



# THE NORTH AMERICAN PAUL TILlich SOCIETY

## Newsletter

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### NEWS ABOUT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY IN TORONTO

The Annual meeting of the North American Paul Tillich Society will take place on November 22 and 23, 2002, in Toronto, Ontario. As always, the meeting will take place in conjunction with the American Academy of Religion and Society of Biblical Literature's annual meeting from November 23 through November 26, 2002.

On May 15 at 9:01 AM (EDT), registration and housing open for the AAR/SBL. "Super-Saver" registration rates are in effect until Sept. 15.

N.B. You must be registered for the meeting to secure housing. Your dues must be paid up to date by August 1, 2002.

To make reservations for the meeting and for housing (one method only):

#### On Line:

[www.aarweb.org](http://www.aarweb.org) OR [www.sbl-site.org](http://www.sbl-site.org)

FAX: (available 24 hours a day)

330.963.0319 (meeting registration and housing forms)

#### MAIL:

Annual Meeting of the AAR/SBL Registration  
and Housing  
c/o Conferon Registration and Housing Bureau  
2450 Edison Blvd, Suite 2  
Twinsburg, OH 44087

#### QUESTIONS:

800.575.7185 (U.S. and Canada)  
330.425.9330 (outside U.S. and Canada)

Please note that the hotel prices quoted in the AAR/SBL Annual Meetings Bulletin are quoted in Canadian dollars. Thus, a room that costs \$150 CDN is the equivalent to \$94 USD.

The annual program book will be mailed in early September (allow a few weeks for delivery). The program for the North American Paul Tillich Society sessions on Friday afternoon and Saturday morning, along with the new AAR Group on Tillich, will be printed in the October Newsletter. The banquet as usual will be held on Friday evening.

<b>NEW PUBLICATIONS ON or ABOUT TILlich AND TILlich ONLINE</b>
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John J. Carey. *Paulus, Then and Now: A Study of Paul Tillich's Theological World and the Continuing Relevance of His Work*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2002 (June).

Calvin O. Schrag. *God as Otherwise Than Being. Toward a Semantics of the Gift*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2002 (June).

Martin Beck Matustík and William L. McBride, ed. *Calvin O. Schrag and the Task of Philosophy After Postmodernity*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2002 (February).

Tillich on line...

**The following works by or about Tillich are available online at [www.religion-online.org](http://www.religion-online.org) (Some of the works listed are out of print).**

1. "Beyond Religious Socialism" by Paul Tillich  
Tillich: I brought with me from Germany the "theology of crisis," the "philosophy of existence" and "religious socialism," and I tried to interpret these to my classes and readers. In all three of these fields—the theological, the philosophical and the political—my thinking has undergone changes, partly because of personal experiences and insights, partly because of the social and cultural transformations these years have witnessed.

2. "Existentialist Aspects of Modern Art" by Paul Tillich  
Existentialist art has a tremendous religious function, in visual art as well as in all other realms of art, namely, to rediscover the basic questions to which the Christian symbols are the answers in a way which is understandable to our time.

3. *My Search for Absolutes* by Paul Tillich  
**(ENTIRE BOOK)** A brief intellectual autobiography of the development of the thinking of Paul Tillich, whose lifelong search for truth, reality and the meaning of God lies at the very root of the theological revolution of his times.

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5. "Paul Tillich as Hero: An Interview with Rollo May" by Elliott Wright

Hannah Tillich leaves the impression Paulus was a prurient person trying to get as many women as possible into bed. This is a distortion of fact and, more seriously, a distortion of his character. Yet people want to hear and see the prurient.

6. "Paul Tillich's Gift of Understanding" by Lawton Posey

Tillich's theology revealed a human being involved in a human struggle to understand. It contained a concern with the person of Jesus, encouraged a new look at the church and challenged the preacher during the times when required to preach even when life seemed cruel and sometimes meaningless.

7. "The God of History" by Paul Tillich

Jahweh has proved to be the God of history therefore the god who is really God! Jahweh is the God of history, for he, through his prophets, has shown that he understands the meaning of history, that he knows the past and the future, the beginning and the end.

8. *The Interpretation of History* by Paul Tillich  
**(ENTIRE BOOK)** Published in English in 1936, these essays were written by Dr. Tillich in Germany between 1926 and 1933. The first chapter is a general introduction to Tillich's thought, a kind of biographical genesis. The remainder of the chapters deal with how we understand our historical existence, and introduce the English speaking student to many of Tillich's key concepts: the demonic, kairos and logos, the problem of being, understanding power and human existence, the relation of church to culture, and an interpretation of both history and eschatology from a Christian viewpoint.

9. *The Protestant Era* by Paul Tillich  
**(ENTIRE BOOK)** What is wrong with Christian civilization? Does Protestantism need a Reformation? This volume of essays, translated by James Luther Adams, constitutes a noteworthy contribution to American thought. The epoch now coming to an end has been largely supported by religious and humanist belief in a sort of automatic social harmony. But the conditions that made such a belief plausible and effective are now disappearing. The human manipulation of nature through technology and his

“use” of human beings as commodities have resulted in utilitarianism, objectivism, and widespread dehumanization. Many are tempted to flee for “security” to new forms of authoritarianism. A spiritual and social reformation is required. Tillich explains the Protestant principle—a restless, critical, and creative power—that is the measure of every religious and cultural reality.

**10. *The Religious Situation* by Paul Tillich**

**(ENTIRE BOOK)** In this classic written 1926, Dr. Tillich interprets the significance of the revolt against capitalist civilization. He believes that a new attitude is developing as a consequence of these revolutions which may be described in religious terms as an attitude of “belief-ful realism.” Religion for Tillich is “direction toward the Unconditioned.”

It is the reference in all of life to the ultimate source of meaning and to the ultimate ground of being.

**11. “The Right to Hope” by Paul Tillich**

In this sermon, the prominent theologian asks the question: Do we have a right to hope? He then affirms that we have a right to hope for ourselves, for others, and for all humankind.

**12. “Tillich’s Social Thought: New Perspectives” by Franklin Sherman**

Much of what Paul Tillich has to say is pertinent to any effort to relate Christian theology and ethics to the social problems of our times and embraced a form of socialism. But he showed a full appreciation of the danger, as seen in the Soviet example, of turning socialism into a form of totalitarianism.

**13. *Ultimate Concern—Tillich in Dialogue* by D. Mackenzie Brown**

**(ENTIRE BOOK)** Paul Tillich explains his religious and philosophical beliefs in small group conversations with scholars conversant with his writings in a spontaneous, simple language.

**14. “What Tillich Meant to Me” by Max L. Stackhouse**

Tillich could speak of emptiness and change and, by turning them inside out, find that the whirl had a structure and the void a heart.

A few names were inadvertently left off the Winter issue of members paying their 2001 dues and some have subsequently paid their dues. Many thanks. They are:

Young Ho Chun  
Robert Dwight  
Calvin Schrag  
Paul Carr  
Grace Cali

***Critical Social Theory: Prophetic Reason, Civil Society, and Christian Imagination*, by**

Gary M. Simpson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 178 pp.

**Reviewed by Guy B. Hammond**

Gary Simpson’s *Critical Social Theory* represents an attempt to show how the critical theory of the Frankfurt School “oriented around its communicative turn, can assist Christian theology to the retrieve the prophetic imagination” (x). To accomplish this, Simpson brings the perspective of critical theory, principally the early Max Horkheimer as modified by Jürgen Habermas, into dialogue with critical theology, principally the correlational theology of Paul Tillich. The Frankfurt School offered a twentieth century continuation of the critique of Enlightenment rationality found in Kant, Hegel, and Marx. Although Horkheimer in his later writings (along with Theodor Adorno) seems to arrive at the impasse of a totalistic critique of reason, Habermas continues the search for “a new understanding of reason permeated by time and history” (126). Tillich, for his part, argues for a theology that instead of bifurcating prophetic and rational criticism builds upon the reciprocal contributions of rational insight and prophetic depth. Simpson sees a convergence between Habermas’s proposals regarding “communicative reason” and “the anticipation of an unlimited communication community” (97) and a Tillichian prophetic pursuit of “a critical theory of reason coupled with an eschatological understanding of history” (126). In fleshing out this convergence, Simpson provides a number of illuminating insights. He clarifies the importance of Horkheimer’s break with positivistic sociology (social “facts” are ahistorical, 8-9), and with the bourgeois philosophy of history (that hypostasizes the atomistic individual, 15). And he shows how Horkheimer’s later disillusionment with reason contributed to the rise of postmodernist moral relativism. Also illuminating is Simpson’s

careful analysis of Tillich's "pivotal, programmatic essay" (35), "Protestantism as a Critical and Creative Principle" (1929), where he ferrets out the implied targets of some of Tillich's comments (e.g., "abstract" prophetic criticism is said to refer to "the Barthian school of dialectical theology") (39).

Simpson's extended discussion of Habermas could serve for theologians as an effective introduction to this still-developing philosophy. After explaining the earlier, and perhaps more familiar, Habermasian themes of the "lifeworld" and its "pathological colonization" (100) by the mega-systems (the economy and the administrative state), Simpson describes Habermas's later approach to "civil society" as "a two-sided threshold between the mega-systems of the state and the economy, on the one hand, and the lifeworld, on the other" (122). For Habermas, civil society is the social space where "normative resources for a more emancipatory and just deliberative democracy and for a more responsible stakeholder economy" (136) may arise.

Simpson sees in this conceptualization an avenue toward the revitalization of theological ethics and ecclesiology. Picking up on an admittedly brief reference in Tillich's essay (cited above) to the "congregation" as Protestantism's path beyond the individualistic "heroic personality" (48-49), Simpson visualizes congregations as "meeting places of private and public life" (144) where practical moral discourse can be carried out "without totalistic claims" (139). Even though we are immersed in a pluralistic era we need "communities of moral deliberation" (168, n31). Congregations can cultivate a vocation as "communicatively prophetic public companions" (144).

### **ONTOLOGY OF POWER IN NIEBUHR, MORGENTHAU AND TILlich**

**Ronald Stone**

Reinhold Niebuhr helped prepare the way for the acceptance of two German refugees with Teutonic overtones in their thought and speech. Paul Tillich would become the most important American systematic theologian and Hans J. Morgenthau the most important American theoretician of international relations. In my own writing, I have tried to unite the politics of realism with the practices of peacemaking. So, my peacemaking has been criticized by cynical realists and my politics of Christian

The author may be faulted for his rather vague and imprecise use of the key phrase, "the prophetic imagination" (used as an apparent equivalent of the Christian imagination, the communicative imagination, the theological imagination, the Protestant prophetic imagination, etc., at various points in the book). Though a Tillichian interpretation of the phrase is suggested (reason requires "an ontologically transcendent rootedness," 34), Simpson might have given more definition to his own usage. (For example, Walter Brueggemann, from whom Simpson borrows the phrase, stresses the freedom of the prophetic God, in contrast to the "static imperial religion of order and triumph," to give hope for an open future (cf. *The Prophetic Imagination* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 18-23). Simpson effectively carries forward Tillich's argument that rationality by itself lacks "ultimate seriousness," but he fails to achieve significant clarification of Tillich's further claim that "the form of grace is the presupposition of prophetic criticism" (Tillich quoted, 43). Tillich himself abandoned this convoluted language later; Simpson's efforts to glean useful insights from Tillich here are commendable, even though there are probably limits to the usefulness of Tillich's specific terminology.

It has sometimes been said that there is no Tillichian "school" of theology. Professor Simpson makes a strong case for the revitalization of Tillich's perspective through a correlation with one of the most forceful of contemporary philosophies, the critical theory of Jürgen Habermas. In so doing, he makes a valuable contribution to contemporary theological discussions.

realism by more idealistic peacemakers. It occurred to me that the exposure of the roots of these three philosophers in prophetic sources and ontology might strengthen the case for realistic peacemaking. It is hoped that the exposure of the roots will not kill the plant.

If the foreign policy of the American empire is to be guided by realism in the post-Soviet period, it is important that we be clear about its morality and philosophy. There are crude expressions of amoral and immoral realisms often associated with the names of Thucydides and Machiavelli that are heavily studied in American political science courses. There are also moral expressions of realism grounded in the Hebrew Bible (especially the proph-

ets), Christian political theory, and our humanistic sources derived from the above and reason which need emphasis in a time of immense American power.

The crudity of the present administration's use of realism is seen in the President's mangled use of the Serenity Prayer of Reinhold Niebuhr the week of the news of his daughters' beer problems hit the news. He was referring to the Democrats' rise to control in the U.S. Senate. "There are some things over which I have no control and some things I can influence," Mr. Bush said this morning as he sat in his office near the front of Air Force One. The plane was taking him back to Washington from Tampa, Florida, where he had been hammering nails into a house being build by Habitat for Humanity. "And I'm able to distinguish between the two." [*New York Times* (June 6, 2001)]

His prideful statement is the opposite of the humility represented in Niebuhr's Christian realist prayer.

### **The Morgenthau-Niebuhr-Tillich School**

The perspectives of Reinhold Niebuhr, Hans J. Morgenthau, and Paul Tillich, were developed in the conflicts of democracy with Nazism and Communism. While acknowledging their contextual limitations, what can we learn from them for the peacemaking tasks ahead? This chapter will synthesize their philosophies and present the synthesis as a recognizable school of thought. The argument assumes that although the 20<sup>th</sup> century needs of American foreign policy shaped their thought, at its deepest roots were images of prophetic realism from the Bible. Between the Bible and foreign policy, they explored many sources of thought, both Western and Eastern. Rather than dividing them into Jewish realism and Christian realism, this study joins them as prophetic realism

The recognition that prophetic realism is found within a long tradition of particular religious communities points to the validity of the language for those communities. There is no need to try to refute this language from narrow canons of linguistic positivism or recent social science. It has its own legitimacy represented in the nine steeples of churches I observe from my office window. It is the language of a particular community and of these public philosophers. Nor does the moral relativism of post-modernism threaten because the language is in reference to a witness to an absolute who is judge of

heaven and earth. The rejection of metanarratives represented by Jean-François Lyotard in *The Post-modern Condition* is simply another perspective of moral nihilism and irrelevance to international politics. The prophetic realists are persuaded not only of the reality of an absolute but also of the desirability of theological insights that Lyotard finds incredulous. Convinced of the reality of both religion and politics, the prophetic realists are hardly tempted to reduce life to a text.<sup>1</sup> The developments of ontology within the school have provided a philosophical basis to their reflections beyond their use of prophetic Biblical sources.

The Morgenthau-Niebuhr-Tillich perspective on international affairs has been important in the preparation of policy papers for several of our mainline church denominations. Yet, it has not been the only school of thought, and it is probably less influential in denominational and ecumenical councils than it was earlier. Liberation theologies and feminist perspectives have eroded the prophetic realist paradigms while both the national Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches have reduced their staffs and influence in international affairs.

Because Christianity was relatively non-political in its origins, it is always tempted to return to its first century origins and forget its Hebrew foundations. The churches are also tempted to become utopian because of utopianism's affinity with some strands of eschatology. As some of the churches—Catholic, Calvinist (including the United Church of Christ), Lutheran, and Methodist among others—are organized trans-nationally, they tend to tilt toward international organization that may obscure national power centers.

The Morgenthau-Niebuhr-Tillich School, while clear about its peacemaking and justice commitments, has presented them in the context of power struggles among nations. This has been helpful in formulating church policy in eight ways.

1. The ethics of international affairs are not determined by the practice of international affairs but found in philosophical and confessional sources of ethical wisdom.

2. The nations are important actors, but they are not gods, and the forms of governmental organizations vary from clans, tribes, nations, empires, federations, alliances, and international organizations.

3. While universal peace is not expected in history, many potential wars can be avoided; nuclear war or wars of mass human destruction must be avoided.

4. Political actors tend to corrupt political practice, but their roles are necessary and important, and the dangers of the corruption of power can be ameliorated.

5. The goals of foreign policies reflect the particular histories of the societies. In the case of the United States, the purposes of foreign policy include peace and justice as well as economic and strategic security. From the human rights wing of realism, particularly Jimmy Carter, Andrew Young, and John Bennett, the purposes also include the prudential promotion of human rights.

6. The doctrine from Paul Tillich of *kairos* has become important from the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. (1980) to South African *kairos* theology and Central American political theology.

