remains a Fichtean criticism, since he suggests that Tillich should pay more attention to the second principle of the *Wissenschaftslehre* which opposes the difference of the non-I to the identity of consciousness ('Friedrich Büchsel an Paul Tillich', 30.09.1911, EGW VI, pp. 63-64). Tillich sees Büchsel's criticism as a misunderstanding and claims that it was not his intention to dismiss the moment of difference so dear to his friend ('Paul Tillich an Friedrich Büchsel' [1911], EGW VI, p. 70). As far

as I can see, Tillich will never again use the proposition I = I to define autonomy. Yet, this does not mean that he abandons his early understanding of autonomy as identity of consciousness. See Doris Lax, *Rechtfertigung des Denkens. Grundzüge der Genese von Paul Tillichs Denken dargestellt und erläutert an vier frühen Schriften aus den Jahren 1911-1913*, (Göttingen : V&R Unipress, 2006), p. 135, n. 253.

⁶⁰ See Medicus, *Dreizehn Vorlesungen*: 'Nicht aber kann er [der Mensch] sich aus eigener Kraft zu Gott erheben, sich aus eigener Kraft Anteil am Dasein Gottes geben. ... Gott kommt... zu denen, die die Freiheit, zu der sie berufen sind... realisieren... und läßt sie erfahren, daß ihr wahres Selbst in ihm, in Gott gegründet ist, daß ihr wahres Dasein sein Dasein, daß die Freiheit, die sie in sich realisiert haben, seine Freiheit ist [p. 211]. ... 'Aber "so lange der Mensch noch irgend etwas selbst zu sein begehrt, kommt Gott nicht zu ihm, denn kein Mensch kann Gott werden. Sobald er sich aber rein, ganz und bis in die Wurzel vernichtet, bleibt allein Gott übrig und ist Alles in Allem..."' [p. 213]. 'Wie völlig dieses neue Stadium des religiösen Problems den Prinzipien der Wissenschaftslehre entspricht, lehrt der Rückblick auf die drei Grundsätze von 1794. Das absolute Ich des ersten Grundsatzes ist selbstverständlich Gott; das der Form nach unbedingte Nicht-Ich, diese "negative Größe" die im zweiten Grundsatz entgegengesetzt wurde, ist genau die bloße Erscheinung, das tote Dasein; das quantitätsfähige endliche Ich, das die tätige Auseinandersetzung mit dem Nicht-Ich aufgenommen hat, von der der dritte Grundsatz handelt, ist das lebendige Dasein' [p. 213, n. 1].

⁶¹ EGW VI, p. 44.

⁶² Paul Tillich, 'Author's Introduction', in *The Protestant Era* (Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. xv.

⁶³ GW IX, p. 52

⁶⁴ GW II, pp. 30-31.

⁶⁵ GW II, pp. 26-27. For a more detailed account of this argument, see Marc Boss, 'Coincidentia oppositorum und Rechtfertigung - das cusanische Erbe in Paul Tillichs Denken', in Gert Hummel, Doris Lax. éd., *Mystisches Erbe in Paul Tillichs philosophischer Theologie/ Mystical Heritage in Paul Tillich's Philosophical Theology*, (Münster: LIT, 2001), pp. 135-163.

⁶⁶ Renate Albrecht, René Tautman, 'Materialien und Briefe zur Kasseler Pfingstenkonferenz 1911. Einführung', in EGW VI, pp. 28-31.

⁶⁷ EGW VI, p. 30.

⁶⁸ See 'Rechtfertigung und Zweifel (1919)', EGW X, pp. 128-131; 'Das Christentum und die Gesellschaftsprobleme der Gegenwart (1919)', EGW XII,

pp. 47-50 ; 'Religionsphilosophie (1920)', EGW II, pp. 338-340.

⁶⁹ See 'On the Boundary' (1936) 'The World War in my own experience was the catastrophe of idealistic thinking in general. Even Schelling's philosophy was drawn into this catastrophe'; see also 'Die religiöse Lage der Gegenwart (1926)', GW X, p. 29 : 'Krieg und Revolution haben Wirklichkeitstiefen eröffnet, denen der Idealismus nicht gewachsen ist.'

⁷⁰ In 'Welche Bedeutung hat der Gegensatz von Monistischer und dualistischer Weltanschauung für die christliche Religion (1908)' Tillich suggests that Spinoza's 'consistent physical monism' which denounces 'freedom of the will as self-delusion' can only be conquered if we leave behind us the 'realm of necessity' in order to begin, as Fichte does, with the free 'act' of the "self positing" of the I (EGW IX, p. 60). In 'Die Grundlage des Gegenwärtigen Denkens (1912-1913)', a lecture he pronounces in the context of the so-called 'Vernunft-Abenden' — which he coordinated in the winter of 1912-1913 as he was ministering in the parish of Berlin-Moabit (see Lax, *Rechtfertigung des Denkens*, pp. 63-89) —, Tillich castigates the recent 'monism of epigones that covers itself with the name of Spinoza and declares with unphilosophical arrogance the opening of the monist century' (GW XIII, p. 80). To these 'epigones and submissive followers' of Spinoza, Tillich opposes "Fichte, the philosopher of the I, the act and the will," by stressing that 'he, the greatest opponent of Spinoza was his true continuator' (GW XIII, p. 82). In his report on these 'Vernunft-Abenden,' Tillich explains that 'lectures and discussions' took place in four different groups, one of them being situated in the 'monist headquarter' of Berlin-Lichterfelde. 'As a consequence, number of monists could be found among the participants. The president of the *Berliner Monistenverein*, for example, was always present as hearer and as main opponent in the discussions (GW XIII, p. 59). The report also briefly mentions participants to the 'Vernunft-Abenden' who claimed their sympathy toward the theosophical society. To be sure, the *Monistenverein* was not the only organised group Tillich was polemically conversing with as a young minister. But his neo-idealistic apology of Christianity resting on the coincidence of autonomy and justification seems mainly intended — and particularly well suited — to respond to monist criticisms of religious heteronomy in the name of 'free thinking.' See 'Kirchliche Apologetik (1913)', GW XIII, pp. 41-42: '[D]er Apologet soll überzeugen — wovon? Von der Wahrheit, vom Christentum, ist zweifellos die Antwort. Aber der Apologet hat beides nur in individuell bedingter Form. ... Dann ist es Sache seines Tak-

tes, deutlich zu machen, ... dass auf dem Boden des Protestantismus, des Glaubens an die Gemeinschaft mit Gott durch Gottes Gnade und nicht durch unser Werk, auch jedes einzelnes System des Denkens, ob eines Theologen, ob einer Kirchengemeinschaft, nicht die vollkommene Form der Wahrheit ist, sondern ein Stückwerk, das uns dennoch durch die Gnade Gottes in Gemeinschaft bringt mit der Wahrheit selbst. Stellt so der Apologet seine eigene Arbeit unter das Nein und Ja des Rechtfertigungsglaubens — der höchsten Überzeugung, zu der er führen kann —, so überwindet er die Schwierigkeiten, die aus seiner individuellen Gedankenbildung entstehen. Nur auf dem Boden des Rechtfertigungsglaubens, auch dem Denken gegenüber, ist Apologetik möglich.'

⁷¹ See Marc Boss, « Protestantisme et modernité : Résonances troeltschiennes des premiers écrits socialistes de Tillich (1919-1920) », in A. Dumais, J. Richard, éd., *Pour une nouvelle synthèse du christianisme avec la culture de notre temps*, Québec/Paris, Presses de l'Université Laval/L'Harmattan, 2002, pp. 87-117.

⁷² Ulrich Barth, *Religion in der Moderne* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2003), pp. 89-123; Ulrich Barth, 'Religion und Sinn', in *Religion – Kultur – Gesellschaft*, pp. 39-65. Christian Danz, 'Theologie als normative Religionsphilosophie. Voraussetzungen und Implikationen des Theologiebegriffs Paul Tillichs', in Christian Danz, ed., *Theologie als Religionsphilosophie. Studien zu den problemgeschichtlichen und systematischen Voraussetzungen der Theologie Paul Tillichs*, Münster: Lit, 2004, pp. 73-106; Folkart Wittekind, "'Sinndeutung der Geschichte". Zur Entwicklung und Bedeutung von Tillichs Geschichtsphilosophie, in *Theologie als Religionsphilosophie*, pp. 135-172; Folkart Wittekind, "'Allein durch den Glauben". Tillichs sinntheoretische Umformulierung des Rechtfertigungsverständnisses 1919', in *Religion – Kultur – Gesellschaft*, pp. 39-65.

⁷³ 'Rechtfertigung und Zweifel', EGW X, p. 131 : 'Wir können demnach unsere Aufgabe so bestimmen : Es soll gezeigt werden, daß das Prinzip des Protestantismus in sich ein Moment enthält, durch dessen Entfaltung es in Einheit kommt mit einem auf Autonomie aufgebauten Geistesleben.'

⁷⁴ See note 69. *On the Boundary* provides an illuminating account of Tillich's ambivalence about German idealism. On the one hand, he rejects the Hegelian claim that a 'system of categories' describes 'reality as a whole, rather than being expression of a definite and existentially limited encounter with reality' (1966, p. 83). On this specific issue, even the old Schelling falls under Tillich's criticism: though he 'recognized that reality is not only the manifestation of pure essence,' Schelling believed,

just as Hegel did, 'that he and his philosophy stood at the end of a historical process through which the contradiction within existence had been overcome and an absolute standpoint attained' (1966, pp. 83-84). On the other hand, Tillich stresses that the 'principle of idealism' has always remained the 'point of departure' of his own thought (1966, p. 82). 'Every analysis of experience and every systematic interpretation of reality must begin at the point where subject and object meet. It is in this sense that I understand the idealist principle of identity. It is not an example of metaphysical speculation, but a principle for analyzing the basic character of all knowledge. To date, no critique of idealism has convinced me that this procedure is incorrect' (1966, p. 82). Likewise, Tillich claims to remain indebted to the idealistic 'philosophy of freedom' and to its understanding of the 'correspondence between reality and the human spirit' (1966, pp. 82-83).

⁷⁵ Stephen Crary, *Idealistic Elements in Tillich's Thought*, Yale University Ph.D., 1955, Religion, University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan, p. 124.

⁷⁶ Gunther Wenz, *Tillich im Kontext. Theologisches und geschichtliche Perspektiven* (Münster: Lit, 2000), p. 217. See also 'Rechtfertigung und Zweifel. Tillichs Entwurf zur Begründung eines theologischen Prinzips von 1919 im halle-wittenbergischen Kontext', in Christian Danz, Werner Schüßler, eds., *Religion – Kultur – Gesellschaft* (Münster: Lit, 2008), p. 87, n. 5: 'Es ist der späte Schelling, der den jungen Tillich vor allem beeindruckte...'

⁷⁷ Wenz, *Tillich im Kontext*, p. 222: 'Nun legt sich die Vermutung nahe, daß die Absage des frühen Tillich an das Historisch-Faktische im Christentum veranlaßt ist durch seine damals noch ungebrochene Abhängigkeit von der Philosophie des transzendentalen Idealismus, die sich bereits in den Schriften zur Philosophie Schellings zu lockern scheint.' A similar account of Tillich's putatively growing distrust toward idealism in his pre-war writings is provided by Wenz's essay 'Metaphysischer Empirismus. Der späte Schelling und die Anfänge der Tillich'schen Christologie', in Peter Haigis, Gert Hummel, Doris Lax, eds., *Christus Jesus – Mitte der Geschichte!/?/Christ Jesus – the Center of History?* (Münster: Lit, 2007), p. 27: 'Anfang des zweiten Jahrzehnts des 20. Jahrhunderts war der Bruch des allgemeinen Bewusstseins mit der idealistischen Tradition weitgehend vollzogen, um 1914/18 definitiv und endgültig zu werden.' Reading Tillich's early work in the light of later autobiographical accounts, Wenz presupposes that a neo-idealistic construal of Tillich's pre-war writings would be incoherent with his early appropriation of Schelling's positive philosophy (*Rechtfertigung*, p. 87, n. 5). But the

decisive question, here, is whether Schelling's positive philosophy does or does not belong to the specific kind of idealism the young Tillich calls for. As I shall argue, it does.