7. Nazism and Communism required the responsible use of U.S. power, including force, and present crises still do, particularly for humanitarian rescue operations.

8. Finally, moving beyond their context and time, the ethics of sustainable human development strategies and the ethics of just peacemaking can be articulated in realist terms congruent with Christian ethics.

Rather than repeating what I have written earlier on Hans Morgenthau, Paul Tillich, and Reinhold Niebuhr, I have chosen to critique the work of Michael Doyle on realism. Michael W. Doyle's major book, *Ways of War and Peace*,<sup>2</sup> begins its close reading of theory with Thucydides. He mentions that he begins his international relations class with the same author. The part on realism is much longer than the parts on liberalism or socialism that are the three major types of perspectives in his book. The dominance of realist international relations theory is recognized, and he defends it from many of the charges leveled at it. The concluding part of the book entitled "Conscience and Power" is a phrase quoted directly from Reinhold Niebuhr. The concerns for the role of morality and religious movements in international relations are akin to Niebuhr's own probing of these issues. So what more could realists want? They would, I think, want to resist the too tight, typological method of Doyle. Reinhold Niebuhr was scornful of his brother H. Richard Niebuhr's placement of him in the Christ and culture in paradox motif in his definitive work *Christ and Culture*.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, I would protest against the label and type of fundamentalism for Machiavelli and Morgenthau in Doyle's work. A sympathetic reading of either will not reduce them to Waltz's "Image 1"<sup>4</sup>

which attributes war to the defects of human nature. Machiavelli was very conscious both of the nature of the state and of international anarchy. Morgenthau's pithy, bold writing, like Machiavelli's, allows him to be misinterpreted as focusing primarily on the psychological dimensions of the elite. But his theory is too rich to characterize it as Image 1. Doyle recognizes that they take aspects of Image 2, attributing war to defects in the state, and 3, emphasizing international anarchy, as well. Such recognition is inadequate, however, as he had before him the model of Thucydides' own "Complex Realism."<sup>5</sup> Why in an academic treatise label one of your most respected theorists a "fundamentalist?" The term fundamentalism arises from a protest of very conservative Presbyterians to the historical-critical method in scholarship as well as against modernism. This is a very strange term for scholarship to apply to a Renaissance thinker like Machiavelli, an American-modernist, exiled Jew like Morgenthau, or a liberal, existentialist theologian like Tillich.

It would be foolish to deny the importance of religious anthropology to Tillich, Morgenthau, or Niebuhr. They all regarded their anthropology as important to their political philosophy. It is equally important for clarity to note other important sources of their thought. There are unresolved tensions in their perspectives that would incline one to think of Doyle's terms of complex realism or pluralist theory instead of fundamentalist-realist theory.

Before returning to the center of this thesis, permit me to digress further into a critique of the typological structure of Doyle's argument. If realism is one type and socialism another, how are we to understand Reinhold Niebuhr who first writes in a realist vein "The Morality of Nations"<sup>6</sup> while a socialist? No one can deny Niebuhr's recognition as a realist, but Norman Thomas also recognized "Niebuhr being considerably to the left of me" while Niebuhr served as vice-president of the American Socialist party. The realism itself continued into the 1950s when he and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., worked together drafting the foreign policy positions of the liberal Americans for Democratic Action. Tillich's socialism was deeper and longer lasting than Niebuhr's and only in the *kairos* circle of revolutionary Berlin did it have utopian themes as the rest was characterized by his "faithful realism." At least in the complexity of the biblically based realism of two of our thinkers, the realist approach characterized both their socialism and their liberalism as these

concepts were experienced in North American politics.

Morgenthau's five references to Machiavelli in *Politics Among Nations*<sup>7</sup> include one which is affirmative of his insight, two which are negative and two which are neutral. The chapter on "Morality, Mores, and Law as Restraints of Power" stresses the reality of these restraints on power. It rejects the theories of Machiavelli and Hobbes and finds both biblical ethics and democratic constitutionalism restraining power drives. The greater potency of Locke and Augustine over the views of Machiavelli and Hobbes are affirmed. In *Truth and Power*,<sup>8</sup> an appreciation of Machiavelli's warnings to the weak of the dangers of depending on the powerful is balanced by two rejections of Machiavelli's morality and one neutral comment. The volume contains some of Morgenthau's strongest affirmations of Hebrew and Christian images of "wise and good rulers" as well as transcendent moral values. The case for Morgenthau's similarity to Machiavelli is defeated by Morgenthau's own meager references to him and rejection of his project at several points. On the other hand, all of the references to Thucydides in Morgenthau were positive. In Doyle's terms he belonged in the category of "Complex Realism" where Thucydides is the major example. Tillich ignored Machiavelli and Niebuhr's references to the "notorious realist" use the same quote about seeking the reality of politics. Elsewhere, he dismisses him as a cynic. The texts of the philosophers, Morgenthau, Tillich, and Niebuhr, reveal their essential agreement, some mutual dependence and fulsome praise of the other's thought.

In a tribute to Niebuhr, Morgenthau spoke of Niebuhr's contribution to political thought in five ideas all of which were near the center of Morgenthau's own thought. He then went on to say, "I have always considered Reinhold Niebuhr the greatest living political philosopher of America, perhaps the only creative political philosopher since Calhoun."<sup>9</sup> Eduard Heimann, who responded critically to Morgenthau's paper, also said:

I much admire the speech we have just heard by a man who has come to an alliance with Reinhold Niebuhr without being his pupil. Here are two movements, two ideas, moving closer and closer together until there is a kind of identification.<sup>10</sup>

Niebuhr did not respond to the more detailed critique of his work by Heimann, saying only:

I am not certain that anything which I might do to amend or explain the *position which Morgenthau and I have in common* could quiet the criticism of my old friend Eduard Heimann.<sup>11</sup>

One of the more interesting conversations between Morgenthau and Niebuhr was in the *War/Peace Report* in 1967. Here the two dialogued about morality and foreign policy, expressing their essential agreement. In response to the editors' attempt to propose a division between their thought, Niebuhr responded: "I wouldn't say that the views of Morgenthau and myself are 'somewhat different.' We basically have common ideas with certain peripheral differences."<sup>12</sup>

Tillich, at the same conference, indicated his general agreement with Niebuhr but criticized Niebuhr's critique of ontology. The following discussion suggested less distance between the two even here. So, why denote them as prophetic realists?

### Prophetic Realism

N. Benjamin Mollov's dissertation traces the documentation of the Jewish origins of some of Morgenthau's thought. He shows from Morgenthau's own writing his consciousness of himself as a persecuted Jew, as a Jewish refugee from Hitler, as a supporter of Jewish causes, and his particular connections with the Lubavitch Hasidic community at the end of his life. Recognizing that Morgenthau did not have a prominent Jewish mentor in the study of politics, human nature, and international relations, Mollov's work credits Niebuhr as the source of Morgenthau's biblical, or what I call prophetic, realism. Mollov quotes Morgenthau from a lecture to students at the University of Chicago: "A theologian like Reinhold Niebuhr has made the greatest contemporary contribution to the understanding of basic political problems" rather than a professor of political theory.<sup>13</sup> Mollov refers repeatedly to Morgenthau's advice to politicians as prophetic speaking of truth to power and finds Morgenthau himself identifying with Isaiah "Speaking in the Wilderness."

Seeing Morgenthau and Niebuhr as prophetic realists echoes Paul Tillich's use of the "Spirit of Judaism" and "Prophetism" in his 1933 book *The Socialist Decision*.<sup>14</sup> He could have used prophetic realism to describe the position which holds to the seriousness of divine judgment, the reality of moral principles, the contingency of history, the recognition of sin, historical catastrophes, human opportunity for avoiding political destruction, newness in

history, and hope for humanity in the face of political failure and social collapse. Tillich described his own position challenging Hitler directly in the name of religion as religious realism. No one should claim the title of prophet for himself/herself. But, there is a recognizable position here and enough continuity with Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Amos (Niebuhr's favorite prophet) to recognize the two German refugees and Niebuhr, their German-American friend, as prophetic realists. Furthermore, the term prophetic realism is true of most of their whole careers whereas the categories of Doyle of liberal or socialist theory are representative of only contingent aspects of their political thought. Jewish realism and Christian realism, both grounded in the prophetic heritage, are very similar. The thinkers are distinguished more by their prayers than by the philosophical structure of their thought about international politics. The recent appearance of one of Niebuhr's prayers in a prayer book of Reformed Judaism nuances even this posited difference to a minor one.

Max Weber connects the term prophet in a sociological understanding with the rise of empires, the proclamation of moral judgment, the bearing of personal charisma, the sense of a meaningful world, and particularly with international politics. "Their primary concern was with foreign politics, chiefly because it constituted the theater of their god's activity."<sup>15</sup> Later he wrote:

Hebrew prophecy was completely oriented to a relationship with the great political powers of the time, the great kings, who as the rods of God's wrath first destroy Israel and then, as a consequence of divine intervention, permit Israelites to return from the Exile to their own land.<sup>16</sup>

While it may be Niebuhr and Tillich who most closely resemble the type, I would include Morgenthau of the Vietnam War years as well. Further pushing of this theme of prophetic realism as understood by Max Weber would have to deal with the study of Weber and the appreciation of him by both Niebuhr and Morgenthau.

Another break with Machiavelli of the prophetic realists is that while they contended for their views, they did not pursue political power for themselves. George Liska finds Morgenthau's antithesis in Machiavelli. Morgenthau's liberal values meant that as a commentator he could not degenerate into *realpolitik*. He was interested in speaking truth and not fawning upon the prince for power. He knew the rulers would use power and he explained its intricacies,

but its pursuit was not good in itself. Without mentioning it, Liska captures the tension the title of Morgenthau's book of 1960-1970 essays, *Truth and Power*, and understands his distrust of power.

The distrust of power, fraught with the tendency to repudiate it under stress, comes through in Morgenthau's Niebuhrian (and Augustinian?) identification of the drive for power with sinful lust—with man's (sic) fall from grace into depravity.<sup>17</sup> So in commenting on his own lack of political ambition he said:

And by no means am I sorry about this lack of political activity in my life. It has simply been a part of my whole personality to be theoretically interested in power but not personally so.<sup>18</sup>

### Prophetic Realist Contribution

The prophetic realist contribution has been to try and make the politics among nations work better. They have believed that these politics represent both struggle and cooperation. Both the struggle and cooperation reflect the tendency among humans towards egoism and the preference for their own families and tribes. They have not written simply descriptively, they have written to persuade. They have wanted to persuade an empire tempted by swings toward isolationism, imperialism, moralism, Manichaenism, and materialism to patiently conduct its affairs diplomatically and persistently in a manner of broadly conceived national interest and national restraint. In my reading, Tillich, Morgenthau, and Niebuhr do not escape from trying to reform United States policy; they provide a perspective on that policy. The perspective is in terms of a philosophy of history and a philosophy of humanity that can be regarded as a biblical and Augustinian expression of liberal ideals under conditions of international conflict.

Prophetic realism tends to be rather eclectic in its usage of the history of ideas. While some of Niebuhr's ideas can be traced to Augustine, Kant, Marx, and James, his synthesis is his own. Tillich criticized Niebuhr for his overly sharp "no's" to many philosophers. Tillich thought his own dialectical method appreciated the philosophical ideas in their own time better than did Niebuhr's comparative method. One can find elements of Aristotle, Kant, Nietzsche, Niebuhr, and others in Morgenthau's thought. But, Morgenthau's fashioning of all of this into his own theory of international politics is, I think, a relatively unique contribution. One must be

particularly careful in the American context to avoid attributing direct, decisive dependence on any of the European theorists who seemed to pursue power amorally. Niebuhr is an ethicist, after all. In *Politics Among Nations*, in addition to dismissing Machiavelli, Morgenthau leveled a devastating blow to those who advocated pursuing power without regard to morality by grouping Nietzsche among the failures along with Mussolini and Hitler. There could have been no more damning of a philosopher in 1948 than the association with Mussolini and Hitler, as the U.S.A. had just fought them to the death. The recognition that international politics was not ethics preserved both fields and permitted a creative, dialectical relationship between the two.

Niebuhr expressed in his journal his sense of Morgenthau's accomplishment in his first book.

The consequence of the element of contingency in the realm of history and of the relativity in the observers of history makes it impossible to reduce the stuff of history to pure rationality. For this reason history will remain a realm of contending social forces, and these forces will embody power and use power. Dr. Morgenthau shows very clearly why it is vain to hope for the gradual elimination of the moral ambiguity of politics through historic development. He contends that every moral action is more ambiguous than the abstract analysis of a moral action and that a political action is doubly ambiguous, for it involves the power impulses of a group. The general thesis is one which is not unfamiliar to readers of this journal. The book should have a wider acclaim than it will probably get.<sup>19</sup>

When Morgenthau listed Niebuhr's contribution, he summarized it as the rediscovery of political man.<sup>20</sup> He meant that to a degree the political sphere was autonomous, that the lust for power characterized human political history and human nature, that the lust for power and Christian morality were not reconcilable, that ideology distorted political understanding, and that political history is not scientifically reducible to patterns because of its contingencies. His tribute to Niebuhr reflects Morgenthau's own understanding formulated in Part I of *Politics Among Nations*.<sup>21</sup>

All three supported actively the establishment and defense of Israel consistently. All three urged clarity in U.S. purposes, defense of Europe, and adjustments in disputes with the Soviet Union. Niebuhr and Morgenthau, along with John Bennett, led the realist criticism of U.S. Vietnam policy under John-

son (Tillich died in 1965). Tillich and Niebuhr both condemned the atomic bombing of Japan and argued against defending Berlin with nuclear weapons in the 1960's. Tillich's call to resist reliance upon nuclear weapons was more strident than Morgenthau's and Niebuhr's more developed essays on the subject urging restraint and diplomatic efforts to insure their non-use.

All three were critical of John Foster Dulles's moralism and legalism stressing the dynamic shifts in an ever-changing world political scene. All three were critically supportive of the UN with Morgenthau being the most critical while Niebuhr served as a delegate to UNESCO for a brief time before his 1952 stroke. Utopian plans for world government or universal peace proposals, whether religious or secular, were debunked at different times by all three.

### Ontology of Love, Power, and Justice

The seizure of the German government by Adolph Hitler in 1932 forced our thinkers to live their lifetimes in a time of war. Unity and reconciliation of peoples would remain a hope, but disunity and war or potential war was the reality. Their times fit Hobbes's description as a state of war inasmuch as he said that a rainy season did not mean continual rain but only the inclination to rain, so their time was a state of war. Depending upon prophetic religion, they were inclined to expect war and destruction, but their ontologies also inclined them towards the expectation of conflict.

Langdon Gilkey's book, *On Niebuhr*, makes the case that it is Niebuhr's ontology upon which his realism rests. According to Gilkey, Niebuhr accepted the modern ontology "of radical temporality, of change of fundamental forms, of contingency, relativity, transience, and autonomy in the light of creation, sin, and grace, of creativity, anxiety, self-concern, and self-deception rescued by divine judgment and mercy."<sup>22</sup> While rejecting the modern myths of the progress of liberalism or the revolution of communism, he viewed the world biblically according to his interpretation, with a transcendent God related to the world in grace and judgment.<sup>23</sup>

Niebuhr's theology represents, therefore, a correlation, if ever there was one, between a modern ontology and Biblical symbols, a correlation in which each side reshapes the other and makes possible a Christian existence within the precarious terms of modern life.<sup>24</sup>

Niebuhr did not use either *ontology* or *correlation* as Gilkey did in their Tillichian meaning, but Gilkey is persuasive in his Tillichian interpretation of Niebuhr. Gilkey gives Niebuhr credit for protecting the distance between God and humanity and the freedom of humanity,<sup>25</sup> noting that Tillich's ontology is less successful in expressing the transcendence of God. Well, of course, even if we use ontology to describe Niebuhr's systematic insights, he remains less mystical and more ethical in the structure of his theology than Tillich. Gilkey's study of Niebuhr is especially good in showing how much philosophy Niebuhr used even if it was not the ontology of Tillich. Gilkey records: "This is a theology of catastrophe, nemesis, and renewal in history, not one of progress."<sup>26</sup> To a large degree, Tillich shared this prophetic reading of history. But his ontology—the desire to understand being overcoming estrangement—led him to stress the beneficial as well as the negative side of the concept of utopia, and to see positive possibilities in the dialectics of history (the *karios*), which were greater than those seen by Niebuhr.

Likewise, Tillich's understanding of love as the drive for reunion contrasts with Niebuhr's understanding of love as a duty of seeking the other's good. So justice as a form which allows for the reunion of being contrasts with justice as rules by which the good of people in society are protected in Niebuhr. Niebuhr has a vision of the whole, but the dialectics of yes and no are stressed more than in Tillich's ontology which pushes toward unity. However, just as one is inclined to give Niebuhr the nod of approval for political discourse and confine Tillich's *Love, Power and Justice* to the philosophy classroom, Hans Morgenthau is seen referring to Tillich's ontology.

Morgenthau's essay on love and power quotes Tillich, but he does not stay with Tillich. He notes that Tillich needs the term justice in his reconciliation of power and love. But Morgenthau does not want reconciliation. For Morgenthau, power is the psychological relationship by which one imposes one's will on another. "Love is reunion through spontaneous mutuality, power seeks to create a union through unilateral imposition."<sup>27</sup> Both, for Morgenthau, arise from the ultimate loneliness of the human being that needs community. The imperial political leaders he discussed wanted love but despaired of achieving it and pursued the never-ending quest for power. Morgenthau's pessimism about what can be achieved in politics develops naturally

out of his Jewish background and Old Testament international politics, but it is reinforced by his rather bleak ontology. We come into the world needing others but when these relations do not develop well, we seek power but that is rather futile and finally—at least in the 1962 essay—we die alone after peopling the heavens and the next world with imaginary companions to provide love. In the same period, he is writing about the fear of nuclear war denying meaning to death and about President Kennedy's inevitable need to make choices out of ignorance which very likely will have tragic outcomes. The 1962 writing in *Commentary* is extraordinarily bleak for Morgenthau, but this note of tragedy in the international political situation, grounded in his ontology, is a perpetual theme. Like Niebuhr, he rejects the optimism of both Communism and Liberalism; but his own accommodationist foreign policy is more pessimistic than Niebuhr's or Tillich's.

From conversations with both James Muilenberg and Reinhold Niebuhr, I have always thought both of them felt Paul Tillich's *Biblical Religion and Ultimate Reality* was directed at their respective methodologies. Reinhold Niebuhr made the difference between himself and Tillich's ontology pretty clear in his review of the volume. Niebuhr thought that if ontology was considered as "everything which concerns being" there would not be any inevitable conflict between philosophy and the Biblical ways of thinking about God. He worried that if ontology was too narrowly pursued as a "science of being," it might be overly rational in its exclusion of symbols or poetic thinking and thereby reduce the "transcendence" of both the divine and the human.<sup>28</sup> For Niebuhr, the drama of human life has elements of both meaning and meaningfulness and religion ought not try to subsume the whole drama to an ontological system of meaning. He wanted to rely more on glimpses of love in human relations and the symbol of the cross than upon a completely rational system. The differences between Niebuhr and Tillich were more clear after World War II in the late 1950's and 1960's when Tillich reduced his political writing and began to explicate his system upon his ontology. Niebuhr, after the war, wrote less systematically in theology but published more on international politics [see: *The Structure of Nations and Empires* (1959) and *The Democratic Experience* (1969)]. Roger Shinn has recorded that this divergence was at first more clear to students who were listening to and reading the early drafts of Tillich's system than it was to Niebuhr.

Niebuhr's thought on the relationship between love and power is not ontological even if Gilkey is correct that his Biblical faith conceptions compose an ontology. Love is the gracious love of God or agape and human expressions of it are approximations of agape, but under the conditions of sin, love is the obligation to treat the neighbor as the self or to take care of the neighbor's real needs. It is not the sharp dualism of a Nygren, but it is love under conditions of the divine and under conditions of human sin. Life is a struggle of lives that under sin often take the form of struggles over power, which is most often understood as control over others. But, Niebuhr does not carefully define power. It seems to me that it is understandable in the different contexts in which he uses it. In economics and politics, it inevitably is exercised within sin and the most just resolutions of the conflicts occur when power as capacities to influence are roughly equally balanced among contending parties.

### The Concept of Power

There are three basic attitudes toward the concept of power in Niebuhr's political philosophy. Power is, in one sense, morally neutral. It is simply the vitality of human life and is almost synonymous with energy. In this sense, Niebuhr uses the balance of power to mean the state of equilibrium that permits the vitalities of social forces to be expressed without annulling any one of the forces.<sup>29</sup> The second use of power regards it as an outgrowth of man's pride and his false attempts to gain security by dominating other men.<sup>30</sup> This use of power equates it with the capacity to impose one's will upon others<sup>31</sup> and has led Niebuhr frequently to equate power with force. The third major use of the term *power* is to treat it as a necessary expression of social organization and cohesion.<sup>32</sup> Given man's nature, an organizing power is needed to prevent social chaos. In this sense, power has a more positive moral connotation than in the first two uses. Depending upon the particular context, power may be regarded by Niebuhr as morally neutral, negative, or positive.

Not only its moral connotations, but the meaning of power varies in Niebuhr's writing with the context. The importance of the term *power* to his political thought, however, requires that the central meaning of the term be understood. Niebuhr characteristically states that "the contest of power...is the heart of political life."<sup>33</sup> In this sense, which is fundamental

to Niebuhr's political thought, power seems to be the capacity to realize one's purposes, through either authority or force. The struggle, which characterizes politics, is for control of the institutions and forces that permit one to realize one's goals. It is not always clear in Niebuhr's writing that his definition of power includes the goal factor; often it appears that he is thinking only of the control of the institutions or the forces. But the goal factor, a necessary ingredient for an adequate definition of power, is presupposed in Niebuhr's thought by his doctrine of man, which insists that every political self has certain interests that he is attempting to maximize.

All communities are, in Niebuhr's thought, representative of a balance of power. That is, mankind covertly lives in a state of anarchy with each individual pursuing his own interests and trying to achieve a security that he cannot attain.<sup>34</sup> Social peace or the order of any community represents an achievement of order though the peace is never final. The peace achieved is not "the peace of God," but a mere armistice.<sup>35</sup> The armistice is based upon the balance of power, i.e., some adjustment and accommodation of interest have been agreed upon by the major contending forces. The adjustment made is dependent upon the relative power of the contending groups. All such adjustments are regarded as tentative, and "the principle of the balance of power is always pregnant with the possibility of anarchy."<sup>36</sup>

Though the balance of power does not play as significant a role in Niebuhr's thought about American foreign policy as it does in the thought of Morgenthau,<sup>37</sup> its role is very significant. The balance of power in the domestic sphere represents the achievement of order that is enforced by the authority and force of the dominant group. In the international sphere, the balance of power represents an accommodation of interests of nations relative to their power that is sufficient to prevent major wars. The international sphere lacks the organization that can coerce submission and require that the interests of the system be protected. The maintenance of a tolerable degree of order in international relations therefore devolves upon the major countries. They must exercise their responsibilities for the order of the world while attempting to refrain from excessively exploiting their advantaged position.

During World War II, Niebuhr's writing on the reconstruction of the postwar would emphasize the relationship between America's responsible assumption of a position of power and the need to overcome anarchy. The world must find a way of avoiding

complete anarchy in its international life; and America must find a way of using its great power responsibly. These two needs are organically related; for the world problem cannot be solved if America does not accept its full share of responsibility in solving it.<sup>38</sup>

The old balance of power had been destroyed by the two world wars; the choice now was between a new balance or continued anarchy. Throughout the war, Niebuhr pleaded with his reading public to accept the responsibilities that the United States' new role gave her.<sup>39</sup> He recognized that to assume the task of shaping a new world order would expose the country to the charge of imperialism. He counseled against both isolationism and imperialism<sup>40</sup> in the postwar period, but he insisted that a new balance of power required active United States involvement. Even while counseling the United States to accept its role as a world power, Niebuhr saw the dangers of pride.

It is intolerable to imagine an America so powerful that we are held responsible for vast historical events in every part of the globe beyond our knowledge or contriving. Nothing is more dangerous to a powerful nation than the temptation to obscure the limits of its power.<sup>41</sup>

In the postwar world, he saw a bipolar balance develop which was secured by the balance of nuclear terror. His primary focus in international politics was how this balance was influenced by events. The balance differed from previous balances in three respects: it was worldwide, it was bipolar, and it was enforced by nuclear terror. The responsibilities of the United States left it no retreat from maintaining this new type of balance. The security of the United States depended upon its maintenance, but there was no final assurance that his new balance of power was stable.

Hans J. Morgenthau's *magnum opus*, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, brings the struggle for power into the subtitle and the theme of power continues throughout the analysis of international politics. The struggle for power or the capacity to dominate another's mind and actions is rooted in human nature for Morgenthau, and it is inevitable. Not all relations among nations are political, but when they are political in Morgenthau's sense, they involve power as "man's control over the minds and actions of other men."<sup>42</sup> Power derives from expectation of benefits, fear, and love or respect. Power is different from force and there are distinctions between "usable and unusable power"

and "legitimate and illegitimate power."<sup>43</sup> Much of the rest of the book analyzes various uses of power and strategies of balancing power and the quest for peace. The inevitability of the power struggles inclines Morgenthau to dismiss plans or schemes for peace which presuppose ending the power struggle and toward accommodationist and diplomatic maintenance of the balancing of power. I have no problem regarding Morgenthau's study as a profound philosophy of international politics for the guidance of U.S. foreign policy. Calling it an ontology would be a stretch, though it has some ontological tendencies which remain undeveloped. The role of God in the book seems to be restricted to that of "the judgment of God, inscrutable to the human mind."<sup>44</sup> The conviction that the will of God "is always on one's side"<sup>45</sup> of the conflict, he regards as blasphemous. The hidden ontology is that of God as judge and humanity as practicing the sin of the struggle for power. The morality of Morgenthau remains mainly a critique of that which he finds inevitable. Such a morality can be regarded as a prophetic morality especially if the hopeful conclusions to most of the prophetic books of the Bible are dismissed as editorial additions. Still, if the definition of metaphysics or ontology is seen in a meager sense as Adrian Thatcher uses it, Morgenthau's politics might be said to have an ontological pattern.

Metaphysics does construct patterns according to which we see ourselves and our world in a particular light, but it does so in the knowledge that there is an ontological reality which gives itself to the pattern and upon which even the pattern itself depends.<sup>46</sup>

Of the three realists, the one with the most developed ontology was the one who foresaw, even in 1954, the emergence of *one* super power "through liberal methods and democratic forms."<sup>47</sup> He could not foresee a world state for that required a spiritual unity that the world lacked. Possibly continental federations would emerge, but he seemed less hopeful of these in 1954 than he had been in World War II. He was cautious but in his ontology of love, power, and justice, he was driven toward "the rise of one power structure,"<sup>48</sup> after that perhaps, its ways could become universal. But even then power struggles, disintegration, and revolution could tear apart the synthesis. To the question: "Can mankind never become as a whole a structure of power and a source of universal justice?" he was forced to say the analysis leaves history and flies to the relationship of love, power, and justice to the ultimate.<sup>49</sup>

The break up of the Soviet Union has decreased the role of federation in world politics, while the European federating tendencies increases the influence of federation. The realists seem correct in the impossibility of the world state in the policy relevant future. Of the three, only Tillich foresaw the emerging possible lone superpower role of the U.S.A. under democratic forms. Perhaps after that era, “[t]he law and the justice and the uniting love which are embodied in this power will become the universal power of mankind.”<sup>50</sup> Such a unity would call for resistance, and not be permanent. His other writings on *The World Situation*,<sup>51</sup> however, were more pessimistic because there he had seen the democratic-market, political-economy emerging from the Leviathan of modern capitalism which had to be resisted. Capitalism represented the controlling, technological will of the bourgeoisie that disrupted community, trivialized religion, and dominated the churches. Tillich was wiser than Morgenthau in these post-war writings as he refused, as Morgenthau’s system did, to disentangle economics from politics. His actual political influence decreased with the break up of “The Council for a Democratic Germany” while Morgenthau’s non-economic politics increased and Niebuhr’s political, mixed-economy political ethics gained favor. Niebuhr and Morgenthau kept giving advice to political leaders who would listen, while Tillich wrote more for the religious, cultural, and psychological leaders who would listen. The disruption of Germany into East and West was too much, and he could not say much about practical politics beyond that, though he could make it clear that temporary retreat was better than first use of nuclear weapons to defend either Berlin or West Germany. His last political essay, grounded in the prophetic tradition of scripture, in the love and justice imperatives of Protestantism, and referenced to the categorical imperatives of Immanuel Kant’s humanism, criticized the exclusiveness and utopianism of the papal encyclical *Pacem in Terris*. Tillich, as he affirms realism twice in the essay, hopes for “partial victories over the forces of evil in a particular moment of time.”<sup>52</sup>

Probably in the end, it is the prophetic tradition that unites the three at the deepest level despite the possibility of recognizing ontology in Niebuhr and even in Morgenthau. In Tillich’s most passionate political writing,<sup>53</sup> he does not mention ontology or rush to generalize and unify. In the speeches against the Third Reich (1942-1944),<sup>54</sup> he identifies with the prophets of disaster. Jeremiah is discussed exten-

sively. The anti-nationalism of Judaism is seen as prophetic. The necessity to speak truth and judgment rings throughout the speeches. At the end, he promises hope to Germany but only on the other side of defeat. Germany’s punishment at the hand of the allies is seen as God’s judgment and her hope is in the rediscovery of her Christian-Judaic-humanistic sources.

<sup>1</sup> See Robert K. Garcia, “Apologizing to the Post-modernist,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary Struggle* XXII, no. 2 (2000), 1–19.

<sup>2</sup> Michael W. Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951), 183.

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth M. Waltz, *Man, The State of War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), 16–41.

<sup>5</sup> Doyle, 49–52.

<sup>6</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1932), 83–112.

<sup>7</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1967).

<sup>8</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Truth and Power* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1970).

<sup>9</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, “The Influence of Reinhold Niebuhr in American Political Life and Thought,” in Harold R. Landon, *Reinhold Niebuhr: A Prophetic Voice in Our Time* (Greenwich: The Seabury Press, 1962), 109.

<sup>10</sup> Eduard Heimann, *Ibid.*, 111–112. Emphasis added.

<sup>11</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *Ibid.*, 122. Emphasis added.

<sup>12</sup> “The Ethics of War and Peace in the Nuclear Age,” in *War/Peace Report* 7 (February 1967), 3.

<sup>13</sup> M. Benjamin Mallov, *The Jewish Aspect of the Life and Work of Hans J. Morgenthau* (unpublished dissertation, Bar-Ilan University, 1995), 103.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Tillich, *The Socialist Decision* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 20–26.

<sup>15</sup> Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 51.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 58

<sup>17</sup> George Liska, “Morgenthau vs. Machiavelli,” in Kenneth Thompson and Robert J. Myers, eds., *Truth and Tragedy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Press, 1977).

<sup>18</sup> Hans Morgenthau in “Bernard Johnson’s Interview with Hans J. Morgenthau,” in *Ibid.*, 386.

<sup>19</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, “Hans J. Morgenthau: Scientific Man vs. Power Politics,” in Charles C. Brown, ed., *A*

*Reinhold Niebuhr Reader* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992), 147.

<sup>20</sup> Morgenthau in Landon, ed., 99–104.

<sup>21</sup> Morgenthau, *Politics*, 3–22.

<sup>22</sup> Langdon Gilkey, *On Niebuhr* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 248.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>27</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, “Love and Power,” *Commentary* (March, 1962), 248.

<sup>28</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, “Review of Paul Tillich *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality*,” in Brown, ed., 157.

<sup>29</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1943), 257–58, 265. The text from footnotes 29–41 is an edited version of Ronald Stone, *Reinhold Niebuhr, Prophet to Politicians* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), 178–180.

<sup>30</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1941), 192.

<sup>31</sup> Niebuhr, *Nature*, vol. 2, 258.

<sup>32</sup> E.g., Reinhold Niebuhr, *Christianity and Power Politics* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1940), 123.

<sup>33</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, “Leaves from the Notebook of War-Bound American,” *The Christian Century* LVI (November 15, 1939): 1405.