⁷⁸ 'Paul Tillich an Emanuel Hirsch. 20. Februar 1918', GWE VI, p. 114. Tillich goes on to say that after having left Schelling II for Schelling I he went to Hegel and finally to Nietzsche. His famous lecture 'Über die Idee einer Theologie des Kultur' (1919) confirms this latter statement and explains how Hegel and Nietzsche influenced Tillich's account of the 'task of theology' toward the end of the war: 'Es ist orientiert an Nietzsche's Erfassung des "Schöpferischen" auf dem Boden von Hegels "objektiv-geschichtlichem Geist" (GW IX, p. 15).

⁷⁹ 'Die religionsgeschichtliche Konstruktion in Schellings positiver Philosophie, ihre Voraussetzungen und Prinzipien (1910)', EGW IX, p. 248, n. 369: 'Aber die negative Philosophie ist durch die Erfassung des Autonomiebegriffs notwendige Voraussetzung der positiven. In dem richtig gefaßten Autonomiebegriff liegt schon das Prinzip der positiven Philosophie, die Freiheit.' Xavier Tilliette (*Schelling. Une philosophie en devenir*, vol. I [Paris: Vrin, 1970], p. 34) and Günther Wenz (*Subjekt und Sein. Die Entwicklung der Theologie Paul Tillichs* [München: Kaiser, 1979], pp. 70-71) have rightly observed that Tillich's two Schelling dissertations provide a dialectical understanding of the relationship between negative and positive philosophy that is formulated in terms remarkably close to those Walter Schulz uses half a century later in *Vollendung des deutschen Idealismus in Schellings Spätphilosophie* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1955).

⁸⁰ EGW IX, p. 248, n. 369.

⁸¹ 'Gott und das Absolute bei Schelling', EGW X, p. 51: 'Wenn unter Rechtfertigung die ausschließlich göttliche Aktivität auf unser Heil verstanden wird, so ist Schellings Religion in beiden Perioden seiner Entwicklung Rechtfertigungsglaube. In der ersten Periode von der Natur entnommen, gipfelt er in der Gnade der intellektuellen Anschauung und ist im Leben die innere Gelassenheit des Rechtfertigungsgläubigen; denn Gott ist das Absolute. In der zweiten Periode aus der Geschichte entnommen, gipfelt er in der Gnade des persönlichen Gottes, der sich als Person der Person hingibt und von sich aus die Kluft zwischen Gott und Mensch aufhebt...'

⁸² 'Die Freiheit als philosophisches Prinzip bei Fichte', EGW X, p. 62.

⁸³ EGW X, p. 61.

⁸⁴ EGW X, p. 62.

⁸⁵ 'Der Begriff des Übernatürlichen, sein dialektischer Charakter und das Prinzip der Identität –

dargestellt an der supranaturalistischen Theologie vor Schleiermacher (1915)', EGW IX, p. 442.

⁸⁶ See, for example, 'Die Grundlage des Gegenwärtigen Denkens' (1912-1913), GWE X, pp. 83-84: 'Aus dem freien Denken folgt das niemals ruhende Recht der Kritik,

**THE NEW ATHEISM, THE GOD ABOVE GOD,
AND THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF WONDER**

RICHARD GRIGG

The "new atheist" literature, especially that produced by natural scientists such as Richard Dawkins and Victor Stenger, has put theism on the defensive. The theist's automatic reaction is to say, "The critics are not talking about my God; my belief system is more sophisticated than the theisms being attacked." But there is a simple calculus for determining whether one's own assertions about God do fall prey to the new science-based atheism: If one wants to claim (as the vast majority of theisms do, however sophisticated) that God can exercise causal influence in the physical world, then one's God-Concept runs afoul of basic scientific principles such as the conservation of mass/energy.

In what sense is Tillich's God above God genuinely different and thus able to withstand the scientific critique? The God above God is free of causal connection with the universe (recall that Tillich, following Kant, already points out in *Systematic Theology I* that causality is a category of *finite* being and thinking). But then what role does the God above God play? One answer is to be found in how Tillich's God above God, as the object of ultimate concern and the "depth" of reason, productively grounds my being-in-the-world without having any causal relation to the physical universe. Given that this route has already been explored elsewhere, however, my paper today takes a second, complementary tack: I will argue that Tillich's God above God, in its connection with the "courage of despair," represents a phenomenology of wonder that, at least via analogues, provides a helpful addition to some *other* thinkers' concepts of God.

Given that the phenomenon of wonder plays an essential role in this paper, let me attempt to define it precisely enough for our purposes. Rudolf Otto tells us in his classic text, *The Idea of the Holy*, that the

die Notwendigkeit des Weiterarbeitens. Tritt ein System mit dem Anspruch auf, das Ende der Wege des Denkens zu sein, so folgt Rückschlag mir doppelter Gewalt. Das war die Tragik des deutschen Idealismus.'

sacred is so far beyond our finite faculties that an encounter with it "fills the mind with blank wonder." In other words, wonder in the religious context is a sense of awe at that which radically transcends our ordinary experience and the concepts that we have constructed to deal with ordinary experience. "The Tao that can be named is not the eternal Tao." What is more, let us stipulate that this wonder is experienced as sustaining and healing, especially insofar as it is a confrontation with that which is the origin of our existence, indeed of all that is. We shall take as the paradigmatic instance of this wonder the awe before the fact that there is anything at all, not just nothing, which Tillich dubs the "ontological shock." Given that Tillich operates with a phenomenological ontology, the experience of such wonder counts for him as the appearance of the power of being to consciousness.

Now we are in a position to meet Tillich's potential dialogue partners. Several thinkers attuned to the scientific worldview, well aware of how most theisms clash with that worldview, have outlined what are in essence pantheistic theologies, in which the physical universe itself can serve as the object of our ultimate concern. These theologies avoid the claim that the divine has a *causal* relationship with the physical world. After all, if one is a pantheist, the divine *is* the physical world. Ursula Goodenough's *The Sacred Depths of Nature* and Sharman Apt Russell's *Standing in the Light: My Life as a Pantheist* provide examples of sophisticated instances of pantheism. In each of these authors, wonder plays an essential role in experiencing a religious relation to nature. These pantheisms can be significantly strengthened, however, by appending insights contained in Tillich's exploration of the God above God. My paper explains three roles, in particular, that the God above God can serve.

First, by uncovering both the logical and the phenomenological *priority* of being in relation to nonbeing, as revealed in the courage of despair, Tillich's God above God demonstrates that religious wonder is secured in an encompassing property of consciousness, despite experiences of wonder being

discrete and momentary (“Such moments come and go,” as Russell points out in her book [256].) The possibility of the experience of wonder is augmented here by Tillich’s pointing out the logic of nonbeing’s dependence upon being. Second, Tillich’s exploration of the God above God and the courage of despair shows that wonder has an ontological rather than merely ontic significance. Third, Tillich’s ability to connect wonder with the power of being allows the power of being or an alternative formulation amenable to pantheists to fill a role that thinkers who are religiously enamored of nature are all-too-often apt to assign to vitalism, a notion for which the contemporary scientific worldview has no room.

Let me offer, then, a very brief overview of Goodenough and Russell’s relevant books. Goodenough is a cell biologist, one who firmly embraces the materialism of the scientific worldview, yet she finds the physical universe itself, and our relationship to it, to be thoroughly appropriate object of ultimate concern. There are multiple dimensions to Goodenough’s religious appreciation of nature, but because my central topic is wonder, allow me to highlight that aspect of Goodenough’s approach. Recall that in *The Idea of the Holy*, Rudolf Otto zeroes in on the experience of the sacred as a *Mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, the overpowering and attractive mystery.

Not only does Goodenough tell us that her religious naturalism entails making a “covenant with mystery” and that this mystery includes the philosopher’s query, “Why is there anything at all, why not nothing?”—a question that ever invites wonder. Yet, she confesses having been overwhelmed to the point of existential terror when one night, while on a college camping trip, she looked up and beheld the vastness of the starry sky. That is, she experienced firsthand not just the sense of mystery, but also the *tremendum*, the overawing power of the sacred or holy and the wonder that it brings with it.

Unlike Goodenough, Sharman Apt Russell is not a professional scientist, but her life in the open spaces of New Mexico and her volunteer work studying its wildlife has provided her a sense of connection with nature every bit as potent as Goodenough’s. What is more, while Goodenough is satisfied to label her attitude toward nature religious naturalism, Russell is intent upon calling herself a pantheist, and her book combines reflections on her personal experiences in nature with brief portraits of pantheists going back to the pre-Socratics. Recalling one of her sojourns in suburbia, away from the un-

transformed world of nature, sitting on her porch steps, she confesses:

I had decided to believe in a holiness that was not confined to any one thing but immanent in everything. God was in the raven and concrete not as a supernatural being but as the miracle of raven-ness and hydrogen molecules and light waves bouncing off a hard surface to enter my soft receptive eye... all of it an amazement, all of it numinous. Suddenly, on those porch steps I was so pleased, so grateful to be part of this existence (2).

Note that the word “numinous” in this passage suggests that Rudolf Otto is once more standing in the wings.

Before launching into a discussion of the three specific points that I am claiming Tillich can offer as aid to these pantheists, it is worth noting that Tillich’s theology and the sort of pantheism we are considering here have an important affinity on a more general level: both are theologies that avoid objectifying the divine. Tillich is well known for his rejection of the notion that God can be thought of as one being among others, a discrete entity that I encounter on the world side of the self-world structure of consciousness. God is never a discrete object of consciousness, or never himself a bounded center of consciousness, but always the ground of being in which I participate. In a parallel fashion, the pantheist does not see the universe in its religious guise as simply the totality of things (a venture into what Heidegger would condemn as “onto-theology”), which she can stand back and contemplate. She does not take herself as a monadic being standing over against the world in what Tillich would call the self-world structure of finite being, but as one who is so inextricably bound up with that universe that the notion of selfhood only makes sense in the context of the notion of the universe. Indeed, when the pantheist contemplates the universe as an object of ultimate concern, he is, of course, a self who stands in relation to the universe as the object of his contemplation. But, rather than the self-world structure of consciousness as fundamentally real, as it certainly is for Tillich, the sort of scientifically savvy pantheist I have in mind here sees the self that stands apart from the universe in order to contemplate it as a mere mental construct—incidentally, a point upon which the Buddha and some Hindu thinkers might agree with the pantheist. The pantheist’s *real* self is not only always engaged with the universe in the manner of being-in-the-world, but always in the

world in a manner such that the self's very being is constituted by the intersection of various universal natural laws and constants.

Let us tackle the first of our three problems. Any form of piety that puts a premium on feeling and experience, on wonder in the encounter with the numinous, must deal with the fact that the religious seeker cannot manipulate the holy in such a way as to call up upon or demand feelings of the numinous or wonder at the simple fact that there is anything at all. Of course, it is well to remember that the traditional theist does not have the experience of the divine-human encounter under her thumb either. The Psalmist can call out to an apparently absent God, and the mystic knows the "dark night of the soul."

Surely, things are a bit more tenuous, though, with pantheists of the sort that Goodenough and Russell represent. There is the brute fact of the physical universe, and at some moments I may experience a sense of wonder at being part of that universe, to the point that the universe seems a quite logical candidate for the object of my ultimate concern. But absent that experiential dimension—and recall that the experience of wonder is sporadic—the universe may seem to be only so much mindless matter and energy.

How might Tillich come to the rescue here? Tillich's exploration of the courage of despair can be adapted so as to show that, not only when my mood does not seem particularly attuned to the wonder of the universe, but even *in extremis*, when the universe *feels* dark and lifeless to me, that universe is worthy of my reverence so that my pantheism can remain largely intact. Now, for Tillich, there is a God beyond that God who disappears in a sense of meaninglessness and doubt. In parallel fashion, it can be said that there is a godly character to the universe, a holiness, that can be tapped even when I am feeling nothing at all for the universe or even when I am feeling estranged from a universe that seems, as Tennyson put it, "careless of the single life," even if it continues to nurture the overall species *homo sapiens*.

In a nutshell, Tillich's God above God appears in the *experience* of absolute faith, which is augmented with the *logical* realization—in other words, there is both an experiential and a conceptual component here—that even to express despair about my spiritual condition requires being, indeed the power of being that is the negation of the negation of being. In absolute faith, one discovers that nonbeing, how-

ever terrifying and destructive, must always presuppose being as that which it assails.

What, then, of the pantheist, when he or she is weathering a difficult time, one in which the universe appears, at best, indifferent to the human condition? Can there be a pantheistic analogue to the courage of despair and the God above God, which demonstrates the ubiquity of that which makes nature sacred, even though I am not feeling, at that moment, a sense of happy wonder at the cosmos? Tillich provides us with an answer to this query, which, it should be reiterated, has both an experiential and a conceptual component. Just as nonbeing can only operate upon being, such that being has a constant logical priority, so any doubts the pantheist might have at a particular moment about the sacrality of nature can be blunted by the observation that "I despair, therefore the larger universe is." More exactly, I despair, therefore the multitude of processes in my brain that allow me to despair must be operative, and those processes tie me inextricably to the larger universe. On the subatomic level, to the atomic, to the molecular, and even to emergent processes on the macro-level, I am one with the physical universe, with its constants and laws, and I must be so if I am able to muster the consciousness of despair. Thus, just as for Tillich being-itself is the all encompassing ground of being such that one can never do any sort of end run around it, either phenomenologically or conceptually, so, from the perspective of pantheism, the holistic interactions of the physical universe have a relentless priority over any mood of estrangement that I can encounter. And the realization that this is so for the pantheist plays a role parallel to the courage of despair and the God above God in Tillich. The inescapability of my immersion in the laws and constants that, as far as we know, embrace our whole universe and any event that can occur within it, including our own despair, leads to a confrontation with that particular sort of self-universe connection that is the lifeblood of pantheism. Here, too, there can be a kind of courage, perhaps even what we could call "dark wonder." It is the courage to affirm my connection with the cosmos in spite of the absence of that happy wonder that, when present, makes pantheism come easily.

Of course, for Tillich, the courage of despair is not simply a *result* of recognizing the necessary priority of being over nonbeing, but, given his phenomenological ontology, an actual manifestation of being-itself, a way in which being-itself is given to consciousness. But the pantheist is not in such a dif-

ferent situation, because the realization that even to despair is to participate in the most intimate way in the whole that is the universe is, as a realization, a here and now instance of the actual functioning of that universe as that which sustains me and makes any realization possible.

The second issue on our agenda is to see to it that the religious relation is understood as having ontological and not merely ontic significance. For Tillich, the religious relation is one of being grasped by an ultimate concern. Phenomenologically, this comes out most straightforwardly in the experience of courage, the self-affirmation of being in spite of the threat of nonbeing. But it comes out too in experiences of wonder, such as confronting the fact that there is anything at all, rather than simply nothing, that particular act of wonder that Tillich, as already noted, dubs the “ontological shock.” Here one encounters being-itself, which is the one proper object of ultimate concern for Tillich. That one encounters *being-itself* in every act of courage, that is, *in every instance of affirming the self in spite of the threat of nonbeing*, suggests that such wonder and such courage are not accidental modifiers of the self but keys to the constitutive or ontological dimensions of the self. Now the pantheists that we are using as our touchstones here, viz., Ursula Goodenough and Sharman Russell do not embrace Tillich’s phenomenological ontology. But they can follow his lead in finding ontological implications in the self’s experience of the universe. On the one hand, if I find myself in a non-religious relationship to the universe, that is, a relationship in which I am a monadic self, standing over the universe as my world in the self-world structure of consciousness, this relationship is of merely ontic significance. But to understand myself instead as an integral part of the larger universe is to take a qualitatively different sort of stance. Indeed—and here let me augment Tillich with a distinction that Martin Buber makes in his famous contrast between the I-It relationship and the I-Thou—there is actually a different I in the two sorts of relationships to the cosmos. One I is an isolated Cartesian thinking thing and, as already noted, essentially a mental construct, a useful fiction. The genuine self can only be understood as a function of the physical universe, its laws and its constants, operating through me in such a way that I experience the gift of existence. Hence, in embracing the pantheistic view of my relationship to the universe, I am grappling not simply with an ontic dimension of selfhood

but with a view of the self that reveals its being in the clearest and deepest sense.

Finally, we come to a challenge facing any proponent of a scientifically informed pantheism, a challenge that has to do specifically with the wonder that the pantheist almost inevitably experiences when confronted with the dynamism of the universe. How ought one to conceptualize this wonder at the world’s dynamism, the energy that seems to power life and its constant cycle of birth, growth, and decay, as well the vigorous movement that characterizes almost every dimension of the physical universe? Where living things, in particular, are concerned, there is a long tradition of speaking of vitalism, an invisible energy that is greater than the sum of the physical processes that make up life and that ultimately accounts for the mysterious phenomenon of biological fecundity. But the natural sciences, biology and its co-disciplines, have long ago nixed the notion of vitalism: there is no need to evoke some mysterious life-force, no necessity of calling upon vitalism to explain life. In short, the discrete biological processes that take place in living things, when considered in their totality, offer an exhaustive explanation of the wonderful phenomenon of life. The concept of vitalism, if employed today, is no more than an idling wheel, then, and the scientific community long ago has, in fact, flung upon the junk heap of history along with concepts such as phlogiston and the ether.

But what to do, then, with the undeniably powerful experience that the pantheist has of the vitality of life and the larger universe, something that seems both palpable and irreducible to the empirically available laws of nature? For a third time, Tillich can come to the rescue. The sustenance he provides the pantheist is not to be found in those earlier chapters of *The Courage to Be* where he explicitly takes on vitalism under the heading of philosophies of life and argues that the biological energy that characterizes human life is always incomplete if one does not refer also to the intentionality of human activity. Rather, the key is to be found, as in our previous topics, in Tillich’s discussion of the God beyond God and the power of being-itself. Recall that our first topic had to do with the ubiquity and inescapability of the power of being, of which wonder can be a phenomenological manifestation. There the cognitive key, if not the experiential one, was to be found in the fact that nonbeing is always as a parasite on the power of being.

But Tillich notes that, in effect, and perhaps unexpectedly, being-itself is also dependent upon non-being. Being-itself, the power of being, is, after all, a dialectic, specifically, the negation of the negation of being. If Being-itself did not possess nonbeing within itself as that which it negates then the universe would be inert, pure stasis without the arrow of time and without the possibility of change. It is akin to the situation with the God beyond God: He cannot be the living God if he is not constantly overcoming the challenge of nonbeing that resides within the dialectic of being-itself.

If the scientifically informed pantheist looks to Tillich on this score, then, he or she will not be reduced to explaining the constant movement and vitality of the world in terms of a scientifically unacceptable vitalistic force. Rather, the pantheist can once more borrow from the most fundamental dimension, that is to say, the ontological component of Tillich's thought, and adapt what Tillich has to say. The movement, however non-teleological, that the scientifically sophisticated pantheist insists upon seeing in the natural world can be understood as how that which has taken its place in nature, but only insofar as it has overcome natural forces that seek to undermine it. The winnowing process that is Dar-

winian natural selection makes this particularly clear, but it can be extended to the whole of what is. Any existent thing stands, as it were, in a space that could just as easily be occupied by something else, and hence its existence is always analogous to the recognition that human being can exist only insofar as one is able to affirm him or herself in spite of the threat of nonbeing. There is no need to appeal to some occult vitalistic force.

In summary, then, while Tillich himself is no pantheist, and while his phenomenological ontology will not be taken up unaltered by the new pantheists, Tillich nonetheless provides these pantheists resources with which to understand the appropriateness of the universe as one's object of ultimate concern, even when one is confronted by a dark universe. Second, he shows that the pantheist can see his or her relationship to the pantheistic as having ontological and not merely ontic significance for the pantheist's own being. And third, Tillich aids the pantheist in understanding the potent dynamism of the universe and the life that exists within it, without having to have recourse to the discredited notion of vitalism.

**RESPONSE TO ANDREW FINSTUEN'S
ORIGINAL SIN AND EVERYDAY PROTESTANTS:
THE THEOLOGY OF REINHOLD
NIEBUHR, BILLY GRAHAM, AND
PAUL TILlich IN AN AGE OF ANXIETY**

TERRY D. COOPER

In this finely written book, Andrew Finstuen has done an excellent job of recognizing key differences in the style and content of the works of Niebuhr, Tillich, and Graham, while also making a convincing case that in spite of these differences, they share a central emphasis on the notion of original sin. As he puts it: "The 'original sin moment' that reached its zenith between 1945 and 1965 is the subject of this book. Indeed, the discussion of original sin that circulated widely among American Protestant communities in this era owed much to Niebuhr's, Tillich's, and Graham's interpretation and revitalization of this doctrine. While the three men conceptualized original sin differently—Graham's interpretation, especially, contrasted with that of Niebuhr and of Tillich

—their appearances in mainstream magazines, on radio and television, and on speaking tours reopened American eyes and ears to the centrality of original sin to the Christian faith." While Graham sometimes lapsed into moralism, argues Finstuen, all three ultimately saw our dilemma as *sin* rather than *sins*. This is an important point to notice because some historians have interpreted mid-century American thinking as more optimistic than it really was.

Niebuhr felt disdain for an individual focus on personal, private vices while ignoring the larger social sins of racism, economic injustice, and other forms of oppression. Niebuhr consistently attacked the notion that individual religious conversion will automatically clean up the social system because those systems will now be run by people with pure hearts. Yet neither did Niebuhr believe that the *source* of social sin is strictly social. In other words, it can ultimately be traced back to our own distortion of human freedom. As Niebuhr put it, "without an understanding the situation of the human heart in general it is not possible to penetrate through the illusions and pretensions of the successful classes of every age."¹ Simply eliminating oppression will not eliminate sin, because it is out of freedom that peo-

ple sin in the first place. As Gilkey puts it, "In the long run, warped social structures are *consequences* not causes of human greed, pride, insecurity and self-concern which in turn flow from the exercise of freedom, not its oppression."² Niebuhr would therefore part company with any liberationist perspective that argued that radical freedom is all we need to usher in a new reality of love and total equality. For him, this was a sentimental perspective that overlooks the darkness within the human heart. Thus, whether it is psychology arguing for a utopian world brought about through psychic liberation or sociology arguing for a utopian world brought about through social liberation, Niebuhr drew the same conclusion: both deny the enormous human capacity for an anxious distortion of freedom.

This strong dislike of personal piety also carried Niebuhr away from a deep interest in spiritual development. While Niebuhr makes a valid point that post-conversion life is ambiguous and does not escape the dilemma of sin, he tends to reduce spiritual development to social ethics. Niebuhr held out a place in his theology for self-interest, but he so emphasized inordinate self-interest that it would be easy for his followers to reduce *any* interest in the cultivation of one's inner life to more inordinate self-concern. Niebuhr did not have the benefit of a newer understanding of narcissism that is a part of later psychoanalysts such as Heinz Kohut and others. He followed an essentially Freudian understanding of narcissism. Self-love all too easily becomes the enemy of object love.

Niebuhr was much more of a diagnostician of sin rather than a person interested in cultivating a life in the Spirit. It is not by accident that Rachel Hadley King wrote a book, published by the Philosophical Library in 1964, *The Omission of the Holy Spirit in Reinhold Niebuhr's Theology*. In the same way that Billy Graham's rigorous involvement in evangelism kept him from being a theologian, so Niebuhr's blistering indictment of the human condition kept him too tied up to work with issues of spiritual growth and healing.

I have recently written a book on Niebuhr's contribution to psychology but this contribution is in the area of diagnosing and grasping the human condition and *not* in the area of offering healing.³ Tillich used to say that we all ask three important questions: what is wrong with us, how do we heal it, and how do we sustain this new reality? I believe that Niebuhr is enormously helpful in understanding what ails us, but not helpful in cultivating a life in the

Spirit. In my opinion, his disdain for pietism was an over-reaction to the self-righteousness he saw all around him. Again, he was great at helping us understand that we always remain a sinner; he was not so great, nor was he very interested in, the issue of spiritual development.