<sup>34</sup> Niebuhr, *Moral Man*, 19.

<sup>35</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *Discerning the Signs of the Times* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1946), 187.

<sup>36</sup> Niebuhr, *Nature*, vol. 2, 258.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 161–218.

<sup>38</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, “American Power and World Responsibility,” *Christianity and Crisis* III (April 5, 1943), 2.

<sup>39</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, “Power and Justice,” *Christianity and Society* VIII (Winter 1942), 10.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, “The Limits of American Power,” *Christianity and Society* VII (Winter 1942), 5.

<sup>42</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, Brief Edition (Boston: McGraw Hill, 1985), 30.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 15

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>46</sup> Adrain Thatcher, *The Ontology of Paul Tillich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 176.

<sup>47</sup> Paul Tillich, *Love, Power and Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 105.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Paul Tillich, in *Theology of Peace*, edited with an introduction by Ronald Stone (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990), 150–151.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>53</sup> Paul Tillich, *Against the Third Reich: War Time Speeches, 1942–1944*, edited by Ronald Stone and Lon Weaver (Louisville: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1999).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

**PAUL TILlich AND THE POST-MODERN  
DEBATE ON CULTURE**

**Peter Haigis**

Theology has learned from Paul Tillich to conceive culture as an original expression of the religious depth of reality. Therefore, theology should integrate culture in the explications of dogmatic concepts like revelation, God, grace, and the like. I do not want to examine in detail the way Tillich himself carries out this task. Even the results Tillich achieves in his work I want to push aside. More interesting seems to be the problem that Tillich's project actually arose in the face of a debate on culture that may be dismissed today as anachronistic. The main problem Tillich treats in his programmatic essay on "The Idea of a Theology of Culture" (1919) is the painful conflict between Christian faith based on dogmatic traditions and modern thinking considered to have outgrown its religious past. Obviously, the background of Tillich's theological sketch is the typically modern disengagement of rational spheres like science, morals, or art from each other and their independence from a leading metaphysical or ethical theory. But Tillich is also motivated by an intellectual suffering from this situation. In contrast to this, the situation of "postmodernity" is signified by—to say it briefly—two aspects: the situation of rational disengagement has been replaced by a radical differentiation and pluralization, and furthermore this situation has been interpreted not as a problem which may cause suffering, but as a piece of luck which has to be celebrated. So the "postmodern" debate on culture seems little consistent with a theology of culture as Tillich worked it out. Or, in other words: Tillich's theology of culture seems to be not very helpful to meet the actual challenges of culture for a Protestant theology.<sup>1</sup>

My introductory remarks are based to be sure on two aspects still unproved: first what is meant exactly by the term "postmodern," and second why should such a cultural diagnosis be regarded as important? I will take up these questions in a first section (I). Afterwards I want to present Tillich's concept of culture (II). A third section will lead us into a critical discussion of the "postmodern" theory of culture (III). Then I will return to Tillich's theology of culture to interpret his project in a way (IV) that opens it for the contemporary debate on culture and some standards of "postmodern" thinking (V).

## I. The Postmodern View of Culture

What is meant by "postmodern"? I use this concept in a double way. On the one hand, it signifies a certain style of thinking that is distinguished by several aspects from another style of thinking often called "modern." On the other hand the term "postmodern" can be used as an attribute of a specific cultural and social situation which supersedes the "modern" situation. Following the history of the concept "postmodern" we arrive at the result that it was used first to describe cultural esthetic phenomena in literature, the arts and architecture, then it became a category for a specific social state and at last we can see it used as a slogan for a specific philosophical program.<sup>2</sup> It is important to see that the term "postmodern," in any case, functions as a concept of reflection. That means it must be considered as a theoretical construction which is defined by its relation to other comparative theoretical constructions. Everyone who wants to designate a work of literature or arts, a building, a picture-movie, or anything else as "postmodern" has to name another contrasting category plus some criteria to classify those phenomena as "postmodern" and not, for example, "modern."

The history of the concept "postmodern" shows that it is easier to characterize a way of thinking by this way than to describe esthetical or concrete phenomena as "postmodern." Perhaps it may be possible to designate the turn away from the "Bauhaus" architecture as "postmodern." But could we say that about the paintings of the "Neue Wilde" which link up with classical-modern expressionism?<sup>3</sup> Or where are the origins of "postmodern" literature? In de Sade or Jorge Luis Borges? In Samuel Beckett's work or that of James Joyce? I won't take up these discussions of the experts here. Anyhow, the most elaborated application of the term "postmodern" we can find in the philosophical or sociological discussion. Here it is used in a programmatic or affirmative sense.

The category "postmodern" is often defined with respect to the term "modern." In such explanations, "modern" means the signature of a way of thinking or acting which is obliged to a technical, economic, or esthetical rationality, while "postmodern" thinking is characterized by the uneasiness with this rationality. In its uneasiness, it is similar to a "premodern" attitude with its ideal of conservative values on the one side and to an "anti-modern" attack with some atavistic affect on the other.<sup>5</sup> But "pre-

modernism” remains in traditional ideals and “anti-modernism” tries to destroy instrumental reason by irrationality. Moreover “postmodernism” classifies “modernity” as a project which has failed its goal and now has to be overcome. In the view of postmodernism, modernity is just another chapter of the intellectual history—it is another ideological figure in the waxworks show of thinking. (Unfortunately, I must refrain here from examining whether postmodernity actually is one moment within the dialectics of modernity or a project really objecting to modernity.)

I want to enumerate five aspects to characterize postmodern thinking or a situation which may be diagnosed as postmodern (without any claim for completeness):

The end of the great meta-narratives

The re-discovery and defense of individuality

The openness for the experiences of difference

The denial of any conception of totality or unity

The affirmation and promotion of a consequent pluralism.

I will describe these aspects briefly.

**1.** After the modern supersession of the impressive metaphysical complex of ideas grown up from the soil of Christianity, modern thinking was forced to replace that complex with peculiar ideals in order to bundle the cultural efforts of an epoch. During the Age of Enlightenment, this ideal was the emancipation of man and mankind; in capitalism it was the satisfaction of all needs by means of a maximum of capital and consumption; in Marxism it was the utopian view of a society in which all differences between classes are leveled out. According to Lyotard, all these meta-narratives have lost their credibility. Today we arrived at a situation in which a new ideal cannot neither be developed nor enforced in such a way.<sup>6</sup>

**2.** Already romanticism defended the originality, the legitimacy, and the superiority of the individual against an early modernistic rationalism. In postmodern tendencies we can find “a desire for the rescue of the individual: a return of romanticism.”<sup>7</sup> Against every social process of making individual life uniform, the main task is to proclaim the independence and singularity of every human way of life.

**3.** The experience of otherness respective of the other must not be considered as a problem, but as a chance. A conflict should not be avoided, but rather should be welcomed. The origin of all things is their heterogeneity. The old philosophical discussion be-

tween Parmenides and Heraclitus has been decided now in the age of postmodernity in favor of the latter: “War is the father of all things.” Lyotard underlines a fundamental incommensurability. Homogeneity must be understood as the product of a creation of uniformity that exterminates the peculiarities of different individuals.

**4.** The previous aspect leads us consequently to the refusal of all strategies that are based on claims for totality and unity. These claims result politically in totalitarianism and in an enforced coordination. So it seems to be a kind of rescue, if they remain unredeemed. They will fail a reality that actually is too complex. Each consensus is a sacrifice of their own profile and threatens to become a dictate of conformity.

**5.** Postmodern thinking is linked with a high evaluation of plurality. Plurality should not only be cared for and protected, but also be promoted and carried on. It is the basic structure of our reality, and therefore it is our actual challenge to create a consequent pluralism that does not give up plurality in favor of unity, but rather gives up unity in favor of plurality. Not just an attitude of tolerance, but the attitude of full acceptance of different styles of living, thinking, and believing is demanded. “Modern tolerance towards others is surpassed by the postmodern acceptance of the different.”<sup>8</sup>

Now my second question: Should this postmodern diagnosis be considered as important? I want to stress the difference between importance and plausibility. The plausibility of the postmodern diagnosis and the conceptual tools upon which this diagnosis is based I will take up a little bit later (section III). Here it will do to summarize that the general philosophical debate on culture in the last twenty years has often realized postmodern aspects without reflecting them explicitly or even legitimating them theoretically. The aspects I listed above have become evidential arguments in many actual discussions about a contemporary theory of culture. If theology should participate in that discussion, it can't ignore any longer the roots which are grounded in a criticism of modernity often called postmodern.

Concluding this section, we can say that in the postmodern debate on culture our cultural reality is seen as structured in a plural and divergent way. Moreover, the theoretical discussion about culture itself is an open process that often refuses normative definitions. Such definitions would be considered as one-sided claims of creating uniformity with the tendency and the intention to coordinate diverse cul-

tural phenomena or to extinguish them as insignificant. For postmodern thinkers it is impossible to evaluate single cultural entities in a wider context. That would require a general taxonomy of cultural values, which actually is just as implausible as the great meta-narrations. Each cultural phenomenon, each form of realizing life, has to be considered as being fully autonomous and intrinsically valid, i.e. it may be evaluated only by reference to internal aspects. In contrast, a normative theory of culture is the result of a normative concept of culture that grows out from a single point of view external to the plurality of diverse cultural phenomena. Each normative concept of culture is the product of a specific cultural process. Therefore, it is an attack on the independence of each cultural phenomenon that is foreign to that point of view. In a historical perspective, the dominance of European culture is an example of such an attitude. Obviously, this postmodern interpretation of our cultural context entails many problems for each attempt to compare cultural theories, if such a comparison should not be restricted to a pure descriptive enumeration of cultural differences.

## II. Tillich's Concept of Culture<sup>1</sup>

What is meant in Tillich's usage of the term culture? Culture is the conceptual system of all possible relations by which human mind meets with its surrounding reality—either created through itself or not. Thus Tillich satisfies the typical modern insight that the human mind is always cultural. Each perception of man's natural environment—a naturalistic painting of a landscape or the knowledge of ecological coherences—is the result of a relation to nature that is established and defined by the cultural activity of the human mind. With Tillich, we may distinguish here several functions. The term function is understood in a very broad sense. Tillich can also speak about mental acts or activities of our consciousness.

Tillich's most differentiated matrix is the following one: He distinguishes at first two ways for the human mind to relate with surrounding reality—the theoretical and the practical aspect. In the first case the mind receives and interprets reality; it is more receptive. In the other case, it is engaged in forming and transforming reality; it is more productive. Six cultural realms or spheres are defined in this way: at the one end purely theoretical science, and at the other purely practical community, i.e. the realization of social life. Between both we have

mixed segments: art, which like science is based on perception, but creates artificial products, and jurisprudence, which establishes a practical system for the order of public life, but is based on the intuitive perception of a principle of justice and legitimacy. Besides these four realms we can find two further functions. Both of them serve the human mind to affirm the fundamental truth which founds science and art resp. jurisprudence and community: the first is called "metaphysics," the second "ethics."<sup>10</sup>

All these realms are based on elementary formal codes to realize them. The formal code most abstracted from reality is the semiotic system of logic. Here the human mind is close to its own process of thinking, refraining from any concrete material. Upon this base science is built up with its claim to an exact description of specific facts as far as possible. Next to this, we have the arts with their full scale of expressive forms (painting, music, dancing, literature, architecture etc.). Their formal codes do not follow the principle of exactness or of the reconstruction of "reality," but rather the principle of expressivity. Jurisprudence with its systems of public order and finally the realization of social life with its social forms like monogamy, family, or nation furnish formal norms or models to structure and organize the coexistence of human beings.

I do not want to explain Tillich's concept of culture in particular here, nor do I want to criticize single details. Obviously, we could ask, if his system of functions is coherent and plausible. I do not think so. There is a problem in his theory that is obvious, when we see how he revises his schemes in different texts. We could also ask if his system is complete. Where, for example, is the educational aspect, where is the economic, where are sports and play? Where and in which sense we must conceive politics between jurisprudence and social life? Where is the place of technology? We could analyze this in detailed studies on Tillich's texts. But I don't want to address that here.

Two aspects are more important for my interpretation. First, Tillich has constructed a concept of culture that just claims to be rational and communicable. He meets this condition on a philosophical level, to say it more exactly: on the level of a philosophy of culture. Tillich's definition of "culture" does not intend to say more than any philosopher of culture could or would say. Second, Tillich's concept of culture has different aspects. On the one side, it contains the formal range of human mind's capabilities. On the other, we have a concept of culture that de-

scribes all those phenomena which are products of the expressive and formative activity of the human mind. In an abbreviated way Tillich calls both aspects—the mental activity and the products of this activity—“form.” In this sense, “culture” is the “form” of human existence. But this form is always submissive to immanent principles. It is, spoken philosophically, “autonomous.” The organization of politics and the commercial business, of fashion and painting, of technological investigations and public education follow internal orders and purposes. Therefore, it is problematic if traditional religion institutionalized by the church, by holy texts, or by codices of holy laws wants to dominate this autonomy and intends to direct it for its own purposes.

Concluding this paragraph we can note: there is a concept of culture in Tillich’s texts which is taken from a specific philosophical tradition of a theory of consciousness. The background of this concept we may discover in the roots of an idealistic view of mental activities of the human mind. This heritage is strange to the contemporary look at culture as presented by postmodern thinkers. But should we refuse it as an anachronistic instrument of the 19<sup>th</sup> century? The strategy to establish a universal theory of culture by means of an idealistic model of the human mind obviously fails postmodern plurality and the actual divergency of our culture. Thus, the adequacy and the validity of such an *a priori* concept of culture may be seriously questioned.

### III. A Critical Discussion of the Postmodern Debate on Culture

Postmodern theories on culture seem to be popular, successful, but also plausible; actually we are living in a world structured in a pluralistic way, in which the tendencies of segmentation and particularization of cultural phenomena are increasing. Traditional cultural conventions—formulated, e.g., in esthetical statements—are limited in their validity and are referred more and more to an individual attitude. Furthermore, the individualization in Western civilization is increasing. There is a higher pressure on single individuals to face several cultural traditions and to organize their own cultural way of being. The possibilities in doing so are widely opened by a plurality of options that may be chosen on the basis of one’s own decision. There is a free choice in nearly all options and the only necessity for individuals is being forced to choose.<sup>11</sup> Some individual constructions of cultural patterns are continuing the

traditions, while others make a new arrangement of fragments taken from very different cultural contexts. There we have something like a cultural syncretism.

Certainly, these observations are true. But they present just the provisional description of highly complex reality—a description that remains in a first, pre-critical state without getting through to the reflection of its basic concepts. Furthermore, a postmodern theory of culture has to explain the foundation of the conceptual standards of its describing and interpreting reality. Thus, for example, it has to explain what is meant by culture. Moreover, there is often the talk of plurality or difference in postmodern texts. But what is meant exactly by the term “plurality” or “difference”? Plurality with respect to what? Different from what? To say it in other words: What exactly is conceived as being plural or different by a postmodern philosopher of culture? Surely, it is not the entire reality, because that would suggest referring to a unity or to a totality which had been already objected. Thus one has to avoid this contradiction as well as the tautology: “Anything that exists is plural, because plurality is the quality of anything,” which says nothing at all. Or the explication: “There is plurality,” which also says nothing at all. To avoid these conclusions we have to define objects, entities, or segments of our reality for which it can be maintained that they are plural and different.

The postmodern debate puts a stress on the individual against the general, on the single against the common, on the particular against the total. But what is this cultural nucleus, this last identical entity that is the owner of such predicates? Is it the signature of a cultural epoch, of a cultural community or of a sphere of culture? If this should be the case, we would need criteria to explain the internal energies that tie such a collective instance together. We have to explain the outlines that define it against other cultural phenomena. If we cannot succeed in arguing that way, we have to push aside the concept of a cultural community, a cultural epoch or a style, and replace it with more differentiated items. Then perhaps we may define real individuals, e.g., single human beings, who are founding the difference postmodern thinkers often are talking about and seeking to promote. Again we would have to formulate criteria and perhaps we will arrive at a theory of consciousness respective to unconsciousness as we can find it in the background of Tillich’s concept of culture.

Finally, it may be a single cultural product that represents that cultural nucleus which postmodern philosophers refer to in making their statements about individuality, singularity, or particularity. But these cultural products are based on the elementary formal codes. These codes rule the semiotic context that is necessary for the understanding of any singularity. For example, an abstract painting of Barnett Newman cannot be explained in its difference to a sonnet of Shakespeare, to the invention of a lawnmower and to an Italian pizza. Such a collection of differences would be completely absurd and say nothing at all. But Newman's painting is a single work of art within the whole oeuvre of the artist. It has specific relations to the context of modern abstract painting in contrast to the works of Piet Mondrian, Kazimir Malevich, or Mark Rothko. In a wider context it stands beside artistic minimalism as we can find in the music of Steve Reich and in Robert Wilson's way of directing an opera. To communicate within this wider context we are using a specific esthetical code that makes works of art and styles understandable and compatible. In all these cases, our discussion about culture implies a very distinct understanding of the concept of culture.

There is another mistake often made by postmodern philosophers in speaking about plurality—the confusion between totality and unity. Both are taken as contrasting concepts to plurality. Postmodern talk about plurality rejects totality to concede more legitimization to the single, the individual. Similarly, it rejects the concept of unity. But totality and unity are not the same. To give a definition of plurality, it is logically not necessary to refer to totality. I could make the statement that we have a plurality of religious communities in the United States. Then I do not claim to say anything about all religious communities as a whole. Rather I refer to a framework of concepts that are used in a unified sense. This unity is no homogeneity here, but it is rather the general formal assumption that makes communication possible. The unity I am referring to is a communicative parameter which is common to all single entities which can be considered within this frame. In my example, I would need a concept of religious community on the basis of which I can speak about different religious communities and may present their plurality. Maybe I could extend this speaking of a plurality of religious communities with respect to other societies, maybe with respect to a global perspective on the community aspect of religion as such. Then I would have approximated total-

ity, although one could object that I would have no capacity to include the history of religion in total (keeping in mind not only the past but also the future of religion) or to include possible extraterrestrial living beings in my perspective. Other experiences might revise our concept of religious communities in a way that totality actually is not achievable, but for the moment—here and now—we can use a unified concept which allows us to speak about religious communities and their plurality.

The concept of totality is not logically necessary for the use of the term plurality. So we can oppose totality without making the concept of plurality absurd. Not so for the term unity: if we lose the unifying horizon of a single item, we lose plurality, because we cannot express what is meant by such a plurality. Plurality must always stand in relation to a unified context. We cannot talk about different religious communities if we don't know what is meant by religious community. This has nothing to do with totality or even totalitarianism. On the other hand: if we suspend plurality, we would not arrive at a state of unity, but at a state of homogeneity. Homogeneity is the real opposite of plurality, because homogeneity destroys plurality.

If we take a look back to Tillich's concept of culture from this point of view, we have to criticize more the uniformity of that concept (the matrix of the six functions) than the reference to mental acts (the relation of culture to consciousness). We have no difficulties in refusing the four-fold or six-fold matrix as being incomplete. We would add a culture of remembrance, the psychological effect of dreams or the production of triviality as further genuine cultural activities. Just following that way we would achieve the relativism of an arrogant concept of culture that limits cultural production to advanced elites. Postmodern thinkers have often criticized<sup>12</sup> exactly this aspect of a bourgeois arrogance.

But Tillich himself realized this problem. He opened the uniformity of the cultural matrix he received from the philosophical tradition. He did it as a theologian and expressed in this way his intention to overcome a modern bourgeois concept of culture in a style we could call today somehow postmodern. Tillich transcended the bourgeois concept of culture in a double way. One of his "transcendings" is the concept of religion and the way in which it is linked by Tillich with culture. The second transcending is involved in Tillich's theory of the profane and the demonic. In an impressive way, Tillich leads us here to the limits and to the corruption of a

one-sided rational concept of culture as it is often used in modernity. I will speak more about this in my next section.

The refusal of clear definitions in postmodern discussions is caused by the suspicion that defining acts are hidden trials to dominate the original way of speaking. They are supposed to be pseudo-rational, because they pretend rationality in order to subjugate a wild thinking. Thus, a consequent postmodern thinker rejects definite descriptive patterns in the interest of the specific entities he wants to defend in their originality. Cultural identities should establish their own linguistic form. Often we can find here an allusion to Wittgenstein's theory of language games. I have no objection to this in principle. But again we must raise the question: What constitutes a specific language game and distinguishes it from other ones? Who will play the game and who will not take part? Is a specific cultural milieu a peculiar language game or is every individual cultural product such a single language game? No matter how, you will answer that question: language games can only be established, if there is someone who communicates. And communication is based on rules which are arranged explicitly between the partners or which are assumed tacitly. In my opinion, we must not underestimate the role of communication in a contemporary theory of culture after modernity. Before we may establish normative agreements in an evaluative sense, we have to accept normative rules that make communicative acts possible. This also has to direct the postmodern debate on culture and prevents its atomization. Postmodern texts, even some of the ones of Jacques Derrida, do not refuse to be understood and comprehended. Unless they want to be "Derridadaistic," they seek to convince by arguing and so they intend a communicative agreement; otherwise they would better remain in silence.

#### IV. The Structure of Tillich's Theology of Culture

Tillich was fully convinced—and this is an heritage of Ernst Troeltsch—that the rational reconstruction of culture, as he is presents it in his four or six-fold matrix, cannot be the last word which has to be spoken about culture. It is the great mistake of rationalism to limit the reflection on culture to the source of rationality and thus to give it a rationalistic basis and norm. Even Kant and the idealism of Fichte could not overcome this mistake in the view of Tillich. Another case we have is with Schelling

who transcends the rationalistic project of founding culture and mind. A number of thinkers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century followed him. Tillich presents the gallery of the ancestors in his essay "Kairos and Logos."<sup>13</sup> (And sometimes it seems he would present a gallery of postmodern godfathers here). I won't deepen that historical background of Tillich's thinking now, but turn to the purpose of his project.

According to Tillich every rational consideration of human mind or consciousness (two concepts Tillich is using indifferently) must arrive at the point where the religious dimension of mind comes into horizon. In truth, immanence and transcendence, culture and religion, human and divine reality are unified in their substance, as Tillich would say. Only in the reality that is constituted by our experiences do they diverge. But this experience is characterized by the corruption of our finite consciousness. Thus, an important task of theology (including the theological discipline called "theology of culture," in Tillich's terms) is to demonstrate the substantial unity of the human and the divine reality in culture and religion. Religion is understood as the dimension of the depth of our reality. The concept of unity Tillich is using in this context is based on the reflections of the *Identitätsphilosophie* of German Idealism and has nothing to do with the formal concept of unity of communicative processes I reconstructed above or with the concept of unity which is confused by some postmodern thinkers with homogeneity or totality.

In his "Philosophy of Religion" (1925), Tillich demonstrates the religious dimension of the human mind by analyzing the human consciousness of meaning. In every consciousness of meaning there is a consciousness of a context of meaning in which a single meaning is involved and, on the other hand, there is a consciousness of the meaningfulness of the context of meaning itself. The first—the construction of the context of meaning—is an achievement of the conditioned consciousness. But the second—the consciousness of an unconditioned meaning that bears all conditioned efforts for meaningfulness—is given to the consciousness without having any disposal on it. Without this ground of meaning all our human efforts for meaningfulness would be totally absurd and without any meaning. They would disappear <sup>14</sup>in the abyss of an unconditioned meaninglessness.

The religious dimension of human mind, as it has been demonstrated by Tillich, explains why single rational functions of mind cannot found them-

selves, but must be founded. In his *System of Sciences* of 1923, Tillich calls the functions of science, art, jurisprudence, and social life “founded,” while the metaphysical and the ethical functions are called “unfounded” or “founding.” Actually, these are not functions in an original sense, but phenomena of a transfer of human mind, in which the openness of a mental attitude for the dimension of the unconditioned ground of meaning is present.<sup>15</sup> With the help of these differentiations, Tillich is able to distinguish between several attitudes of human mind. At first, there are two attitudes, the one of which is open for the religious dimension, while the other one is isolated from that dimension by its self-sufficiency. The last one is also called profane. The profane attitude may be helpful for some limited processes of cultural acting like technological developments or the constitution of laws. But, soon there is reached a limit of this attitude, because it is incapable of reflecting values, norms, and meaning in human acts. Often it disqualifies such reflections as being irrational, but actually it gives way to a dangerous dominance of un-reflected traditions or to an indifference which is not less dangerous. On the other side—contrary to that profanity—Tillich considers an attitude open for the religious dimension of the human mind. This attitude is expressed in metaphysical or ethical patterns. But every treatment of this dimension is in danger of covering over the dimension of the religious depth with specific concepts, myths, images, taboos, and rituals instead of making reality transparent for the dimension of the religious depth. Wherever this hiding of the true religious dimension takes place and wherever a conditioned being will be considered as being unconditioned, Tillich speaks of demonization. In both cases—profanization and demonization—Tillich intends to reject the more reductionist rational concept of culture of the bourgeois modernity and to link in an impressive openness with contemporary philosophical discussions on culture (and religion).<sup>16</sup>

Still we have to go one step further. Considering Tillich’s theology of culture in a detailed way we must diagnose that it can not be hit by those objections that had been made at the end of my second section. It can not be reduced to a rationalistic or idealistic concept of culture from which one may suppose it would have been derived. Such a dependency is not constitutive for Tillich’s theology of culture. Actually, it has another structure. Certainly, Tillich is referring to a specific concept of culture that had been very useful in the academic discussion

about culture at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But Tillich’s theory is compatible with other concepts of culture too, because it has the structure of a logical implication. That means it can be understood as an architecture based on several premises on which a conclusion will be built up. To describe it in logical terms we can say: assumed that “culture” has to be defined as “x”, its theological interpretation must be taken as “f(x).” The interesting point in Tillich’s conception now is not what is meant by the “x”, but what is meant by the “f” of “f(x)”. “x” functions as a variable. It symbolizes different realizations and presentations of man’s cultural practice. This practice may be analyzed and summarized theoretically as many philosophers, sociologists, psychologists, and historians are trying to do. But a theology of a culture reconstructed in such a way will not take part in that theoretical task of reconstruction, but will take up the results to interpret them theologically. This structure is an intrinsic necessity resulting from the starting point of Tillich’s reflection. His theology of culture can only reach the goal, if it becomes a theology of culture in practice. And that means it must be open for changing cultural conceptions and contexts in which to discuss them theologically. Otherwise, Tillich’s project would be in danger of being unmasked as a form of the bourgeois theory of culture that Tillich just intends to overcome.

## V. Consequences for a Contemporary Theology of Culture

We just have learned that the theological interpretation of a specific presentation of culture respective of a theoretical summary of that which would be considered as “culture” marks the decisive point in Tillich’s theology of culture. Thus, the question arises in which way this interpretation will be constituted and by which aspects it will be directed. What is the “f” of the “f(x)””? To answer this question we have to distinguish between an interpretation of basic cultural phenomena on the one hand and an interpretation of secondary reflections about cultural phenomena on the other. The difference between the two is not categorical, but medial. Theological (like philosophical) interpretations have a linguistic structure and are based on conceptual explications. In contrast, many cultural phenomena like paintings, compositions, buildings, but even trends of fashion and design, social movements, technological innovations and historical or political events are neither

linguistic nor conceptual phenomena. To interpret them in a conceptual way they have to be put in a linguistic form. Now, Tillich was right to realize that a theological interpretation does not have the same status as historical, scientific, sociological or psychological interpretations. A theological interpretation must assume such interpretations as interpretations of a first order. It does not intend to analyze the esthetic forms of expression. It does not try to clarify historical backgrounds, nor does it have to take part in the struggle of developing categories of description that would be more or less adequate for the considered phenomena. The task of a theological interpretation is to conceive the relationship of man to himself, to his environment, and to the ground of his existence. Therefore, it has to examine, how these relationships are expressed in those phenomena. Evidently there are different possible perspectives of interpretations, and the one preferred by Tillich is just one of them. What is the signature of Tillich's perspective?

First, we have to notice that Tillich estimates the human capacity and necessity for culture as a fundamental condition established in the act of the creation of human beings. This means "culture" is not seen under the theological aspects of man's "self-redemption" or of man's sinful corruption," nor it is considered as an "apotheosis" of man through the perfection of supposedly divine qualities. "Culture" is just the creational condition for the concrete existence of human beings. It is the way of man's existing, the *conditio humana*. Wherever human beings are living and acting, there we have "culture." Although many single phenomena of that cultural practice have their "telos" in themselves (like art or sport or play), they are altogether something like a mirror of the human self-understanding. In other words: at a specific time in human history and at a specific place on this planet earth they express the way human beings consider themselves, their world, their relationships, their existence, and the meaning of their being. Without signifying a specific philosophical tradition, we can call this in Tillich's words a "meta-physical attitude or situation."

This perspective in Tillich's project does not have the quality of representing a universal religious or general Christian point of view. Actually, that would be too complex, too multivalent, and too inconsistent. Thus, Tillich's theology of culture has a Protestant signature, i.e., his theological view of the forms of realization of human culture is directed by the belief and the certainty that God in His saving

power has turned to man in grace; that God wants to shake and found human beings with a critical and creative breakthrough of His divine presence in man's historical life. I just want to sketch what has been elaborated in Tillich's lifelong work—namely, the task of discovering and expressing the "Protestant principle" in the context of a contemporary self-understanding of man as we can find it in a single cultural complex. Abbreviated we could say: Tillich's theology of culture finds its subject in cultural phenomena which are made accessible by different interpretations and even in such interpretations itself, as they express a point of view, a way of life, a style of belief, which may be discussed theologically. The norm of his theology of culture is the relationship of God, man, and world as it is expressed in the "Protestant principle." Evidently, this perspective—this specific replacement of the "f" in the logical term "f(x)"—is a perspective which is neither the only possible one nor the only true one. It stands within the context of a discussion of culture that could be taken up from very different points of view. But it does not have to follow an anachronistic meaning of "culture." It presents a model for a discussion with contemporary culture and with contemporary theories of culture, while its legitimacy and plausibility may just be demonstrated and proved in the concrete processes of such a discussion.

Finally, I have to answer two questions: In which way does Tillich's theology of culture deal with the greater context of the debate on culture? And, what is the systematic relation between Protestantism and postmodernity? If we examined Tillich's project more detailed, we would see that his strategy is dialogical. Tillich was interested in the autonomy of cultural expressions and he defended divergent claims for the interpretation of culture. On the other side, Tillich realized that full autonomy must be recognized as an illusion of modern thinking. In man's historical reality, this autonomy is permanently undermined by heteronomous tendencies. Both autonomy and heteronomy are ambivalent for Tillich with respect to the ultimate reality of God. The strategy of dialogue has the purpose of tying together contradictory perspectives of interpretation in a constructive process. In Tillich's project, this dialogue has the signature of a meeting of cultural expressions with a Protestant point of view and vice versa. In practice, such meetings will have more in common with esthetic processes of reception than with dogmatic ones. But the partners of the dialogue will not give up the basis of their points of view during this

process. There is no reason to do so because no meeting may be fruitful, unless it is an exchange of several points of view. That is the essence of communication and dialogue.

These remarks, as well as the previous sketches about Tillich's Protestant theology of culture, clarify that his project must not be absolutely contradictory to a postmodern theory of culture which has clarified itself. Essential aspects of postmodern reflections on culture (e.g., the intention to promote plurality or to refuse one-sided claims of totality and homogeneity, the openness for experiences of difference, and the readiness to defend individuality) cannot only be discovered in Tillich's project, but must be considered as aspects of Protestant thinking. Moreover, Tillich's critical doubt about a culture founded purely on a rational basis, his criticism against modernity which estimates it as an ideological position but will not let it reach at the status of a norm, and even his self-critical reflections on the meta-narratives of Christianity and Protestantism may be called "postmodern" in the best sense—although in his consciousness of an ultimate truth and in his struggle for a unity achieved by way of communicative practice, Tillich certainly is no "postmodern" thinker at all. But why should he be?

### **Tillich and the Post-Modern Debate on Culture**

The starting point of my paper was the participation on the post-modern debates on culture, which seem not to conform with the Tillichian treatment of culture within his project of a theology of culture. Or to put it in other words: Tillich's theology of culture seems to be unhelpful for the challenges of our contemporary dealing with culture—at least at the first sight.