Tillich, Graham, and Niebuhr indeed all acknowledge original sin. But Graham's literalization of the Fall has enormous theological consequences for which Tillich and Niebuhr did not fall prey. In spite of the fact that Niebuhr is often seen as offering an Augustinian resurrection of original sin, he meant something quite different by it than the great Bishop. For Niebuhr, there is nothing biologically transmitted about original sin. We do not inherit a "built-in" or "hardwired" inclination to sin. For Niebuhr, this would make sin a necessary part of the human condition. A literal, historical view of the fall as the *cause* of sin, for Niebuhr, would be an absurd denial of human freedom rather than a symbol of universal estrangement. It is here that Niebuhr backed away from his appreciation of Freud. For Freud, human destructiveness is ultimately located in our biological drives. Niebuhr would never concede that our natural inclination is inherently out-of-control. This would be an indictment of our Creator, not of us.

Like Niebuhr, Tillich believed that Freud failed to separate humanity's existential and essential natures. Freud only dealt with our estranged condition and called it our essential nature. Maintaining the traditional Judeo-Christian belief that creation is good, both Tillich and Niebuhr insist that our essential nature is not distorted. Because Freud failed to make this important distinction, he concluded his thinking with a very gloomy view of both the individual and culture. Freud's dismay of culture shows that he is very consistent in his negative judgments about the human person as existentially distorted. Now if you see humanity only from the point of existence and not from the point of view of essence, only from the point of estrangement and not from the view of essential goodness, then this consequence is unavoidable. And it is true for Freud in this respect.⁴

As Gilkey suggests, Niebuhr always went "straight for their doctrine of human nature."⁵ Every philosophical approach has hidden cluster of assumptions about human potential and possibilities, the source of human destructiveness, what restores "fallen" humanity, and what is the ultimate reality in which we need "faith." No matter how scientific or

secular a viewpoint may claim to be, it always has faith in something, even if it is the individual or collective rationality of science. All competitive perspectives have assumptions about what heals us individually, socially, and historically. Each perspective has views about the nature and power of human reason, the significance of the human will, the issue of conscience, the problem of guilt, and role of self-interest in daily life. In short, this is the realm of psychology. Thus, any emphasis on Niebuhr as *only* a social theorist, as important as this emphasis is, comes dangerously close to a misrepresentation that Niebuhr has little to say about the inner dynamics of psychological existence. As Robin Lovin suggests:

Niebuhr's assessment of social realities was also guided by attention to the psychological forces at work. Here, he was less influenced by theory than by his insights. Anxiety about the insecurity of our position in the world and guilt about the things we have done to achieve and hold it led us to fashion images of our own vulnerability and purity and provide powerful incentives to believe in what we have made. The ideals and values to which social classes have and political interests groups appeal to justify their claims are thus more than ideological smokescreens to conceal their real economic interests. They also defend against the threats posed by our own anxiety, and they protect our illusions from the reality of ourselves and our past.⁶

Again, Niebuhr, in my view, is an interesting mixture of individual and social emphases. Gilkey is clearly right that Niebuhr explores the human being in history rather than merely searching through the human psyche. And Niebuhr is profoundly interested in issues of social justice and political concerns. Perhaps no theologian has focused more ferociously on the social implications of excessive self-interest. Yet, Niebuhr utterly refuses to blame the problem of human destructiveness or sin on social and political processes which "impose" themselves from without. Niebuhr is constantly aware of the manner in which *individuals* mishandle their freedom in the face of anxiety. He radically departs from any suggestion that cleaning up the social environment will eliminate evil. The social and historical location of evil makes no sense without a certain readiness or inclination within the human heart. Thus for Niebuhr, the *ultimate* location or source of sin is not in oppressive systems, a lack of education, or any form of inequality. The ultimate source of sin is internal. Even if we

eliminate the distortions in our social world today, we still have the problem of ontological anxiety—a problem that will inevitably, but not necessarily, lead to distortions tomorrow. If anything characterizes the thought of Niebuhr, it is this deep belief that sin cannot be reduced to socio-political causes. This makes Niebuhr a most interesting thinker: on the one hand, he profoundly dislikes any brand of psychology which does not consider the social and historical location of the individual; on the other hand, he retains a strong personal emphasis on sin and refuses to reduce the source of sin to outside factors. Thus, while Niebuhr would agree with many of the social critiques of psychology's tendency to be self-absorbed, he would disagree that any external explanation of human destructiveness is tenable. Here we see a two-fold disagreement with Marx: (a) Niebuhr disagreed with Marx's utopian conviction that all social conflict can eventually be eliminated when the oppressed are liberated, and (b), the ultimate source of all alienation is economic. However much Niebuhr had digested Marx's critique of social pretensions, he had also digested a thoroughgoing Kierkegaardian understanding of the role of anxiety and the personal misuse of freedom in sin. I believe this double focus in Niebuhr, a focus that sustained a creative tension in his thought, is especially relevant for today's world. How easily the pendulum swings from an exaggerated individualism to a socio-political reductionism of the self. One view decontextualizes the human psyche to the point that he or she is no longer a socio-historical citizen; the other extreme loses a sense of personhood as it reduces the inner world to a social and political construction.

A question for Finstuen: Did all three thinkers (Graham, Tillich, and Niebuhr) *really* write for popular consumption? I think this is slightly overstated. Niebuhr and Tillich's work was always directed toward intellectually oriented persons. I think a parallel may be helpful: Stanley Hauerwas is sometimes called the best-known theologian in America. But imagine comparing any of Hauerwas's books to something such as Rick Warren's *Purpose Driven Life*, which has sold over 25 million copies. Finstuen tells us: "Everyone from high school dropouts to medical doctors could and did read and appreciate Niebuhr's, Graham's, and Tillich's articulations of the doctrine of original sin at mid-century." I would politely say, "Not in my neck-of-the-woods." I grew up 65 miles from New Harmony, Indiana, and I talked to all sorts of people who knew

that the food was good at the Red Geranium but had no idea who was buried behind it. I would suggest that Niebuhr and Tillich were known best at various colleges and universities. For instance, it would be interesting to know how many of Tillich's most popular book, *The Courage to Be*, was read outside of philosophy and religion departments across the country. Being a hit in philosophy departments and being a hit in pop culture are vastly different.

My overall conviction, however, is that Andrew Finstuen has provided us with an excellent study of three very significant mid-century theological figures. Again, while these thinkers offer a different style of presentation and address different audiences, I believe Finstuen makes a powerful case that they each carried within their system a deep appreciation of the problem of sin. In providing this comparison, Finstuen successfully challenges the all-too-frequent

assumption that American culture in the mid-20th century was more optimistic about the human condition than it really was. This is a study clearly worth reading.

¹ Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, [page not noted—editor].

² Langdon Gilkey, *Reaping the Whirlwind: A Christian Interpretation of History* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000 [1981]), 236.

³ Terry D. Cooper, *Reinhold Niebuhr and Psychology: The Ambiguities of the Self*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2009.

⁴ Tillich, "The Theological Significance of Existentialism and Psychoanalysis," 88-89.

⁵ Gilkey, *On Niebuhr*, 21

⁶ Lovin, *Reinhold Niebuhr and Christian Realism*, 7-8.

**WHAT GOD IS ULTIMATE?
CONTRASTING TILlich'S DIFFERENT
"GODS" IN TERMS OF FAITH**

DANIEL BOSCALJON

Paul Tillich's influence on contemporary theology remains obvious, and one of the most important of his contributions involves his manner of articulating a definition of a God beyond the God of theism (or "God") that transcends basic forms of human knowing. The extent to which Tillich remains the foundation for current thinking can be seen in Mark C. Taylor's *After God*.¹ Not only does Taylor specifically cite Tillich's conception of religion, but Taylor's central understanding of God as a "Complex Adaptive Network" is framed in terms of the category of a "neither-nor" that stands as an explicit logical contrast to Tillich's notion of God as a "both-and" developed in *The Courage to Be*. The problem with this—and other—theological "advances" is that they leave unresolved basic tensions that persist in Tillich's own attempts to explicate both the nature of "God" and the way that humans are able to interact with this "God." In other words, even though Tillich's conception of God and faith remain central to the theological debate, it is a problematically unstable center: because Tillich's major understandings of "God" and "faith," located in 1952's *The Courage to Be* and 1957's *Dynamics of Faith*, do not cohere, an

analysis of the identity and differences within these conceptions is an important task.

Therefore, the primary purpose of this paper is to argue that *The Courage to Be* embodies Tillich's most powerful conception of "God," and that subsequent attempts to further refine his initial insight only weaken it. The secondary purpose is a presentation of a definition of faith able to harness the potential latent in both definitions of "faith," one that allows for an intentional persistence in faith without regard to the presence or absence of a debilitating attack of meaninglessness, and also allows for an encounter with "God" in the stronger sense that comes apart from symbols.

I will briefly address two contextual items prior to clarifying the origin of Tillich's Gods Above God and the faith implied in each. The first is Kantian philosophy, which is foundational to Tillich's project. The effect of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is to complicate the question of God—while Kant argues that God must remain an idea necessary for reason due to the transcendental illusion, or the tendency of reason to assume a coherent totality. Kant argues that one cannot use this necessity to claim that God exists without committing the transcendental error. One can neither prove nor disprove the nature and existence of God through reason. One must relate to God in *faith*, which Kant defines as a combination of subjective certainty (caused by necessity, here) and objective uncertainty (due to the inability to find God in experience). Faith differs from

knowledge (where one has subjective conviction with objective certainty) and opinion (where one is subjectively unconvinced about what is objectively uncertain). Kant's definition of faith is important as it pushes Tillich to offer a theological position affirming a God beyond the traditional ontological proofs. These are encapsulated in the threefold critique of theism that forms the need for an objectively uncertain definition of God, one that is expressed as the "God above God."

The second factor that pushes Tillich into breaking new theological ground is the struggle with non-being prevalent in the 20th century, which takes the form of the existential encounter with meaninglessness. Problematic for theology, meaninglessness is radical enough to annihilate the content of any expression of the divine, ultimately destroying both mystical and divine-human forms of religious experiences. Because meaninglessness assails the motivation to use courage, the courage to be must be a courage of despair that incorporates despair as faith itself, a faith able to see that accepting meaninglessness is meaningful. The confrontation with meaninglessness radically alters the constitution of this faith, however, as the faith necessarily has no content; it is a faith that is undirected and absolute, one that understands that nonbeing depends on the experience of being. This subjective encounter—which fulfills Kant's definition of faith as a subjective conviction that lacks objective certainty—is described as both the courage to be and as absolute faith, and is the "state of being grasped by the power of being itself."

The description of absolute faith in the *Courage to Be* is obviously a conflicted one, as Tillich seems torn between his status as a pastor and as a theologian. This tension lingers at the very end of the book, manifesting as a tension between two possibilities, or two ways that Tillich argues that one can experience an Absolute faith relative to a God above God. On the one hand, Tillich writes

...a church which raises itself in its message and its devotion to the God above the God of theism *without sacrificing its concrete symbols* can mediate a courage which takes doubt and meaninglessness into itself.²

On the next page, however, Tillich indicates almost exactly the opposite about absolute faith. Here he writes that one can become aware of an absolute faith "in the anxiety of fate and death when the traditional symbols, which enable men to stand the vicissitudes of fate and the horror of death have lost their power."³ His discussion of the God above God al-

most exactly duplicates this, as Tillich writes, "one can become aware of the God above the God of theism in the anxiety of guilt and condemnation when the traditional symbols that enable men to withstand the anxiety of guilt and condemnation have lost their power."⁴

Tillich never resolves the tension between a traditional, symbolic presentation of the God above God through a church and the situation of an Absolute Faith explicitly; instead, he ends with language that seemingly focuses on the latter element, keeping God and faith unmoored from traditional symbols. As Tillich memorably concludes, courage "returns in terms of an absolute faith which says Yes although there is no special power that conquers guilt" and finds the courage to be "*rooted in the God who appears when God has disappeared in the anxiety of doubt.*"⁵ This God, revealed at a new level, seems one that would be in an absolute relation to the individual, unmediated by the particular symbology of any given religious creed.

Part of the reason for Tillich's reluctance to settle on the liminal Absolute faith is that he finds it to be literally unlivable for humans, as it is "without the safety of words and concepts, it is without a name, a church, a cult, a theology," although he also claims, "it is moving in the depth of all of them."⁶ In other words, Tillich at this time implies that the practice of faith requires community, conversation, ritual, or tradition. The existential struggle contextualizing Tillich's description pushes him into a limited temporal framework. In other words, as an example, if one's connection with Being seems severed, one may for moments be plunged into a state where one is grasped by the power of Being-itself divested of all its symbolic trappings—but, once these moments pass one must again have a faith mediated through traditional symbols.

The tension woven into Tillich's analysis is resolved five years later in the *Dynamics of Faith*, which sacrifices the fragile temporality of the faith invoked in *Courage* for something more objectively certain. Problematically, although the definition of faith as the state of being ultimately concerned with which Tillich begins the book sounds as though it will heighten the tension between subjective conviction and objective certainty, it in fact allows Tillich to diminish the importance of the individual and the subjective truth of faith. Tillich does this by speaking of both faith and God in terms of symbols. Symbols have a self-negating structure that allows them to be that which they are not—a symbol points away

from itself to something that it is not and participates in it. Tillich's example is that of a flag, which is not a country and yet manifests the country in a piece of cloth. Problematically, the mediation of a symbol necessarily makes both faith and God relative and deprives both of the possibility of an absolute relationship.

The symbol of God, which symbolizes any and every ultimate concern, has an element of ultimacy and an element of concreteness. The additional emphasis on concreteness seems intended to complete, or possibly correct, Tillich's original conception of God and faith as the element of ultimacy. Yet, defined as "a matter of immediate experience and not symbolic in itself,"⁷ it is a distilled conception of the relation of God and faith in *Courage*. Instead of assisting in an idea of the God above God, however, the element of concretion, which "is taken from our ordinary experience and symbolically applied to God,"⁸ becomes a distraction to the argument about both God and faith.

The trouble is manifest at the level of language when Tillich discusses the truth of faith. Tillich writes "Faith has truth in so far as it adequately expresses an ultimate concern," and that it "implies an element of self-negation."⁹ The notion of Absolute Faith presented in *Courage* clearly has no problem meeting these standards, as the struggle with non-being is the essence of an ultimate concern and the absence of content means that each moment of being grasped by this faith *is* self-negating. The fact that these criteria really serve to address the concrete element of symbols is implicitly acknowledged by Tillich who immediately begins discussing them. He writes, "That symbol is most adequate which expresses not only the ultimate but also its own lack of ultimacy."¹⁰ Although one could argue that by inserting this, Tillich is able to re-emphasize the notion of *objective uncertainty* that partially constitutes faith, one must also realize that this puts the responsibility for uncertainty on the concrete object serving as a symbol. This can be seen in Tillich's test of the "subjective" truth of faith, which is determined by measuring whether the symbol creates reply, action, and communication. Perhaps a more obvious example is Tillich's analysis of the Cross. When he writes, "Christianity expresses itself in such a symbol in contrast to all other religions, namely, in the Cross of the Christ,"¹¹ he roots the truth of faith in its concrete vehicle instead of the way that the believer relates to it. Ultimately, Tillich claims that the criterion determining the truth of faith becomes "identi-

cal with the Protestant principle" which, in turn, "has become reality in the Cross of Christ."¹² This clearly shows the extent to which the objective element has overtaken and dominated the subjective. Although emphasizing a particular symbol does allow Tillich to base his interpretation of faith within the context of a recognized faith tradition, crucial to Tillich's understanding of faith, the relativizing of the God above makes the God in *Dynamics*... less "above."

In spite of the fact that Tillich's discussion of symbols is clear and helpful, and even though the movement to a more subjectively controlled situation of faith (suggested by the shift in definition from "being grasped," in which one's faith is provided passively in scattered battles against non-being, to "ultimate concern" that all people have at all times) seems to conform more closely to a notion of *subjective conviction* in spite of *objective uncertainty*, the actual effect is to emphasize the objective at the expense of the subjective.

A second problem comes as the advent of a cultural acceptance of nihilism creates the perception that there is no signified; in other words, one can no longer assume the experience of participation that goes along with a symbol. Finally, post-modern culture and the twenty-first century seem to require a new definition of faith. This is not only because this cultural era eschews the paradoxical both-and structure of the symbol in favor of a neither-nor, but also because, culturally, humans are confronted far more frequently with a crisis of meaningfulness (in which all actions carry a seemingly critical importance) instead of the shattering meaninglessness against which Tillich strove bravely. This definition of faith would need to do the following:

- (1) It would meet Tillich's yes-no judgment for the truth of faith: Yes—it does not reject any truth of faith in whatever form it may appear in the history of faith; and No—it does not accept any truth of faith as ultimate except the one that no person possesses it.
- (2) It would preserve the experience with the God above God as detailed in *The Courage to Be*.
- (3) It would provide a means for individuals to have a prolonged experience of faith that did not depend on the individual's being shattered by an encounter with non-being.

These three attributes of a definition of faith would seem both necessary and sufficient to determining whether a definition of faith and a corresponding definition God could work in the 21st century.

Taylor's conception of God as a Complex Adaptive Network can be measured against these criteria, even though he does not elaborate on a definition of faith in his recent work, *After God*. While it would allow for individuals to have a prolonged experience of faith, Taylor's definition of God, which incorporates a nihilistic element as its adaptive nature, refuses to acknowledge any pre-set value system and seems to fail some of these. This sense of God would reject the notion of God as presented in the history of faith as idolatrous and inflexible. Additionally, the notion of a Complex Adaptive Network would not necessarily provide the experience of Being in spite of non-Being.¹³ Overall, Taylor's nebulous "God" is *too* disconnected from all value structures to make it valuable to the faith experience. A middle ground needs to be found.

Defining faith in terms of vigilance seems to provide an adequate middle ground between Tillich's foundation of an absolute faith (upon which it is built) and an articulation of faith suited to post-modern culture. Vigilance is a reflexive mode of seeing that requires that one watch over how one is watching. Because the structure of vigilance is reflexive, it puts the task of being self-negating on the shoulders of the believer instead of the object of belief. This requires one to take as an axiom that the ultimate truth is that no one person may possess it, which allows an individual to constantly look out for what might be an expression of the ultimate truth in all and any forms.

To this extent, a vigilant faith is one that preserves itself as faith by hesitating to affirm or deny any sign, symbol, or thing that manifests itself as God. Vigilantly, one looks out into the world to see anything as potentially invested with God; beyond traditional symbols, like a cross, one can also look at nature or works of art as potentially manifesting God. Further, in a post-industrial landscape, one can also look at blighted and seemingly godforsaken places—strip malls, abandoned buildings, refuse on the streets—as also places where God may occur. One remains ultimately concerned about the nature of one's ultimate concern, and vigilantly watches over how one is watching to ensure that one remains open to the truth. Because vigilance mandates not accepting the ordinariness with which a thing might first give itself, one remains subjectively convinced of the objective uncertainty of one's experiences.

Thus, a vigilant faith that takes responsibility for finding manifestations of the divine passes the test of "yes" in not rejecting any form of faith.

This vigilant faith, secondly, is non-doctrinal and remains distant from sacred texts or traditional objects of revelation. It depends on one's ability to will and watch for openness. As such, it seems to correlate better with Tillich's sense of Absolute Faith and an access to a God above God—one without symbol or content—than the discussion of a symbolically mediated presence of the divine presented in *Dynamics*.... This also allows vigilant faith to pass Tillich's criterion of "no," as individuals take on the responsibility for refusing to "know" with subjective conviction *and* objective certainty the truth that has been revealed.

Finally, vigilance does not require that one have an existential crisis in order to experience being grasped by the power of Being-Itself. Instead, the decision to act with this faith is one that begins in consciousness, as one wills oneself to engage vigilantly with the world. Because one refuses to grasp for a relative knowledge of a particular truth of faith, one is uniquely enabled to relate absolutely with the absolute at all times when one remains vigilant. The fact that one reaches this point motivated by faith instead of a crisis of despair is another reason why the state of vigilant faith—despite its absence of language, symbol, or world—is a place where humans can dwell indefinitely and in absolute relation with the God above the God of symbols.

¹ Mark C. Taylor, *After God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

² Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be*. New Haven: Yale University Press (1952), 188

³ *Ibid*, 189

⁴ *Ibid*, 189

⁵ *Ibid*, 190

⁶ *Ibid*, 189

⁷ Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper, 1958), 46

⁸ *Ibid*, 46

⁹ *Ibid*, 96

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 97

¹¹ *Ibid*, 97

¹² *Ibid*, 98

¹³ Mark C. Taylor, *After God*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (2007). See especially Chapter 7, 345.

**THE (DIS)INTEGRATION OF JUDAISM IN
TILlich'S THEOLOGY OF
UNIVERSAL SALVATION**

KAYKO DRIEDGER HESSLEIN

Introduction

The nearly successful genocide of the Jews during World War II has led to a shocked awareness among Christians that the proclamations of their theological relationship to Jews were, in part, responsible for the deaths of millions of people. Some Christian theologians have felt compelled to examine their own theology, to determine to what extent it contains Christian supersessionism of Judaism and/or explicit anti-Judaism, and to what degree it is theologically necessary. This article is a continuation of that examination.

When we speak of the relationship of Tillich to Judaism, supersessionism is one of the last words that come to mind. He was involved in Jewish-Christian dialogue at a personal level, and as early as the 1920s, he had formed friendships with key Jewish thinkers such as Adolf Löwe and Martin Buber. His admiration of the latter figure is well-known; Tillich publicly lauded him in person and in print on several occasions, citing Buber as an influence both on Tillich's own personal theological development as well as on Protestant theology in general. Tillich claimed himself to be existentially accountable when it came to the issue of Jewish-Christian relations because he was born a German with the result that, since World War II, he stood against everything that had happened to the Jews during the German-run Holocaust.

Additionally, Tillich was generally affirmative of Judaism as a religion of Law, believing it to be a gift from God that brings joy and even liberation, although, to be sure, never complete fulfillment. He reached this conclusion after spending some time at a kibbutz in Israel, and Tillich also uncovers a place for contemporary Judaism as a "corrective" for Christianity, primarily through Judaism's prophetic role:¹ "Christian trinitarianism can threaten its own monotheistic foundation.... In this situation the power of the Jewish experience of God can become an ally of Christian theology against its own popular and hierarchical distortions.... Judaism is a permanent ethical corrective of sacramental Christianity. And this is the main significance of Judaism for Protestant theology."² Tillich's need for a prophetic voice to counter Christianity's priestly tendencies

speaks clearly to his assertion that religions must never allow themselves to replace the message they carry, and that finally it is the universally directed message of the revelation of God that overcomes any religion.

Nevertheless, this paper will discuss the ways in which Tillich attempts, but fails, to integrate Judaism into his theology of universal salvation, when he both particularizes (making immanent) and universalizes (making transcendent) Jesus Christ as the revelatory center of salvation history. Tillich's good intentions aside, he puts forward a supersessionist theology of salvation history that ultimately invalidates the revelation of contemporary Judaism. This points to the larger issue that any soteriology that relies on yet transcends historically-based revelation will have difficulty incorporating post-*Christi* Judaism. Regarding Tillich in particular, this points to an unfortunate lack of theological cohesiveness.

I will first briefly review Tillich's theology of universal salvation and its connection to salvation history. I will then address Tillich's particularization of Jesus the Christ in salvation history and its effects on Judaism's place in salvation, and then about the effects of his universalization of Jesus Christ.