A first paragraph has to take up the post-modern view of culture and the theoretical concept of "culture" on which these observations and conclusions are made. For both, it is significant that culture must be conceived not only as a plural and divergent phenomenon in general, but also as an open process which refuses normative definitions. For post-modern thinkers, it is impossible to evaluate single items of cultural design because we cannot refer to a general taxonomy of cultural values. Each cultural formation has to be considered as autonomous and intrinsically validated. In any case, a normative cultural theory is the result of a definite normative concept of culture and therefore a *petitio principii* that never can be adequate to cultural phenomena strange

to that point of view. In a historical perspective, the predominance of European culture figures as the proof for such an attitude less desirable at the end of the second millennium. This interpretation entails problems for every attempt of comparing cultural theories, which are not restricted to a purely descriptive enumeration of cultural differences.

In opposition to this, we can find a concept of culture in the writings of Paul Tillich that is derived from a philosophical theory of conscience. The background of Tillich's concept of culture must be searched in the roots of an idealistic view of man's mental activities. This does not seem to agree with our contemporary image of culture espoused by post-modern philosophers. Obviously, Tillich's concept of culture inherited from the 19<sup>th</sup> century must be removed as an old-fashioned tool to establish a European predominance over indigenous cultural developments. The apologetic strategy to prove the idealistic view on human mind as "omnivalent" fails the post-modern view of a cultural pluralism and divergence in general. Therefore, the validity of an *a priori* concept of culture is called in question principally.

But even the post-modern discourse on culture must outline what is talked about if one is talking about "culture." The task to give a definition—as preliminary as it may be—is re-addressed to the post-modern theory of culture. The solution of this task will show that there may be focused another concept of culture than the idealistic one. Likewise, a theory of culture, whether modern or post-modern, cannot avoid formal presuppositions in using concepts at all, although these concepts are subordinated materially to a communicative process, which reforms hermeneutically conceptual tools.

More than this, Tillich's theology of culture is not objected by such replies for it does not depend on the idealistic concept of culture essentially. Indeed it is true that Tillich refers to a concept of culture used in academic discussions at the turn of the century, but his theory is also compatible to other formal concepts, because his theology of culture has the structure of a logical implication: given "culture" has to be defined as x, "theology of culture" must be considered as f(x). The interesting point is not what is meant by "x" but what is meant by "f". This structure is an intrinsic necessity of Tillich's theology of culture. It gains its end only if it has the openness for changing cultural concepts and contexts. Otherwise, it may be unmasked probably as a pure bourgeois

theology of culture that Tillich just intends to overcome.

The strategy of Tillich's theology of culture—and this is the answer to question what the “F” does mean—is dialogic. In Tillich's project, this dialogue has the signature of a meeting of cultural formations with a Protestant point of view and vice versa. In practice, such meetings will have more in common with esthetic processes of reception than with dogmatic ones. Nevertheless, such meetings don't give up the point of view they are based upon. There would be no reason to do so, because no meeting may be fruitful, unless it is an exchange of points of view. That is the essence of communication and dialogue. Therefore, the normative aspect of a theology of culture—and Tillich's theology of culture quite obviously is obliged to that aspect—must not be hidden in the back, but should be an instrument of a sharper evaluation of the dialogue's results looking at the differences which are remaining and keeping the task alive to provide strategies for intelligent co-existence on a small planet.

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(Editor's Note: Several of Professor Haigis's endnotes failed to translate from one software format to another. The editor apologizes for this problem.)

<sup>1</sup> For the discussion between (Tillich's) theology and postmodern thinking cf. Robert P. Scharlemann, ed., *Theology at the End of the Century*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1990. A more elaborated sketch of postmodern thinking we can find in Wolfgang Welsch, *Unsere postmoderne Moderne*, Weinheim 1987.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Wolfgang Welsch (ed.), *Wege aus der Moderne. Schlüsseltexte der Postmoderne-Diskussion*, Berlin 1994 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), 7ff.

<sup>3</sup> See the introduction of Christa and Peter Bürger (ed.), *Postmoderne: Alltag, Allegorie und Avantgarde*, Frankfurt/M. 1988, (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), 7.

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<sup>4</sup> Hans Bertens, *Die Postmoderne und ihr Verhältnis zur Moderne—Eine Übersicht*, in: Dietmar Kamper / Willem van Reijen (ed.), *Die unvollendete Vernunft: Moderne versus Postmoderne*, Frankfurt/M. 1987, 46-98; 92.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Jürgen Habermas, *Die Moderne—ein unvollendetes Projekt*, in: Welsch, *Wege aus der Moderne*, *op. cit.*, 177-192; 191.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Über die Idee einer Theologie der Kultur (1919), in: Paul Tillich, *Main Works (MW)*, Vol. 2: *Writings in the Philosophy of Culture*, ed. by Michael F. Palmer, (Berlin/ New York: de Gruyter, 1990), 69-85; 72f.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Berger's often mentioned “heretical imperative,” in Peter L. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative. Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation*, New York: Doubleday, 1979.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Leslie A. Fiedler, *Cross the Border—Close the Gap* (Germ. *Überquert die Grenze, schließt den Graben!*—Über die Postmoderne, in: Welsch, *Wege aus der Moderne*, *op. cit.*, 57-74.

<sup>14</sup> Religionsphilosophie (1925), in Paul Tillich, MW, Vol. 4: *Writings in the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. by John P. Clayton, p. 117-170; 133f. It would be very interesting to discuss this dialectical conception in contrast with the more deconstructive conception of Derrida, where every assumed ground of meaning has been swallowed by an abyss of meaning. I can't explain that here, but I plan to present a paper on that subject at the colloquium of the French-speaking Paul-Tillich-Society in Paris next year.

<sup>15</sup> MW 1, *op. cit.*, 209ff.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. my doctoral thesis about this subject: *Im Horizont der Zeit. Paul Tillichs Projekt einer Theologie der Kultur*, Marburg 1998.

## THEOLOGY OF CULTURE AFTER POSTCOLONIALISM

**Russell Manning**

In 1919, soon after his return from the trenches of the First World War in which he had personally experienced the self-destruction of the intellectual presuppositions of the nineteenth century and the revelation of the bankruptcy of the dominant Kultur-protestant theology, Paul Tillich delivered a paper to the Kantgesellschaft in Berlin in which he proposed the idea of what he called “theology of culture.” In sharp contrast to the Barthian rejection of the cultural as an arena for theological enquiry, Tillich affirmed the possibility of a theological engagement with culture in which the autonomy of both theology and culture is preserved. Indeed, he claimed it to be a necessity for the new theology of the new post-war era to take the task of striving for a creative synthesis between religion and culture seriously. In this Tillich (like Schleiermacher before him) was seeking a way between the extreme alternatives of a defensive theological positivism on the one hand and a secular reductionism on the other.

This paper proposes, by way of what may seem an unlikely route, to consider the continued relevance of Tillich’s proposals for a theology of culture for contemporary theology. The unlikely route is that of post-colonialism. Post-colonial theory has become today one of the most influential factors in any consideration of what is to be understood by the term “culture.” Whilst not primarily concerned with questions of conceptual definitions, the writings of postcolonial theorists, such as Spivak, Said, and Fanon have significantly contributed to our present day understanding of the concept of culture. The implications of post-colonial theory upon understandings of culture (among those of other contemporary cultural discourses, including theories of gender, sexuality, and race) must be recognised by theologians attempting to engage constructively in discussions concerning the relationship between theology (or religion) and culture. This is particularly so in the case of Paul Tillich’s influential proposals for the possibility and practice of a theology of culture. This paper will address precisely these issues with respect to Tillich’s writings on, and exercises in, a theology of culture.

### **1. Culture After Postcolonialism**

Writing in 1948, T. S. Eliot could have a fairly clear idea of that concept which he set out to describe in his short book entitled, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*.<sup>1</sup> In common with many of his contemporaries, Eliot was able to circumscribe those elements of human life and creative productivity, namely—urbanity, civility, learning, philosophy, and the arts<sup>2</sup>—which could be awarded the honorific classification of belonging to and indeed constituting culture. Further, he could nostalgically affirm the possibility of a hierarchy of culture. He writes, “...we can distinguish between higher and lower cultures, we can distinguish between advance and retrogression. We can assert with some confidence that our own period is one of decline; that the standards of culture are lower than they were 50 years ago; and that the evidences of this decline are visible in every department of human activity.”<sup>3</sup> Such an elitist understanding of culture is, however, no longer tenable.

Indeed, it is possible to characterize twentieth century thought concerning culture as dominated by the question of reconciling the concept of culture with that of democracy. By far the most widespread response, influenced by the Marxist critique of elitism, can be identified as a gradual “democratization” of the methods and objects in the study of culture. As testified by the expansion of the number of separate academic disciplines and the diversity of their specializations, a general trend towards a broadening of the canvass of academic endeavour about culture can be observed. This breaching of the canon away from the classic locus of the so-called “dead white males” has a complex motivation, which cannot be explored here. What is significant, however, for my present purposes, is the observation that this broadening of the academic canvas has had a significant impact upon understandings of the concept of culture. Not only does one find anthropologists, archaeologists, cultural critics, historians, philosophers, et al. espousing very different understandings from each other (each, of course, claiming conceptual adequacy), a similar divergence of opinion is to be found within the individual disciplines themselves. To take an example from anthropology, already in his 1973 essay, “Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” Clifford Geertz refers to Clyde Kluckhohn’s *Mirror for Man*, which, according to Geertz, contains within the space of 27 pages 14 different definitions of the concept (none of which, incidentally, were adequate for Geertz who goes on to propose an alternative 15<sup>th</sup> defini-

tion).<sup>4</sup> Essentially, one can observe within the definitions of culture a general drift from an emphasis upon what T.S. Eliot would have called “high” culture to “low” and a consequent plurality of definitions. Culture is no longer conceptualized as constituted by a discrete number of eligible human activities and their products. It is rather increasingly expanded to include previously excluded spheres of personal and social existence. In addition, the development, in the second half of the twentieth century in particular, of the so-called minority discourses—for example, those of gender, class and race—along with the rise to predominance of postmodern modes of thought has contributed to a radical reassessment of the concept of culture. Further, questions of culture and identity have come to the fore along with issues of empowerment and ownership. It is in this context that I propose to outline the impact of the writings of postcolonial theorists upon contemporary understandings of the concept of culture.<sup>5</sup>

For present purposes, following Leela Gandhi’s distinction, I take “postcolonialism” or “postcolonial theory” to designate the theoretical attempt to engage with the historical condition of postcoloniality.<sup>6</sup> The particular historical situation intended by postcolonial theory is that of the dissolution of the European empires after the Second World War, which saw many of the former colonies achieve independence or at least a greater degree of autonomous self-government. Postcolonial theory emerged in reaction to any apparent tendencies within the newly decolonised nation states—as well as within the former colonial powers—to repress the colonial past. In contrast, “postcolonialism can be seen as a theoretical resistance to the mystifying amnesia of the colonial aftermath. [It is]...devoted to the academic task of revisiting, remembering and, crucially, interrogating the colonial past.”<sup>7</sup> However, as David Lloyd notes in his recent essay, “Regarding Ireland in a Postcolonial Frame,” what he calls “postcolonial projects,” that is to say, applications of postcolonial theory, are not bound to an historiographically limited conception of linear development nor are they confined to reflections upon the narrow situation of decolonization. He claims that,

‘By and large, refusing to occupy a position outside of historical processes, postcolonial critics and historians have sought instead to effect a fold in developmental historiography such that the multiple histories of social practices and cultural formations that were strictly irrepresentable within its terms might re-emerge from the cusp

of their occlusion....This concern in part explains the infrequently noted phenomenon that a theoretical tendency designated *post*-colonial has so often taken its materials from the period of colonisation itself: what is at stake is the archaeology of alternative or subaltern forms of resistance which were at play alongside nationalist anti-colonialism, a set of projects which bears significantly on counter-hegemonic practices now, whether in the remaining colonised domains or within postcolonial states.’<sup>8</sup>

Postcolonialism, then, is the theoretical response to the history of colonisation, decolonisation, and neocolonisation via an exposure of the implicit forms of oppression and subjugation that such a situation entails. One of the foundational texts of postcolonial theory is Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, first published in 1978. In this book, Said exposes the hitherto unacknowledged extent of Western colonisation of the Orient—even perhaps as far as its very creation and subsequent definition. As he puts it, “the Orient was almost a European invention.”<sup>9</sup> Said designates as Orientalism Western Europe’s “corporate institution for dealing with the Orient...by making statements about it, authorising views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”<sup>10</sup> Throughout the book, Said considers Orientalism’s constituent “texts,” which he claims produce a “tradition,” or what Michel Foucault calls a “discourse,” whose material presence or weight, not the originality of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it.<sup>11</sup>

Consistent with Foucault’s deconstructionist strategy, Said proceeds to expose the underlying power motivations of the occidental construction of the identity of the Orient. By effectively decoding the concealed agendas of the colonial discourse of Orientalism, Said reveals the allegedly cultural neutrality of the West to be embedded within a complex of domineering, or otherwise suppressive narratives of oppression. What Said and other postcolonial theorists expose is the systematic devaluation of the cultural status of the non-Western Other(s). In the situation of postcoloniality, therefore, a re-appraisal of those other cultures as being part of the theoretical understanding of what is to be understood by the concept of culture is required. With the unmasking of the hegemonic intentions of the dominant/dominating Western discourse and the cultural assumptions that such a procedure implies comes a

destabilizing of the self-confident exclusivism of the Western conceptualizations of culture. From the elitist presuppositions of the colonial understanding of culture as an essentially Western European possession, which can be exported throughout the world by way of the process of imperial conquest, education, and/or suppression, emerges a pluralist, inclusivist concept of culture in which cultural variance is inscribed as an necessary constituent element. The smug self-confidence of the European model of culture is rendered problematic by the enforced inclusion of such cultural differences within the very conceptual basis of culture.

Such a view of the impact of postcolonialism upon understandings of the concept of culture is confirmed by a brief look at the work of the influential postcolonial theorist, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Spivak aims to expose not only the power relations inherent within colonial discourse, but further to interrogate those modes of thought within the Western philosophical canon which enable the kinds of oppressive procedures found in the colonial endeavour. In her recent book, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason. Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (1999),<sup>12</sup> she locates within the philosophical thought of Kant, Hegel, and Marx criteria of self-identity which determine the European colonial mind-set. She writes that “in the field of philosophy...Germany produced authoritative ‘universal’ narratives where the subject remained unmistakably European.”<sup>13</sup> The subject of enlightened Modernity—Kant’s mature autonomous subject—is prescriptively integrated into colonial discourse as the only model of intellectual and cultural adulthood in contrast to the childlike or primitive colonized subject. Colonialism, cannot, therefore, give intellectual or cultural legitimacy to the alternative forms of indigenous expressions or conceptions of (self) identity. Spivak concludes her 1988 paper, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in which she attempts to overcome this ingrained philosophical presupposition and to give voice to those unrepresented within the self-proclaimed universal narratives of colonialism (the subaltern), with the assertion that such subjects are not just unrepresented but fundamentally unrepresentable within the confines of colonial reason. “The subaltern cannot speak.”<sup>14</sup> The imperative remains, however, for the postcolonial theorist to attempt “to learn to speak to (rather than listen to or speak for) the historically muted subject of the non-elite.”<sup>15</sup> Such a task requires a new mode of thought, a pluralist reason able to recognize difference be-

yond the binaries of self and other, master and slave, colonizer and colonized: in short a postcolonial reason. The role of the concept of culture within postcolonial reason is central. Indeed, in the Preface to *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, Spivak writes that the book “charts a practitioner’s progress from colonial discourse studies to transnational cultural studies.”<sup>16</sup>

Finally in this section, it is important to note that the postcolonial re-evaluation of the concept of culture entails more than simply the replacement of the Western/European model of cultural imperialism with an elevation to normativity of national, local, or indigenous culture(s). Such a procedure can achieve no more than an inversion of the distortions present within colonial discourse in which the framework of cultural hegemony remains unchallenged. Any postcolonial reassessment of the concept of culture must heed Frantz Fanon’s warning that affirmations of national cultures often consist of “no more than a stock of particularisms,” arbitrarily combined and ironically conforming to the imperial categories which they are designed to overcome.<sup>17</sup> In this way, Fanon criticizes the Negritude movement of the 1950s and 1960s for its reinstatement of the prejudices of colonial reason. He writes, “The efforts of the native to rehabilitate himself and to escape from the claws of colonialism are logically inscribed from the same point of view as that of colonialism.”<sup>18</sup> By accepting the European culture of the colonizers as paradigmatic, such a response can, according to Fanon, do no more than re-enact the imperialistic assumptions of colonialism, such that “the unconditional affirmation of African culture has succeeded the unconditional affirmation of European culture.”<sup>19</sup> For Fanon, this situation of postcolonial mimesis can only be overcome by the political independence (violently won, if necessary) of the colonized nation state. “To fight for national culture means in the first place to fight for the liberation of the nation, the material keystone which makes the building of a culture possible.”<sup>20</sup>

To summarize then, the following claims can be made about the concept of culture in the light of postcolonial theory:

1. Colonial conceptions of culture are based upon a rationality that uncritically extrapolates from its contingent situation to unfounded claims to universality.
2. Colonial conceptions of culture are inscribed within a dualistic mode of thought in which only one form of self-identity is permissible and that such a

rationality is unable to think genuine difference and hence denies to the non-Western or European other the status of subject.