Tillich's Theology of Universal Salvation

Tillich's theology of universal salvation is, at least theoretically, inclusive. For Tillich, salvation is not something given to individuals, on the basis of their belief or on God's particular demonstrations of grace, but to the universe. In *Systematic Theology*, volume 2, he writes, "only if salvation is understood as healing and saving power through the New Being in *all* history" is it understood at all.³ Tillich's New Being enfolds not just the individual, but the cosmos from beginning until the end of time. Tillich's reason for this universalism is based on three suppositions. The first is that individuals cannot exist apart from one another. Speaking of salvation as fulfillment, Tillich states that, "fulfillment is universal. A limited fulfillment of separated individuals would not be fulfillment at all, not even for these individuals, for no person is separated from other persons and from the whole of reality in such a way that he could be saved apart from the salvation of everyone and everything. One can be saved only within the Kingdom of God which comprises the universe."⁴

His second supposition is based on history, as he asserts that early Christians considered themselves to be universally inclusive, rather than exclusive, when they professed—rather imperialistically, though Til-

lich does not note this—that “all that is true anywhere in the world belongs to us, the Christians.”⁵

Finally, Tillich argues for universal salvation on the basis of justice. Simply put, he argues that salvation is a justice issue, that justice is universal, and thus salvation “transcends every particular religion and makes the exclusiveness of any particular religion conditional.”⁶

Tillich’s Salvation History

So, what is the connection, then, between Tillich’s universal salvation, and his salvation history? Salvation history is the way in which salvation is made concrete, through historical events that can be described as revelation. Tillich’s view of salvation history can be traced from the German Enlightenment view of history as a linear progression: the human race was advancing forward, with each cultural and/or religious manifestation bringing the world closer to perfection. This view, generally restricted to a consideration of pre-Israelite religion, Old Testament Judaism, and Christianity, portrayed religious development as a move from crude, pagan sentimentality, to a more developed religion of Scripture, to its culmination in the sophistication of Christianity. Historical events, combined with revelatory manifestations of truth, were used as tools to support this argument. However, as Tillich’s experience during the two World Wars made clear, the human race’s infinite capacity for advancement towards perfection came into question, and theologians turned to a different view of salvation history. Rather than viewing it chronologically, they came to consider that the apex of religious evolution was not reached at the end of chronological history, but in the Christ event. As will be shown, this rooting of salvation in the historical event of Christ that then takes on transcendental significance becomes extremely problematic for Judaism, as it shares the same early history and some of the same revelation as Christianity, yet exists both prior to and after the arrival of Christ.

The Particularization of Jesus Christ in Salvation History

It must be recognized up front that Tillich’s soteriology is christologically rooted, which is not in and of itself a problem for incorporating Judaism, and is based on the event of the New Being, the particular uniqueness of Jesus Christ as its historical actualization: “The problem of soteriology creates the christological question and gives direction to the

christological answer. For it is the Christ who brings the New Being, who saves men from the old being, that is, from existential estrangement and its self-destructive consequences.”⁷ Historical actualization is a matter of incarnation, of the historical enfleshment of the message that God is our Ground of Being and wills us to be reconciled to God, but it is also the all-important matter of crucifixion and resurrection. The self-voluntary death of Jesus the Christ demonstrates the ultimate nature of his revelatory existence by “negating itself,” a necessary step in Tillich’s theology, where the medium must sacrifice itself to the message (something Judaism was and is unable to do), while Christ’s resurrection demonstrates that it did so “without losing itself,” proving its ultimate and final nature.⁸

Christ, thus, is the pivotal and fundamental key to Tillich’s soteriology. However, Tillich’s christology, and therefore his soteriology, dialectically incorporates Jesus’ historical embeddedness with his universal transcendence, which is where the cracks begin to show. First, though, it is through the particularity of the New Being’s historical participation in existence that Tillich first attempts to integrate Judaism into salvation history. He does this through Jesus’ religious status as a Jew, heir to the Old Testament prophetic tradition. Tillich proposes that the progress of history indicates a move from “immaturity to maturity,” or from preparation of revelation to reception of it, and, while this smacks of supersessionism, in this way he subtly emphasizes the integral role Old Testament Judaism plays in revelation history by claiming that “the Old Testament manifestations of the Kingdom of God produced the direct preconditions for its final manifestations in the Christ. The maturity was reached; the time was fulfilled.”⁹

The preparatory nature of Old Testament revelation draws Judaism into salvific historical participation. Tillich intricately links revelation and salvation together, asserting that they are the same history: “revelation can be received only in the presence of salvation, and salvation can occur only within a correlation of revelation.”¹⁰ Revelation thus occurs as an event, locatable within the current of history. Revelatory events before and after Christ thus remain within the stream of salvific history, though always second to the ultimate revelatory event of Christ and the cross. The prophetic revelations documented in the Old Testament are considered to be preparatory revelation, and for Christians, essential: “Without a group of people who were indoctrin-

nated by the paradoxes of Jewish propheticism, the paradox of the Cross could not have been understood and accepted.”¹¹ The particular historical existence of Judaism prior to Christ incorporates that religion into the stream of revelation and salvation history, and, seemingly, into salvation itself.

But this very particularity and concrete rootedness causes Tillich to deny Judaism a legitimate place in salvation. This is because Tillich requires of his particular revelatory messages that the media of that revelation sacrifice itself to the message. This is what Jesus the Christ accomplished—he “crucified the particular in himself for the sake of the universal”¹²—but Tillich reminds his readers that, “neither the Jewish nation as a whole nor the small “remnant” groups...were able to overcome the identification of the medium with the content of revelation. The history of Israel shows that...it cannot perform a complete self-sacrifice.”¹³ Thus, Judaism is left unfulfilled and unsaved, by virtue of the fact that it still exists. Contemporary Judaism thus poses a particular, historical problem for Tillich.

What, then, of universal transcendence? I have already referred to Tillich’s theology of universal salvation. Additionally, Tillich leaves room for Judaism within his universalization of the New Being by highlighting that the Logos, a more accurate term than Christ, although appearing in the historical particularity of Jesus, has existed in terms of insights and revelatory experiences both before and after its participation in existence in Christ. Tillich claims that Christ is the center of history, but only if “history is seen in its self-transcending character,”¹⁴ by which he means that the center of salvation history is not a fixed moment in time, but a sliding reference point. As he says, “the metaphor ‘center’ expresses a moment in history for which everything before and after is both preparation and reception. As such it is both criterion and source of the saving power in history.”¹⁵ (Ironically, following this quote, Tillich addresses Hegel’s inability to account for the ongoing existence of Judaism after the arrival of Christianity, and suggests that he “did not take into consideration...the breakthrough of the Kingdom of God into the historical processes, creating the permanence of Judaism and the uniqueness of the Christian event.”) By muddling the chronological waters of time, Tillich seems to argue against a progressive salvation history model that would place Christianity as superior to Judaism simply because it contains the most recent revelation, and instead leaves room for Juda-

ism to contain transcendent revelation that escapes the bounds of particularity.

Or does he? The problem is that Tillich seems to betray some methodological inconsistencies here. Although he claims that Christ as the center of history is applicable only insofar as that history is self-transcendent, he still holds to a very immanently-rooted view of history. In *Systematic Theology* III, he offers a comparison of Judaism and Christianity and their respective treatment of the centers of history that unavoidably elevates Christianity’s approach above Judaism’s, again betraying his belief that Judaism remains unfulfilled. If you will bear with a slightly longer quote:

The prophetic... expectations of Judaism remain expectations and do not lead to an inner-historical fulfillment as in Christianity. Therefore, no new center of history after Exodus is seen, and the future center is not center but end.... [A survey of Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism] shows that the only historical in which the universal center of the history of revelation and salvation can be seen...is the event on which Christianity is based.... The appearance of Jesus as the Christ is the historical event in which history becomes aware of itself and its meaning. There is—even for an empirical and relativistic approach—no other event of which this *could* be asserted.¹⁶

Judaism apparently contains no historically embedded revelatory event that becomes universally transcendent in such a way that it is the center of any salvation history. Again, Judaism is left unfulfilled, superseded by the revelation of the Christ, and since it does not acknowledge such revelation, it is cut out of salvation.

Particularism and Universalism in Partnership

Tillich acknowledged that his theology as it incorporates salvation history posed a problem for the Jews, writing that, “My Jewish friend would emphasize, and so would most of the Jews whom I know theologically: the inner historical fulfillment, the time of justice.... Judaism is the idea of justice being fulfilled in time and space. The true Christian idea is that the fulfillment is only fragmentarily in time and space, but in reality beyond time and space. And Christians interpret the death of Christ as the expression of this fact.”¹⁷ It would appear that here Tillich is still wrestling with the dialectic of the particularism and universalism of salvation in history, although it is also clear that the answer for him re-

mains, and will always be, the universal that includes and transcends the particular, the Ultimate in Jesus the Christ. Jesus the Christ is the only one to, as a particularly historical participant in existence, sacrifice himself to his universal message, and so the only one in whom revelation becomes ultimately salvific.

Conclusion

While Tillich continues to maintain that Old Testament Judaism points to the revelation of God's message, and contemporary Judaism offers a prophetic voice to counter the self-idolatry of Christianity, and while Tillich makes room for the salvation of Jews within the larger circle of universal salvation of the cosmos, he nevertheless neither offers a reason for Judaism to exist theologically on its own, or offers a way that it might take part in salvation on the basis of its own previous revelation history or previous relationship with God. Despite his claims that his view of salvation history is not chronological, he continues to emphasize that the revelation contained within the Old Testament remains antecedent to that in Jesus, thus demonstrating his theological dependence on the historically based chronological order of the event that happened from the first to the second. His emphasis on Christ as the center of history is given weight by the "proofs" leading up to it, seen in the form of Old Testament revelation, which occur within history.

In the end, Tillich's lack of theological and methodological cohesiveness with respect to the Jews highlights that the complicated nature of Judaism's existence before and during the historical event of Jesus requires a more sophisticated view of the relationship between salvation and revelation history than Tillich offers. Emphasizing the historical nature of the Christ event particularizes Jesus and the nature of his salvific activity in such a way that Judaism's inability to incorporate that revelation leaves it outside of soteriological inclusion. Emphasizing the universal nature of Christ removes him from the historically located theological community—Judaism—that formed him, and severs Christianity from Judaism altogether. What must be unfortunately concluded from this examination of Tillich's salvation history is that his dialectically particularizing and universalizing approach fails to demonstrate what we know to be Tillich's abiding concern for the Jews, as he fails to integrate them into his theology of universal salvation, lamentably contributing to the supersessionist problem.

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¹ Alan T. Davies, "Paul Tillich on Judaism and Martin Buber on Christianity," *Studies in Religion* 5(1), 68.

² Paul Tillich, "Jewish Influences," *Cross Currents* 2(3), 40, 41.

**TILlich AND Adorno:
Two Approaches to a Theology of
Correlation**

CHRISTOPHER CRAIG BRITAIN

Paul Tillich's theology of culture, along with what he called his "method of correlation," continues to be debated within contemporary theology. During such discussions, the nature of Tillich's relationship to the Marxist intellectuals known collectively as the "Frankfurt School" is frequently at issue.¹ Tillich is occasionally and inaccurately described as having been a member of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt during the 1930s. Some of Tillich's critics, particularly those who argue that his thought dissolves theology into philosophy, blame the influence of members of this circle for his failings, particularly Theodor W. Adorno. At the same time, some supporters of Tillich are themselves divided over the contribution of Adorno and the other Frankfurt scholars to Tillich's work. Did Adorno help Tillich distinguish his thought from Heidegger, whose work Adorno harshly criticizes? Did Adorno's attempt to bring together Marx and German idealism help shape Tillich's particular reading of Religious Socialism?²

³ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology: Volume II*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957, 167.

⁴ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology, Volume I* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), 147.

⁵ Paul Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 35.

⁶ *Ibid*, 32.

⁷ Tillich, *ST II*, 97 and 150.

⁸ Tillich, *ST I*, 133.

⁹ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology: Volume III* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 365.

¹⁰ Tillich, *ST I*, 144.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 142.

¹² Tillich, *World Religions*, 82.

¹³ Tillich, *ST I*, 143.

¹⁴ Tillich, *ST III*, 364.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 273.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 368-369.

¹⁷ D. Mackenzie Brown, *Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 106.

It is noteworthy that a similar debate exists within discussions of Adorno's philosophy: to what extent did Tillich shape Adorno's thought? Adorno—a secular Jewish Marxist—confronts his interpreters with a puzzling tendency to speak of the importance of a "theological" element in his work. He employs concepts like redemption, and the prohibition on images of the divine (*Bilderverbot*) in his otherwise determinedly materialist philosophy. Some readers of Adorno, thinking that these references to theology represent a lapse in his dialectical materialism, query whether Tillich's influence is at least partly responsible for what is seen as an unfortunate leap into the theological, particularly given that he served as the supervisor of Adorno's *Habilitation* or postdoctoral dissertation.

This paper offers a short exploration of the connection between Tillich and Adorno's thought through an analysis of how their different concerns relate to Tillich's well-known method of correlation. It argues that Adorno's references to theology serve to invert Tillich's approach to a theology of culture. Whereas Tillich's theological approach to culture was to suggest that contemporary society presents *questions* to theology, so that the theological tradition could subsequently be examined for *answers* to these questions, Adorno employs theological con-

cepts to interrupt and question society. It is then human beings, within their social situation, who are charged with constructing the answers to these questions. This different approach to the concept of correlation highlights the substantial differences in the philosophical presuppositions with which each operates. The paper concludes by suggesting that the lack of clarity within the scholarly literature over the intellectual relationship between Tillich and Adorno is due more to the personal relationship the two men had, rather than any essential affinity between their two quite different philosophical and theological positions.

Tillich's Method of Correlation

Tillich's concept of correlation is the result of his interest in establishing a way for Christian theology to address the concerns and problems of the wider society. Such a task, in his view, requires that theology engage with philosophy and other disciplines that help illuminate the concerns of the age.

In early essays like "On the Idea of a Theology of Culture" (1919), Tillich begins to sketch out the position that he will later describe as a method of correlation. He describes "religion" as that element of human culture that focuses on the relationship between human beings and the eternal, which he describes as "unconditioned meaning" or "ultimate concern." Such a perspective distinguishes the scope of the "religious" from a narrower sphere of questions and concerns confined with the church, as opposed to society in general. Tillich writes: "The religious function does not form a principle in the life of the spirit beside others." Instead, he suggests that "the religious principle is actualized in all spheres of spiritual or cultural life." Understood as "directedness to the Unconditional," religion manifests itself in the whole of culture, thus breaking down the traditional distinction between the sacred and secular.³

Tillich develops this perspective hoping that the upheaval following the First World War heralded a decisive opportunity and a potential creative turning point for bourgeois society. For him, the key to responding to the *kairos* of the situation—an opportunity for a change of orientation—is to articulate a more dynamic understanding of the mutual entwining of religion and culture. In his interpretation of socialist politics, he argues that Marxist analyses of society fail to locate any ultimate foundation behind their critiques of the alienation and dehumanization of capitalist society. Marxism, he argues, lacks a positive ground upon which to sus-

tain its critique, but also on which to develop an alternative social practice. In other words, while it questions the domination and irrationality of capitalism, socialism has no answer to explain how an alternative future is possible. Tillich suggests that such an ontological ground is what Christian theology can provide.

In books like *The Socialist Decision* and *Political Expectation*, Tillich views politics through an existential philosophy of history, in which human beings are confronted by the reality of their "finite freedom" in the midst of a specific and perilous situation.⁴ He outlines his philosophical anthropology as follows:

Man is finite freedom. This is his structure. And everything human is included in this structure, all his relations to man, world, and God. Man is not infinite freedom as we say God is. Nor is he finite necessity as we say nature is. Man is freedom, but freedom in unity with finitude. The whole doctrine of man is a description of such an astonishing and unique structure as that of finite freedom.⁵

Tillich argues that "Religious Socialism" makes finite freedom the ultimate criterion for social organization and justice. He understands himself to be in solidarity with socialist political movements, while at the same time correcting the limitations of Marx's materialist anthropology. Essentially, he accuses Marx's account of human nature to be reductive and mechanistic. This robs socialism of its moral and creative impulse. The source and support of "creative freedom" cannot arise, according to Tillich, solely from the material social situation, "but originates from that which is beyond man's being and its brokenness, from beyond being and freedom." It is by being related to "that which is beyond being" that enables the individual to connect with "the root of the prophetic-eschatological element in socialism."⁶ This suggests to him that dialectical materialism needs to be reunited with a theological vision that appreciates the ultimate unity of materialism and idealism, and establishes a closer relationship between spirit and matter.

In Tillich's theological anthropology, human beings are confronted with questions that are "implied in human experience." These, he argues, belong to humanity's "essential being." "Man is the question he asks about himself, before any question has been formulated." The analysis of the present situation and its questions represents, for Tillich, a

philosophical task. The theoretical perspective shaping his approach is as follows:

Whenever man has looked at his world, he has found himself as a part of it. But he also has realized that he is a stranger in the world of objects... And then he has become aware of the fact that he himself is the door to the deeper levels of reality, that in his own existence he has the only possible approach to existence itself... [T]he immediate experience of one's own existing reveals something of the nature of existence generally.

In Tillich's view, once an analysis of humanity's "essential nature" is completed, and the primary questions that such an examination raises about existence are identified (e.g., finitude, etc.), the Christian theologian can then demonstrate how the symbols of the Christian tradition provide answers to these questions.

Tillich and Adorno

The philosopher and sociologist Theodor W. Adorno is arguably the most well known member of the so-called "Frankfurt School." Tillich served as the supervisor of Adorno's *Habilitation* (postdoctoral dissertation), and the two men subsequently corresponded regularly after they both fled Nazi Germany for the United States. Adorno recalls their relationship as having been one involving "profound differences," but despite his criticisms, he continued to think of Tillich as a friend, and expressed great admiration for his "boundless willingness to entertain every intellectual expression."⁷ But in a letter to Tillich in 1944, Adorno sharply criticizes his former supervisor's account of religious socialism and his interpretation of materialism. He challenges Tillich's attempt to reconcile the conflict between materialism and idealism, as well as proletariat and bourgeois, through the evocation of a future harmonious world "that can in no way be explained in terms of present reality."⁸ In Adorno's view, the philosophy of history presented by Tillich essentially has been reduced to "mythology," by which he means abstract and sentimental.⁹ Seeking to shun the rigid dogmatism of a Marxist theory he considers to be reductive and mechanistic, Tillich develops a concept of the "true human being," whose horizontal freedom is enabled by a vertical relationship to something beyond history. For Adorno, this perspective does not represent a way to mend the social order, but actually abandons it by creating an abstract ideal of human existence; "The definition of the human as 'fi-

nite freedom'...is as methodologically arbitrary and 'external' as it would be to define the human being's particular distinction from the animal via the earlobe."¹⁰ In Adorno's view, Tillich's anthropology describes human beings as being both part of history, while at the same standing outside of it. Adorno argues that this nurtures the illusory notion that it is possible to escape the influence of the social environment, and implies that human agency is "free-floating" above history.¹¹

For Adorno, Tillich's emphasis on the idea of a human essence shifts attention away from the complexity of material reality by deploying a concept that masks society's internal contradictions and elusive nature. Adorno argues that the limitations in materialist theory cannot be so easily resolved by the introduction of some mediating concept that is employed to mend the rupture between knowledge and matter, subject and object. He suggests that the appropriate response to the complexities of materialism is not to seek after some fixed metaphysical or methodological certainty, but is rather to encourage an attentive sensitivity to social suffering, and a commitment to try to bring it to an end.

Adorno's philosophy of history understands existence to be confronted by catastrophe. He insists that "the concept of the autonomous human subject is refuted by history."¹² Thus, against a position like Tillich's, he argues that "history is not a characteristic quality of the human being, but rather it is the epitome of all suffering."¹³ From such a perspective, he writes, "The need to lend a voice to suffering is the condition of all truth. For suffering is objectivity that weighs upon the subject; its most subjective experience, its expression, is objectively conveyed."¹⁴ Suffering, in Adorno's view, reveals the presence of injustice and incompleteness. Philosophy cannot in itself heal this situation, but can only engage in a ruthless criticism of all things, with the aim of uncovering the sources of domination and the gaps in existing forms of thought and culture.

For Adorno, thought has an emancipatory impulse, which points it beyond the merely existing reality that stands before it. At the same time, critical theory seeks to prevent thought from leaving behind a focus on present social conditions. It is thus undertaken in the service of freedom. "[T]he telos, the idea of Marxian materialism, is to do away with materialism, that is to say, to bring about a situation in which the blind compulsion of material conditions over human beings is broken, and in which alone the

question as to freedom could first become truly meaningful.”

Adorno’s philosophy challenges Tillich’s presumption of a common human essence rooted in a concept of finitude. But more generally, Adorno resists any methodological presumption that present experience might serve as a foundation for either a theological or philosophical ontology. For, in the context of an unjust and suffering world, why should the theologian presume that the “questions” posed by a specific social situation represent an accurate or undistorted perspective that one can accept at face value? In this regard, Adorno criticizes Martin Buber’s existential analysis of society, which he says supplies human beings with “patterns” for being human. In Adorno’s view, these patterns have “have been driven out of them by unfree labour.”¹⁵ If the social totality shaping human existence is producing unjust relationships and ideological cultural forms, then it would be misguided to construct a positive theology on the basis of its prominent “questions.” Tillich’s method of correlation, drawing as it does from Heidegger, is vulnerable to Adorno’s criticisms of the Heideggerian tradition. Adorno argues that this approach to philosophy neglects the fact that human existence is caught up in a determining objectivity. Heidegger’s phenomenology, in other words, ontologizes present forms of damaged life. What Adorno considers a sign of social alienation and distorted consciousness, Tillich identifies as evidence of the ontological need for, and truth of, theology. But in Adorno’s view, such a method takes distorted “second nature” as evidence for an ontological given.

Adorno’s Inverse Theology

Despite his criticism of Tillich, throughout his critical philosophy, Adorno continues to suggest that theology has an important role in his critical theory, and a significant influence in this regard, although indirectly and often unmentioned, remains Paul Tillich. Recalling Tillich’s influence helps to illuminate Adorno’s cryptic references to his own understanding of his work as an “inverse theology.”

What Adorno means by an “inverse theology” is often misunderstood by his interpreters.¹⁶ It is not a nod towards a negative theology, nor is it a hint of a crack in Adorno’s criticism of the need for ontological foundations. Contrasting Adorno to Tillich helps bring into view that Adorno’s position can be described as developing an “inverse correlation” between theology and culture. He essentially reverses

Tillich’s approach to a theology of culture. Whereas Tillich suggests that contemporary society presents the *questions* to theology and the theological tradition is subsequently examined for *answers* to these questions, Adorno inverts this ordering. For Adorno, theological concepts—such as the prohibition of images of the divine (“*Bilderverbot*”), redemption, justice, and the messianic—call the social *status quo* into question. In his view, all conceptual thought constructs blind spots for itself, in which the object of thought becomes manipulated and forced to conform to the needs of a logical system. Theological concepts like the *Bilderverbot* serve to interrupt the reification caused by such a drive to “identity thinking,” and alert the philosopher of the incomplete and limited nature of rationality. Thus, after calling into question philosophy’s attempt to reduce the object of thought to a system, it is then human beings, within their social situation, who are charged with constructing the answers to such questioning. An inverse theology is not a top-down imposition of idealist concepts; rather, the theological element in Adorno’s work is employed to crack open existing life, to make room for new insights, and to challenge human beings to respond to the failings, irrationalities, and gaps that such perspective on life brings into view.