3. Postcolonial conceptions of culture must avoid simply rehearsing the internal dynamics of colonial reason by implicitly adopting its understanding of colonial culture as normative.

4. Postcolonial conceptions of culture must, therefore, overcome the internal dynamics of colonial reason, either through the political action of liberation from the institutional and explicit cultural forms of colonialism, or through the philosophical action of deconstructing the assumptions of the implicit rationality which underpins colonial conceptions of culture in the name of a postcolonial reason.

## 2. Tillich's Theology of Culture.

Tillich's largely essayist treatments of various aspects of culture represent the most sustained attempt by a modern theologian to engage constructively with his contemporary culture and have been justly influential, even if their popularity has waned somewhat in recent times. They are, however, unquestionably (although, given their pre-post-colonial historical context, unsurprisingly) the products of a conception of culture very different from that of the postcolonial situation outlined above. Tillich's theology of culture is in practice a theology of European high culture and as such appears to be materially inadequate to contemporary understandings of culture. However, as I hope to show, Tillich's theology of culture simultaneously provides formally open-ended interpretative structures with the potential to enable fruitful contemporary theological engagement with culture in the situation of postcolonialism.

In a provocative article published in 1995, "Reconsidering the Status of Popular Culture in Tillich's Theology of Culture,"<sup>21</sup> Kelton Cobb claims that "the cultural materials he [Tillich] finds most transcendent tend to be those that are the most alienating and incomprehensible to even moderately literate people."<sup>22</sup> Examples of these cultural materials include Expressionism, Bauhaus, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Schelling, Hegel, Einstein, and Heidegger. Cobb, while acknowledging that a shift in Tillich's writings on the theology of culture occurs in 1933, argues that Tillich consistently fails to address popular culture. For Cobb, whether Tillich saw material culture as "a symbol for divine revelation, as in his pre-emigration writings or as subsequently an ex-

pression of 'the human predicament,' he "favoured analyzing the most erudite and the most prized creations of culture."<sup>23</sup> Attributing Tillich's privileging of the forms of expression of "the cultural elite" to a combination of a mandarin conception of culture (Kultur) and his close relation to the Frankfurt School of Social Research, Cobb cites John Clayton's claim that Tillich favoured "intellectual writers, painters whose works had little popular appeal; leading philosophers, and obscure 'mythologies' like psychoanalysis."<sup>24</sup>

At the same time, however, both Cobb and Clayton recognize that Tillich's apparent restriction of the materials of culture worthy of interest to the theologian of culture stands in contrast to the formal open-endedness of his proposals for a theology of culture. Clayton's claim, quoted above, in fact continues with the observation that "He [Tillich] avoids popular culture to such an extent that it is questionable whether he carries through on his own promise, which is to look into culture as the 'totality of human self-interpretation.'"<sup>25</sup> Likewise, Cobb admits that "Tillich, in principle, directs us to all cultural products, including cars, furniture, and factory buildings."<sup>26</sup> This ambivalence between Tillich's stated objective and his material application of his theology of culture must be considered before any judgement can be made as to the relevance of Tillich's theology of culture to the culture of postcolonial theory. In essence, the crucial question here is whether Tillich's restricted application of his theology of culture to the cultural artifacts of the avant-garde or elite is merely a matter of personal preference or acquaintance or if it is rather necessarily implied in his understanding of theology of culture, that is to say, whether the formally open-ended structures of interpretation in fact conceal a hegemonic exclusivity with regard to the value of cultural creations. I will approach this question by means of a brief examination of what Tillich understands by the concept of "culture" (a curiously neglected question within the critical literature).

What then is Tillich's conception of culture? In his first public lecture, the famous *Über die Idee einer Theologie der Kultur*,<sup>27</sup> delivered in 1919, Tillich refers theology to "every cultural function."<sup>28</sup> Although he does not explicitly define what he means by culture precisely, it can be deduced that he intends to include a wide range of human expressions. In Section 4 of the lecture, "Cultural-Theological Analyses," he gives examples from art, science, individual ethics, social ethics, and poli-

tics.<sup>29</sup> Earlier, the theologian of culture is described as one “able to bring to expression the comprehensive unity of the cultural functions and to show the connections, which lead from one manifestation of culture to another, through the underlying unity of the substance that is brought to expression in them.”<sup>30</sup> Equally, Tillich distinguishes between culture and nature by claiming that nature can only become an object for human interpretation through culture. He writes, “For us nature is meaningful only by means of the spiritual functions, and it is as the sum of these functions that we conceive of culture in a subjective as well as an objective sense.”<sup>31</sup>

Turning from the beginning to the end of his intellectual development, in Volume I of *Systematic Theology*, Tillich identifies the two poles between which theology must move as “the eternal truth of its foundation and the temporal situation in which the eternal truth must be received.”<sup>32</sup> He goes on to define the situation as “the scientific and artistic, the economic, political, and ethical forms in which they [individuals and groups at a particular time] express the interpretation of their existence,”<sup>33</sup> and further as “the totality of man’s creative self-interpretation in a special period.”<sup>34</sup> As opposed to purely kerygmatic theology (and its exaggerated forms such as neo-orthodoxy or fundamentalism), Tillich unequivocally asserts that, “the pole called ‘situation’ cannot be neglected in theology without dangerous consequences.” Instead, what is required is a “courageous” participation in the situation, which is defined as “all the various cultural forms which express modern man’s interpretation of his existence.”<sup>35</sup> In other words, theology must engage wholeheartedly with the situation of its period, that is to say, its culture. While Tillich’s terms have altered from culture to situation, that which is intended by them has not.

Theology of culture (or in his later terminology, of situation), is, therefore, not to be thought of as the application of theological method to certain, theologically interesting, cultural forms or aspects of culture. Rather, it is the necessary response of the theologian—that is, of the person who is ultimately concerned with the apologetic demands of the Christian message—to all the forms of cultural expression of humanity’s self-interpretation. It is, in short, a way of doing theology. As is well known, for Tillich, the theologian, it is the religious substance that provides the depth of culture and grounds its meaningfulness in all its forms. An expanded version of his famous formula clearly shows the scope of Til-

lich’s intention: “Religion as ultimate concern is the meaning-giving substance of culture, and culture is the totality of forms in which the basic concern of religion expresses itself.”<sup>36</sup> This last is perhaps the clearest statement of Tillich’s understanding of the concept of culture available in his writings and is wholly consistent with his contention in 1919. Here, the theologian of culture “is able to bring to expression the comprehensive unity of the cultural functions and to show the connections, which lead from one manifestation of culture to another, through the underlying unity of the substance that is brought to expression in them. By this means, he can help to realize the unity of culture from the standpoint of substance.”<sup>37</sup> It is, therefore, not just open to the theologian of culture to engage with the totality of cultural forms; it is essential to the very purpose of theology as Tillich understands it to trace the process of the breakthrough of substance into form “in every cultural sphere and creation of culture and to bring it to expression.”<sup>38</sup>

What this argument reveals is a distinction between two separate moments within Tillich’s writings on theology of culture: first, his formal proposals for the structures of a theology of culture, that is to say, his attempt to prescribe the theoretical possibility of theology as theology of culture; and second, his attempts to produce a practical theology of culture, that is, to actually do theology of culture.

Tillich’s proposals for theology of culture are located within the context of his broader concern (especially in his pre-emigration writings) to affirm the pre-eminence of theology within a system of the sciences on the basis of the essential synthesis of religious substance and cultural forms. This is independent of the material use Tillich himself puts his formal proposals to. As is well known, in his *System of the Sciences*, Tillich proposes a three-fold classification of the sciences according to the three fundamental elements of scientific enquiry—“pure thought, pure being, and spirit as existing, living thought.”<sup>39</sup> The third group of sciences, within which Tillich locates theology of culture, is those determined by the principle of spirit. Tillich classifies these sciences as “the science of spirit” or “normative sciences” (*Geisteswissenschaften*) and explains that they are concerned with thought as it is present to itself as being. Whereas the sciences of thought are concerned with thought abstracted from being and the sciences of being with being as it confronts thought as alien to it, the sciences of spirit by contrast are concerned with “the self-determination

of thought within being,” that is, spirit.<sup>40</sup> As Adams notes, “in the spiritual act, elements of thought and existence achieve form as a cultural creation. Here the key word is ‘creation.’”<sup>41</sup> For Tillich, “every creation contains two elements: an element of being, through which creation becomes original positing, and an element of thought, through which creation becomes determined, formed positing.”<sup>42</sup> In an act of creation, the conflicting elements are united into a spiritual whole that is at once individual and universal. “Creation is the individual realization of the universal.”<sup>43</sup> Theology of culture is the normative science of this cultural creativity and as such is concerned with every form of cultural creativity in as far as it expresses the spiritual principle which determines it. Likewise, to return to the language of the *Kulturvortage*, a theology of culture, which approaches culture “from the standpoint of substance” achieves “a cultural synthesis of the highest significance, a synthesis that not only gathers together the different cultural functions, but that also overcomes the culturally destructive contradiction of religion and culture,”<sup>44</sup> cannot be selective in those elements of culture with which it is to engage, precisely because the religious substance of culture is present to all cultural functions and forms.

However, the question as to whether Tillich’s theology of culture can respond to the postcolonial situation and the altered conception of culture this situation entails cannot be answered simply by a demonstration of the formal open-endedness of Tillich’s understanding of culture or his understanding of theology as the normative spiritual science of that culture. As has been noted above, postcolonial theory represents more than an expansion of the inventory of the contents of culture to include those indigenous forms of self-interpretation excluded by the colonialising process. More fundamentally, it questions the theoretical validity of the dominant concept of culture and the occidental rationality in which it is embedded. This raises the further question to Tillich’s theology of culture. Is his actual preference for the high forms of culture, despite the universality of his theoretical structures indicative of his unavoidable immersion within a tradition of thought which fails to recognize its own provinciality? Or, does Tillich’s theology of culture, in which the mutual dependence of culture and its religious depth is affirmed, represent an immanent critique of those intellectual presuppositions exposed by postcolonialism? In other words, is Tillich’s theology of culture not only a possible means of thinking about

the relations between theology and culture after postcolonialism, but also, surprisingly, a particularly appropriate one?

It is with a tentative argument in support of this latter suggestion that I will close this paper. The first thing to say in response to these questions is that Tillich’s analysis of culture in terms of its religious substance and cultural form contains a strong criticism of the universalizing tendency within European thought, in which the provincial non-ultimate elevates itself to ultimacy. Equally, by replacing as normative to conceptions of culture, the Kantian autonomous culture of form with a theonomous culture of substance,<sup>45</sup> Tillich explicitly questions one of the central planks of what has been identified as colonial reason. The theonomous breakthrough of substance in the shattering of form that remains form is not restricted to any particular sphere of culture. This is to say, for Tillich, the legitimacy of a cultural form is determined by its relation to the unconditioned ultimate concern which grounds the meaningfulness of human self-interpretation, not in its relation to other cultural forms. Theology of culture is not a science of thought. Culture is determined by the extent to which it is expressive of the meaningful religious substance, not by its inclusion within a normative human system of categorization of cultural forms. Just as it is possible for Picasso’s *Guernica* to be, for Tillich, the most Protestant painting of the twentieth century without containing any explicitly “Protestant” content (whatever that might be), so those cultural forms which, according to the colonial model have no “cultural” content, can be seen as genuine expressions of human self-interpretation.

Similarly, one finds within Tillich’s understanding of theology of culture an implied priority for the formal structural proposals over against Tillich’s own particular application of those structures. The point is well made by John Heywood Thomas, who writes of the necessity derived from within Tillich’s thought, of being “able to give the notion of a ‘cultural-theological analysis’ content in a different way from Tillich’s’ own.”<sup>46</sup> For Tillich, who viewed himself and his work as part of the long tradition in theology of a striving for a “creative synthesis” of religion and culture on the basis of their common foundation, any solution—even his own—can only ever be provisional. Indeed, Tillich categorizes the history of Christian thought, in his lecture series of the same name, as the history of solutions and dissolutions (Augustine, Schleiermacher, and Hegel are

examples of the former, Aquinas, Kant, and Barth of the latter). What is permanent, however, in this history, is the basic presupposition of the essential unity of “concerns which are not strange to each other but [which] have been estranged from each other,”<sup>47</sup> whatever their manifestation in a particular historical situation.

In this sense, Tillich’s elitism could in itself be testimony to the possibility of his theology of culture being applied to those cultural expressions beyond the European cultural canon. If, as Peter Steinacker has argued, Tillich’s own cultural style is expressionistic and as Cobb and Clayton assert, he is concerned with that which is avant-garde or alienating, could Tillich perhaps be taken to be proposing a theology of culture which is not content to simply accept the cultural *status quo* but instead, in the name of the religious substance of culture, pushes at the boundaries of the dominant conception of culture? Tillich, in affirming the religious substance, for example, of Expressionist art or psychoanalysis and hence affirming their cultural status, is, implicitly at least, offering a critique of an exclusivist concept of culture. By shifting cultural discourse from the cultural sciences to a theology of culture, Tillich opens the possibility of a genuine engagement with culture as it is conceived by postcolonialism beyond the false universalisms of colonial reason to the ultimate ground of meaning. Elitism, after all, need not be culturally conservative.

Equally, however, by locating culture in its relation to its religious substance which transcends merely temporal or provincial conditions, Tillich’s theology of culture can simultaneously represent a vibrant and relevant *challenge* to contemporary cultural reflection, including the understanding of culture derived from the postcolonial critique which has so far been left unchallenged in this paper. As I have noted above, the theologian of culture cannot ignore developments within the cultural sciences. A theology of culture cannot, in Heywood Thomas’ phrase, “flout the canons” of cultural criticism; its theonomy must not be a new heteronomy in disguise. At the same time, the theologian is called to speak with a voice of prophetic criticism against the constraining secular reductionism of the cultural sciences. Theology of culture is, for Tillich, the normative discipline of the expression of “the underlying unity of the substance” of culture from the standpoint of that substance and as such must resist a total immersion in the concerns of the sciences of form. This resis-

tance applies just as much to postcolonial theory as to the colonial reason it rallies against.

In conclusion, therefore, I wish to propose that real possibilities exist for a contemporary theology of culture conceived along broadly Tillichian lines. Such a theology of culture is, in its formal open-endedness consonant with the concerns of present day critical theories such as those of postcolonialism. At the same time, however, in its refusal to allow itself to be wholly identified with these theories as well as its commitment to ultimate concern, such a theology of culture can serve as a constructive articulation of the theological import of the cultural expression of humanity’s self-interpretation.