Tillich and Adorno in Conversation

In a letter from 1965, Adorno responds to a question Tillich poses to him about the use of the phrase the “word of God” as it was deployed by Karl Barth. Adorno answers:

I reject [this theology] no less than you do... [T]he philosophy of language becomes something like a fetishism of language. What is the word of God supposed to mean without God? No, that won’t do.... [T]hese theologians will make common cause with logical positivists, for whom language has a very similar function, namely to replace the subject.¹⁷

These remarks illustrate that Tillich and Adorno shared some common views about the theology of Karl Barth, from which Tillich frequently sought to distinguish his theology of culture. It also illustrates how their work resists any trend toward rooting theology in a philosophy of language. Adorno also appreciates how Tillich’s theology continues to take individual subjectivity seriously, and makes it a crucial element of his methodology. He resists any move that, in his mind, appears to call for the sacrifice of the subject—any leap into the arms of some

higher authority or guiding force—which is how he interprets both Kierkegaard and Barth. By resisting this, he considers Tillich to be on a similar path as his own project. And yet, when it comes to relating theology to culture, Adorno's position, at least structurally, has ironically more in common with Barth than with Tillich. For him, culture does not mediate theology or somehow embody the concerns of the religious.

This comparison offers a useful way to draw out some of the contrast between Tillich and Adorno. Tillich criticized Barth for failing to keep the divine "Yes" and "No" together in his reading of human culture. Barth, he argues, keeps these two movements irreconcilably separate. The word of God offers a firm judgmental "No" against the limitations of human culture, but any "Yes" can only come from the external offer of free grace. It is not to be found already immanent in the workings of culture.¹⁸ Given such a view of Barth, one can surmise that Tillich might have regarded Adorno's inverse theology as similarly problematic: Adorno confronts culture with a vigorous and profound "No," but fails to offer any positive source whence a "Yes" might be found. What for Adorno's secular Jewish materialism is a determined prophetic judgment against the injustices of this world, threatens to become, in Tillich's view, nihilism. To this, Adorno would only answer—the only "Yes" that ought to be the focus of critical thought is the "Yes" that human beings might offer themselves to the need and possibility of living in pursuit of a better world.

Given this curious difference between the fundamental orientations of Tillich and Adorno's thought, what accounts for the fact that this is so seldom explored in discussions of the relation between the two? And why, in their own writings, are they content to criticize Barth's dialectical theology, while leaving their own differences unmentioned? The savage nature of Adorno's criticisms of Heidegger, Sartre, and Martin Buber are legendary, but one finds nothing of the sort about Tillich in his published works, and only fragments in his personal letters.

I suspect that the reason is a rather simple one: Adorno spared Tillich from public criticism, and perhaps the same was true of Tillich towards Adorno, out of a deep respect and appreciation for the other. They had both sought to nurture socialist philosophy and politics in the face of the rise of Nazism, and both had suffered personally as a result. This cemented a form of solidarity between the two

men, which was more personal than it was intellectual.

A week after Tillich died, Adorno began a series of lectures by offering a tribute to Tillich. He described how Tillich had agreed to supervise his postdoctoral dissertation after others had rejected him, despite the real differences *between* and *in* their views. Since completing this dissertation gave Adorno the credentials he would later need to escape Germany (by being offered a position at Oxford), he credits Tillich for saving his life: "Had he not exerted himself on my behalf," Adorno told his students, "it is questionable whether I would have survived."¹⁹

When he then asked his students to stand in silence to honor the memory of Tillich, it would not have signified any agreement with Tillich's theology of culture, but it was an admission of a real indebtedness, both personal and intellectual. The sense of personal gratitude is obvious; the intellectual indebtedness, though, is signaled in the way that the act of standing in silence in memory of Tillich can be understood to have modeled the inverse theology that Adorno developed. By contrasting his thought in opposition to that of Tillich, he was standing in silence to signal a "No" against the regime that has sought to destroy both himself and Tillich. And he was hoping that somehow, despite everything, his students might somehow find a way to answer the question this presented to German culture.

¹ For examples of such discussions, see: Cobb, Kelton, "Reconsidering the Status of Popular Culture in Tillich's Theology of Culture," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 63.1 (1995), 53-84; Hammond, Guy B., "Tillich, Adorno, and the Debate about Existentialism," *Laval théologique et philosophique* 47.3 (1991), 343-355; O'Keefe, Terrence, "Paul Tillich and the Frankfurt School," *Theonomy and Autonomy: Studies in Paul Tillich's Engagement with Modern Culture*, ed. John J. Carey (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984), 67-88; Scarlemann, Robert P., "Totality: A Philosophical and Theological Problem Between Tillich and the Frankfurt School," *Laval théologique et philosophique* 47.3 (1991), 329-341.

² See: Champion, James W., "Tillich and the Frankfurt School: parallels and differences in prophetic criticism," *Soundings* 69.4 (1986), 512-530; Strum, Erdmann, "Theodor W. Adorno contra Paul Tillich," *Zeitschrift für neuere Theologiegeschichte* 3 (1996), 251ff.

³ P. Tillich, "On the Idea of a Theology of Culture," in *What is Religion?*, ed. James Luther Adams (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 161ff.

⁴ Paul Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, trans. Franklin Sherman (New York, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977 [1st German edition, 1933]); *Political Expectation*, ed. James Luther Adams (New York, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1971).

⁵ Paul Tillich, "Man and Society in Religious Socialism," *Christianity and Society*, VIII, No. 4 (Fall, 1943), 13.

⁶ Tillich, *Political Expectations*, 47-48.

⁷ Adorno, *Lectures on Negative Dialectics*, 3.

⁸ Tillich, *Socialist Decision*, 69.

⁹ Adorno, "Contra Paulum," *Briefwechsel: Theodor W. Adorno und Max Horkheimer*, vol. 2, ed. Christoph Gödde & Henri Lonitz (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2004), 491.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 482.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 488.

¹² Adorno, *History and Freedom*, ed., Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Rodney Livingstone. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), 7.

¹³ Adorno, "Contra Paulum," 487.

¹⁴ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 17-18.

¹⁵ Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, trans. Knut Tarnowski & Frederic Will (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 17.

¹⁶ For discussions of this question, see: Elizabeth A. Pritchard, "Bilderverbot Meets Body in Theodor W. Adorno's Inverse Theology," *Harvard Theological Review* 95:3 (2002), 291-318; Brittain, Christopher Craig, *Adorno and Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), chapter 4.

¹⁷ Adorno, *Lectures on Metaphysics*, 182 n.4.

¹⁸ Clayton, John P., *The Concept of Correlation: Paul Tillich and the Possibility of a Mediating Theology* (Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 168.

¹⁹ Adorno, *Lectures on Negative Dialectics*, 3.

**A SCIENTIST—JESUIT FRIENDSHIP:
PAUL H. CARR AND DONALD P.
MERRIFIELD, S. J., (1928 – 2010),
PRESIDENT, LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNI-
VERSITY (1969 - 1984)**

PAUL CARR

Paul Tillich had an important impact on our thought and friendship. Don and I became good friends when we were studying physics at the MIT graduate school, 1957–1961. After that, I lost contact but reconnected again after 30 years through a retreat on the geologist-priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J.

At MIT, we would often chat before and after our quantum mechanics and group theory courses. Our mutual interest in philosophy and religion made us different from most of the other physics students. We were required to take three courses outside our physics major. Most physicist students took electrical engineering courses, but I chose to take George Buttrick's "The New Testament and the Mind of Today" courses at Harvard University and then Paul Tillich's "Theology of Culture."

Don was easy to talk to, particularly about my readings for Tillich's course. He gave interesting and provocative responses to my descriptions of Albert

Einstein's essay "Science and Religion." Einstein spoke of a "cosmic religious feeling...of the sublimity and marvelous order which reveal themselves both in nature and the world of thought." This did not require a Personal God, interfering with natural events, which Einstein thought religion should do without. Don would smile whimsically when I told him of Paul Tillich's essay, written in response, "God is supra-personal, a symbol, not an object among other objects... God is not less than personal."

Existentialist philosophy was in very much in vogue during those days. We both read and had lively discussions of Albert Camus novel, *The Stranger*. I used the following quote from Albert Camus' *The Rebel* in the acknowledgement section of my Master of Science Thesis: "the desperate encounter between human inquiry and the silence of the universe." At times, my research on ultrasonic waves at the record high frequency of 10 GHz seemed like this.

I lost contact with Don after leaving MIT in the spring of 1961 to serve as a lieutenant in the US Army Ordnance Corps. Don completed his Ph.D. in theoretical solid-state physics under Prof. Slater in 1962.

After completing my military service in 1962, I was able to continue my research at the Air Force Research Laboratory, Hanscom AFB, Massachusetts. I completed my Ph.D. Dissertation, "Harmonic

Generation of Microwave Phonons,” at Brandeis University in 1966 and was promoted to Chief of the Microwave Physics Branch in 1967, a position I held until my retirement in 1995.

In the early 1990s, I participated in a retreat on geologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin S.J. at Boston College. Geologist Father Jim Skehan, S.J. and Episcopal Priest, Rev. Barbara Smith-Moran led the inspiring weekly sessions held after work at the Jesuit residence St Mary’s. During this retreat, I remembered my former MIT friend, Don Merrifield, S.J. and asked Jim Skehan if he knew of any way to make contact with Don. Through Jim’s leads, I discovered that Don was Chancellor of Loyola Marymount University and had been its President from 1969 to 1984. I was amazed!

I was able to contact Don and was happy that he had remembered me after 30 years. He invited me to have breakfast with him at the Jesuit residence at Loyola Marymount University, on a cliff overlooking the coastline of Los Angeles. The morning sun was shining brightly when we met again. He was indeed older but the same enthusiastic, affable person I had known in MIT graduate school.

He told me with an amusing smile how he had become President of Loyola University during the Viet-Nam War period of student unrest, when “nobody else wanted the job.” After a very difficult day with student unrest on his own campus, he and his associates decided to unwind by going to a movie in Berkley. When it was over, they encountered a similar student demonstration. Fund raising was a major responsibility of his being president.

Those morning breakfasts with Don over the years inspired me to develop my grant application to the Templeton Foundation for my Science and Religion course, which I taught in the philosophy department at University of Massachusetts, Lowell. Don and another friend made a video dialogue on Pope John Paul II’s 1996 statement on evolution, which confirmed that Darwin’s theory of evolution is “more than a scientific hypothesis,” but asserted that human beings have a spiritual dimension beyond the physical. Don particularly liked the interdisciplinary nature and thought of the Santa Fe Institute.

In 1999, Don shared his essay, “Halloween, Complex Adaptive Systems, and Missouri Valley

Thomism,” with me. Don believed that the mind-body problem is philosophical and ontological, not scientific. For him, there was a spiritual dimension beyond the physical. If matter were an abstraction removed from its holistic spiritual ground and only governed by natural laws, then we human beings would be nothing but biological machines. In contrast, Don quoted Teilhard de Chardin: “Bathe yourself in the ocean of matter...for it cradled you in your preconscious existence; and it is the ocean that will raise you up to God.”

In a 2000 email, Don shared with me “Death Where Is Thy Sting? Belief in Life Beyond Death.” It reminded me of a conversation I had with Paul Tillich in which he said, “It is impossible for our finite human minds to comprehend an existence beyond space and time.” Scientists inappropriately use the authority of science to make claims, such as there is no life beyond death, about which it has no wisdom tradition. Don also pointed out that science cannot prove the assumptions on which it is based. Science focuses on the physical world and thereby achieves success in limited areas. In contrast, Don quoted the words of St. Paul (1 Cor. 2:9, Int. SV), similar to Tillich’s above: “No eye has seen, no ear heard, and no mind has imagined the things that God has prepared for those who love Him.”

Don believed in “...a spiritual core totally at home and incarnate in the brain, though not emerging from its structure but from its being. If this is an attempt to resurrect the old Thomistic soul, the form of the body, so be it.”

In 2003, Don sent me an email saying that he had been transferred to the Jesuit Community in Honolulu, Hawaii after which I lost contact. I recently discovered that he passed away on February 25, 2010, at age 81. I learned from his obituary that he had continued his breakfast ministry for dozens of homeless at Ala Moana Beach Park twice a week, using his own money.

My life has indeed been greatly enriched by having known him. His grappling with the issues of science and religion and life after death gave me a glimpse of the life eternal. “In Don’s earthly end, his spirit, detached from his body, fulfilled at last, is resting with all its weight on God-Omega (adapted from Teilhard de Chardin).”

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