I end with a passage from Tillich’s 1919 lecture already referred to:

Cultural-theological tasks have often been posed and solved by theological, philosophical, literary, and political-cultural analysts; but the task as such has not been comprehended nor its systematic significance recognized. No one has seen that what is at issue here is a cultural synthesis of the highest significance, a synthesis that not only gathers together the different cultural functions, but that also overcomes the culturally destructive contradiction of religion and culture by means of a sketch of a system of religious culture, in which a science which is in itself religious takes the place of the opposition of science and dogma, in which art that is in itself religious takes the place of the separation of art and cultic form, in which a form of the state that is in itself religious takes the place of the dualism of state and church, and so forth. The task of the theology of culture can be comprehended only in the light of this breadth of purpose.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> T.S. Eliot, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (London: Faber and Faber, 1948).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-19.

<sup>4</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1973), 4-5.

<sup>5</sup> For an account of the historical genesis of the (post)modern anthropological understanding of culture, see Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 3-60.

<sup>6</sup> Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory. A Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 3-4.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>8</sup> David Lloyd, "Regarding Ireland in a Postcolonial Frame" in idem., *Ireland After History* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1999), 38-9.

<sup>9</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 3

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 94

<sup>12</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason. Towards a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>14</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Ranajit Guha, eds., *Selected Subaltern Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 271.

<sup>16</sup> Spivak (1999), p. ix-x

<sup>17</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* tr. Constance Farrington (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1983) (first published as *Les damnés de la terre* in 1961), p. 180

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 170

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 171

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 187

<sup>21</sup> Kelton Cobb, "Reconsidering the Status of Popular Culture in Tillich's Theology of Culture," in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* LXIII, 1 (Spring 1995), 53-85

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 73

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 65

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 53, citing John P. Clayton, *The Concept of Correlation* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1986), 129

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 53

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 53-4

<sup>27</sup> English translation, "On the Idea of a Theology of Culture," in Victor Nuovo, *Visionary Science. A Translation of Tillich's 'On the Idea of a Theology of Culture' with an Interpretive Essay* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 23

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 29-34

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 29

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 34

<sup>32</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol I (London: SCM Press, 1997), 1.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 1-2

<sup>34</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 4.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 5

<sup>36</sup> Paul Tillich, "Aspects of a Religious Analysis of Culture," in MW/HW II, XXXX.

<sup>37</sup> Nuovo (1989), 29.

<sup>38</sup> Nuovo (1989), 26.

<sup>39</sup> Paul Tillich, *The System of the Sciences according to Objects and Methods* (1923), tr. Paul Wiebe (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell, 1981), 37

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 137

<sup>41</sup> James Luther Adams, 144.

<sup>42</sup> Tillich, *System of the Sciences*..., 139-40.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 140

<sup>44</sup> Nuovo, 29

<sup>45</sup> See Nuovo, 26.

<sup>46</sup> John Heywood Thomas, "The Problem of Defining a Theology of Culture with Reference to Paul Tillich," in Richard W. A. McKinney, ed., *Creation, Christ and Culture. Studies in Honor of T. F. Torrance* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1976), 282)

<sup>47</sup> Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, 29

<sup>48</sup> Nuovo, 29

**BRIDGING PSYCHOLOGY AND RELIGION:  
VIKTOR FRANKL'S EXISTENTIAL  
PSYCHOLOGY AND PAUL TILlich'S  
RELIGIOUS**

**Britt-Mari Sykes**

At various points during my doctoral studies, I have searched through Viktor Frankl's voluminous work in English trying to find reference to Paul Tillich. I have found two footnotes. The most intriguing reference is a footnote in Frankl's book, *The Will to Meaning*.<sup>1</sup> Frankl describes a lively debate he had with Tillich during the question and answer period following a lecture he gave at Harvard Divinity School. Without any further details about Tillich's question or Frankl's response, Frankl ends the footnote recalling that Tillich was satisfied with his answer. Given Frankl's ease with psychological, religious, philosophical, and political discourse as well as Tillich's similar interests and ease, I can only assume they had some knowledge of the other's work. Frankl and Tillich are in fact a very compatible pairing. Frankl's existential psychology and Tillich's religious philosophy have striking similarities. Together they provide a possible bridge between psychology and religion.

Frankl and Tillich approach human nature from a similar existential foundation. Each suggests that neither psychology nor religion alone can adequately portray human existence. While both are quick to point out that neither is an existentialist, they each rely on several essential existential pillars. Their similar approaches are strong reactions to the impact scientific models of human nature have had on both psychological and religious discourse through the twentieth century and which continue to prevail in this century. Human nature, Frankl and Tillich argue, is comprised of complex and varied elements that simultaneously come together to form an integrative whole. Tillich describes this reality of human existence as the "multidimensional unity of life."<sup>2</sup> To approach human nature from only one perspective, therefore, distorts the reality of human existence. Human existence is, Frankl and Tillich both argue, ambiguous, fraught with inherent contradictions. We have infinite potential yet our existence is finite. We possess inherent freedom and yet our individual freedom is simultaneously framed by the "facts" of life, the realities and contingencies of existence. Our biological, social, cultural, familial, economic, and political contexts, to name but a few,

constitute the "facts" of our existence, or our "destiny" as Tillich refers to them.

For the purpose of this brief paper, I want to introduce a specific example from Frankl's and Tillich's writings: the relationship between Frankl's concept of the spiritual dimension and Tillich's definition of religion as ultimate concern. Frankl's concept of the spiritual dimension seems to make more sense from a Tillichian perspective while it is more confusing when viewed from a purely psychological perspective. Tillich once expressed a desire to "enlarge the concept of theology" and bring it into dialogue with psychology. For Tillich, a counselor or therapist who "...gives counsel in religious and in psychoanalytic terms at the same time" seems quite appropriate.<sup>3</sup> Frankl is in fact such a therapist, one who gave "counsel in religious and psychoanalytic terms at the same time." Further, Frankl's psychological theory, known as Logotherapy, may well suit Tillich as a therapy that expands and enlarges the concept of psychology and brings it into dialogue with religion.

Frankl and Tillich have both expressed reservations about whether the role of the psychologist and theologian should be compared. Each acknowledges that a dialogue between the two can be mutually beneficial, "a relationship," Tillich describes, "of mutual interpenetration."<sup>4</sup> Where Tillich suggests "...how untenable theological positions are which want to exclude philosophical and psychological problems from theology,"<sup>5</sup> Frankl has described psychological theories as untenable when they exclude meaning and values. Questioning the meaning and value of life are not, according to Frankl, signs of pathology. "Every psychotherapist knows," Frankl wrote, "how often in the course of his psychiatric work the question of the meaning of life comes up. It helps little to know the patient's feelings of futility and philosophical despair has [sic] developed psychologically in this or that fashion...our patient has the right to demand that the ideas he [or she] advances be treated on the philosophical level."<sup>6</sup>

Frankl's Logotherapy specifically addresses the human experiences and expressions of meaninglessness, anxiety, and guilt. Frankl removed these experiences from pathological categories and classified them as existential realities. These realities, and how an individual experiences, expresses, and interprets them, contain the seeds for psychological growth, change and healing. Tillich describes these same universal existential realities as objects of salvation.

Echoing Frankl's critique of many psychological theories, Tillich writes,

They try with their methods to overcome existential negativity, anxiety, estrangement, meaninglessness, or guilt. They deny that they are universal, that they are existential in this sense. They call all anxiety, all guilt, all emptiness, illnesses which can be overcome as any illnesses can be, and they try to remove them. But this is impossible...<sup>7</sup>

Tillich had an obvious interest in psychology and the relationship between psychology and religion. Tillich at times used psychoanalytic discourse to enhance and broaden his definition of religion as "ultimate concern" to a post WWII audience. Psychoanalytic discourse was, therefore, an additional context or perspective that allowed Tillich to "sharpen and deepen his theological [and philosophical] understanding."<sup>8</sup> Tillich, however, remains a theologian and religious philosopher. Frankl's work, on the other hand, despite his being trained as a neurologist and psychiatrist, has been continually questioned.

Frankl is positioned very much "on the boundary" between psychology and religion. Critics of Frankl's work, within the discipline of psychology, have questioned and marginalized his theory of Logotherapy precisely for its inclusion of philosophical and religious questions. One critic stated, "You [Frankl] have unabashedly related secular therapeutics to matters of ultimate concern, about which Tillich has written so much..."<sup>9</sup> Another critic commented that, "...in spite of his rise to prominence in psychology...Frankl's impact on research and academic psychology has been limited by the philosophical and religious approach favored by Frankl and his followers."<sup>10</sup> Although this same psychologist sees tremendous value in Frankl's theory, especially as a supplement to other psychological models, he feels Frankl "overemphasizes spirituality."<sup>11</sup> These comments are typical of the response Frankl has received. Other comments include: Is Logotherapy a legitimate psychotherapy? Is it religious psychotherapy, secular religion, a philosophy of life? Clearly, Frankl's position is seen as incongruous with the aims of psychology and therapy. Questions about the "religious" themes in Logotherapy have always been asked and Frankl has always been ambiguous, always "on the boundary." In a 1995 interview when Frankl was 90, he stated, "I do not allow myself to confess personally whether I am religious or not. I am writing as a psychologist, I am writing as a psy-

chiatrist, I am writing as a man of the medical faculty."<sup>12</sup> In the same interview, Frankl added, "I have come to define religion as an expression, a manifestation, of not only man's will to meaning, but of man's longing for an ultimate meaning...the positing of a supermeaning that evades mere rational grasp is one of the main tenets of Logotherapy."<sup>13</sup>

The central tenet of Logotherapy is the will to meaning. Frankl considers our primary human motivation to be the will to meaning, or the active and deliberate search for meaning in our lives. Frankl cautiously refers to meaning(s) in the plural denoting an ongoing discovery of meaning(s) throughout the course of our individual lives. He is careful to distinguish between meaning(s) in the plural and meaning in the singular, referring perhaps to an ultimate meaning. Frankl always leaves the door open to interpret the meaning(s) we discover through human endeavor as partial manifestations of an Ultimate Meaning. Meaning(s) are discovered through our active participation in life, by going beyond our subjective selves (Frankl refers to this as transcendence). We discover meaning(s) through our relationships with others, through our attitudes and decisions, and in our experiences, our beliefs, and values. The will to meaning stems from what Frankl called the spiritual dimension.

In addition to the somatic and psychological dimensions of the human psyche, Frankl introduced a third "spiritual" dimension. The spiritual dimension represents an unconscious yet fully integrated foundation at the core of the human psyche. Frankl in fact refers to the spiritual dimension as the "essential ground,"<sup>14</sup> a term significantly similar to Tillich's "ground of being." Frankl suggests that each dimension is included in the next in ever more expanded layers, representing a model of expanded consciousness. The inclusion of this third dimension is necessary, according to Frankl, in order to complete a realistic psychological picture of human existence and experience.

Tillich's definition of religion aids in further illuminating the link between psychology and religion in Frankl's foundational concept of the "will to meaning" and the spiritual dimension of the psyche. Tillich makes a definitional distinction between religion in its "largest" and "narrowest" sense. He states, "religion, in the largest and most basic sense of the word, is ultimate concern. And ultimate concern is manifest in all creative functions of the human spirit."<sup>15</sup> Further, religion is an "ultimate concern about the meaning of one's life and the mean-

ing of being as such."<sup>16</sup> Religion, from Tillich's existential perspective, involves three things: first, ultimate concern; second, a continuity between the religious and secular realm; and third, the interdependence between religion and culture. "Religion," Tillich states, "is not a special function of man's spiritual life, but it is the dimension of depth in all of its functions."<sup>17</sup>

Frankl defines religion as that which "involves the most personal decisions man makes,"<sup>18</sup> implying that individual decisions and their unique expression involve our very existence as a whole. While Frankl at times denies there is an "ultimate meaning," only meaning(s) which are discovered and take shape within the realm of human existence,<sup>19</sup> he will also define religion as the search for ultimate meaning.<sup>20</sup> Frankl defines the spiritual dimension as representing an unconscious unity of human experience and endeavor but also adds that the spiritual dimension mediates between an ultimate meaning and the will to meaning, our primary motivation. This suggests that what Frankl is saying is that our primary motivation, the "will to meaning," is an inherent religious motivation which points toward an ultimate concern. The "will to meaning" implies that our human psyche is engaged in a religious quest.

Religion, according to Tillich, is "...the aspect of depth in the totality of the human spirit."<sup>21</sup> The spiritual dimension in Frankl's psychological model represents a similar "totality of the human spirit." Frankl's psychological theory places human experience in relation to a depth or unifying dimension. What it means to be human and the meaning of one's life (the "will to meaning") is of ultimate concern. Frankl states, "...whether expressed or implicit, this is an intrinsically human question. Challenging the meaning of life can therefore never be taken as a manifestation of morbidity or abnormality, but is rather the truest expression of the state of being human, the mark of the most human nature in man."<sup>22</sup> Tillich similarly suggests that "being religious means asking passionately the question of the meaning of our existence..."<sup>23</sup> Frankl has taken this question and developed a psychological theory around it. By bringing the question of meaning to the fore in therapy, Frankl preserves the dignity and value of each individual. Psychological growth and development thus become a uniquely creative, unfolding process "towards existence."

Thirty years ago in an article entitled "Religion and Existential Psychoanalysis," Frankl wrote,

Logotherapy tries to answer the psychotherapeutic needs of our time. Modern man needs to be considered as more than a psychophysical reality. His spiritual existence cannot be neglected. He is not a mere organism. He is a person...the worth of this person must be respected by psychotherapy in practice...The possibility of destroying a whole world was never so imminent as it is today, nor has a practical respect for the individual person ever been so necessary.<sup>24</sup>

Thirty years later these words resonate with the same sense of urgency. Frankl's implicit message of responsibility, both individual and collective, resonates today as we in the west struggle to balance our devotion to individual expression while recognizing the simultaneous need for community and partnership. Logotherapy's answer to the "psychotherapeutic needs of our time" is the cumulative influence of a psychological, religious, philosophical, and ethical approach to human nature. How do we in fact account for an individual's ability to believe, to have unwavering faith, to have one's faith shattered, to create, to dream, to destroy, to imagine, to love, to hate, to hope, to despair? How do we account for an individual's ability to construct meaningful ways of living and experiencing? When an individual in therapy describes experiences of meaninglessness, of love, of anger, or joy, do these experiences reside solely within the realm of psychology? How does the discipline of psychology broach such questions, or answers, if answers can, or need be, found?

Tillich once commented that he could not "deny that there [was] a correspondence between reality and the human spirit which [was] probably expressed most adequately in the concept of meaning."<sup>25</sup> Frankl's psychological theory, with its foundational concepts of the "will to meaning" and the spiritual dimension has captured this "correspondence" between reality and the human spirit.

<sup>1</sup> Viktor E. Frankl, *The Will to Meaning* (New York: Meridian, 1988), 26.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol.3, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 15.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Tillich, "The Theological Significance of Existentialism and Psychoanalysis," in *Theology of Culture* (London:Oxford University Press, 1964), 114.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>6</sup> Viktor E. Frankl, "From Psychotherapy to Logotherapy", in *Pastoral Psychology VII* (1956), 58.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Tillich, "The Theological Significance of Existentialism and Psychoanalysis," 122-123.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Tillich, *On the Boundary* (London: Wm. Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., 1967), xix.

<sup>9</sup> Bernard Steinzor, "Review of *The Will to Meaning* by Viktor E. Frankl," *Psychiatry and Social Science Review*, Vol. 3, 9, (1969), 28.

<sup>10</sup> Paul T.P. Wong, "Meaning-Centred Counselling," in Paul T. P. Wong and Prem S. Fry eds., *The Human Quest for Meaning: A Handbook of Psychological Research and Clinical Applications* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc., 1998), 400.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Matthew Scully, "Viktor Frankl at Ninety: An Interview," *First Things* 52 (April 1995), 7.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>14</sup> Viktor E. Frankl, *The Unconscious God* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1985), 110.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Tillich, "Religion as a Dimension in Man's Spiritual Life," in *Theology of Culture*, 7.

<sup>16</sup> Paul Tillich, *Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 6.

<sup>18</sup> Frankl, *The Unconscious God*, 64.

<sup>19</sup> Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, 55.

<sup>20</sup> Frankl, *The Unconscious God*, 12.

<sup>23</sup> F. Forrester Church ed., *The Essential Tillich* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1987), 1.

<sup>24</sup> Viktor E. Frankl, "Religion and Existential Psychotherapy," in the *Gordon Review* VI (1961), 9-10.

<sup>25</sup> Paul Tillich, *On the Boundary*, 83.

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