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GLOBAL FLOWS, HEAD SCARVES, AND FINITE FREEDOM: TILLICH ON GLOBALIZATION

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This paper probes Paul Tillich's conceptions of freedom and nationalism and their significance for current expressions in globalized contexts. There are three central sections of the paper: (1) an analysis of various features of globalization through the works of Arjun Appadurai, Saskia Sassen, Amy Chua, and Amartya Sen; (2) an examination of Tillich's writings on freedom and nationalism in his 1933 *The Socialist Decision* and his later works; and (3) an investigation of a case study, the recent legislation banning conspicuous religious symbols in French public schools, and possible Tillichian rejoinders. My thesis holds that Tillich's reflections remain instructive for the present globalized contexts because they protect an irreducible selfhood and freedom (tantamount to a transcendent imperative over concrete circumstances), yet they also affirm this selfhood and freedom as shaped by others (manifested as participation within relationships and communities). Tillich encapsulates these claims in a participation-transcendence dynamic that bears the seriousness of a moral imperative without relinquishing attention to the concrete situation.

Section One: Themes in Globalization

The understandings of globalization vary markedly,[1] but a frequently identified feature is the interpenetration between the global and the local. Sociologist Roland Robertson, for example, has stated that "globalization—in the broadest sense, the compression of the world—has involved and increasingly involves the creation and the incorporation of locality, processes which themselves largely shape, in turn, the compression of the world as a whole."[2] This compression of local and global expresses the fluidity of freedom and selfhood within a post-national world; more dramatically, this fluidity becomes manifested as conflict. As Saskia Sassen puts it, "[g]lobalization is a process that generates contradictory spaces, characterized by contestation, internal differentiation, continuous border crossings."[3] The balkanization of these contradictory spaces appears prominently in the global city, and Sassen analyzes the concrete implications of spaces of powerlessness. The juxtaposition of power and powerlessness can erode social justice when manual laborers, principally women and immigrants, "are never represented as part of the global economy, [even if]

they are in fact part of the infrastructure of jobs involved in running and implementing the global economic system."[4] Though they serve an irreplaceable function in the global economy, service workers in the global city are rendered invisible by economic structures that instrumentalize labor and destabilize and vitiate individual identities and freedoms.

In addressing such phenomena, anthropologist Arjun Appadurai describes our decolonized worlds in terms of social imagination and constellations of global flows. Global flows express the disjunctures and de-territorialization that increasingly compel individuals to re-imagine their own identities and freedoms. Appadurai insists that the Weberian presuppositions about ethnicity as grounded principally in biological and genealogical kinship must be abandoned in favor of a view of ethnicity that "takes the conscious and imaginative construction and mobilization of difference as its core."[5] Whether manifested as ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, or ideoscapes, disjunctive, but ubiquitous global flows impact these imaginative constructions by blurring and exploding traditional boundaries and preconceptions. Appadurai denominates transnational cultural movements—funded by international migration—as "diasporic public spheres."[6] Within these diasporic spheres lies "the nationalist genie, never perfectly contained in the bottle of the territorial state, [which] is now itself diasporic."[7] Weberian conceptions of nationalism and ethnicity as aggregate natural facts are superseded by nationalism and ethnicity as freedom and identities produced by the collective imagination. The blunting of such imagination has reductive ramifications, for it obviates collective identity and individual self-formation (*Bildung*). Tillich had anticipated such deleterious ramifications in contemplating *die Judenfrage* in 1953: "The individual human being who belongs to a nation or to a race is no longer regarded as an individual. One sees the individual only through the image of the type…Such stereotyping…was disastrous for the relationship between the Germans and the Jews."[8] If collective imagination underlies nationalism, we must probe the relationship between freedom and nationalism, particularly freedom as construed in utilitarian terms of rational choice theory and wealth maximization by neo-classical economics. Here the biases of Western sensibilities confront a global world of marginalized, displaced, and heterogeneous persons. Amy Chua disabuses views that promote free-market democracy as *the* definitive strategy for

creating a secure and productive society in a globalized context: "Because markets and democracy benefit different ethnic groups in societies [with market-dominant minorities], the pursuit of free market democracy produces highly unstable and combustible conditions."[9] Chua points, for example, to Filipino Chinese who, though just 1 to 2 percent of the population, hold controlling interest in the principal commercial banks, department store chains, and major supermarkets of the Philippines.[10] She examines similar phenomena in the case studies of Brazil, Cameroon, and Russia as well as, on a broader context, anti-American sentiment. Chua does not espouse anti-democratic principles, but she cautions that democracy as presently conceived and implemented—that is, driven by a proposed synthesis between market-driven economics and democratically-achieved consensus—cannot sustain freedom and flourishing because majorities do not adequately participate in these processes. This disenfranchisement of majorities has induced ethnic hatred and violence, but it has also attenuated the links between material, market goods and national identity: "A principal focus of nationalist and ethnonationalist anti-market reactions in the non-Western world has been the humiliating domination by 'outsiders' of a nation's economic symbols: oil wells in Latin America, gold mines in South Africa, forests in Burma and Indonesia, Lomonosov porcelain in Russia, or other sectors that have come symbolically to be associated with national identity."[11] Chua recommends that democracies and markets that expand participation, particularly ways that expand ownership among the poor,[12] can reconnect nationalism and freedom in ways that promote justice. We will see below the extent to which Tillich promotes democracy as a critical corrective to purely nationalistic impulses, but a corrective that itself be restrained by the imperatives of justice.

Economist and philosopher Amartya Sen also argues that our globalized context necessitates the rethinking the nature of freedom. Rather than construe freedom in neoclassical or utilitarian terms as achievement, Sen holds that conceptions of freedom should attend to "the *processes* that allow freedom of actions and decisions, and the actual *opportunities* that people have, given their personal and social circumstances."[13] Similar to Chua,[14] Sen envisages freedom as a capacious set of social and political individual opportunities broadly conceived as capabilities. Sen's capabilities approach acutely recognizes the significance of moral values and nonmoral

goods, and, consequently, the importance of transforming social perceptions about market and non-market freedoms. Sen posits that a sense of justice—a sense discarded by the separation of fact and value by neo-classical and utilitarian models of economics—can be a decisively motivating factor for economic action: "Social values can play—and have played—an important part in the success of various forms of social organization, including the market mechanism, democratic politics, elementary civil and political rights, provision of basic public goods, and institutions for public action and protest."[15] Sen points to the Grameen Bank and Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) in Bangladesh, which not only afford women more substantial financial opportunities but also enable them to participate more fully in social and economic affairs, thereby effectuating social change and redressing imbalanced power dynamics.[16]

Section Two: Tillich's Participation-Transcendence Dynamic

In his 1933 text, *The Socialist Decision*, suppressed by the newly entrenched Nazis, Tillich fleshes out the disparate roots of nationalism. Gregory Baum remarks that, "Tillich was one of the few anti-fascist writers of the thirties on who did not oppose nationalism on principle."[17] Tillich's perspective, as Jean Richard notes, must be qualified and nuanced. In *The Socialist Decision*, Tillich develops a trenchant critique of the bourgeois and romantic elements of nationalism, but he also censures present forms of socialism. Tillich develops a social theory that distinguishes two types of consciousness, consciousness of origin and consciousness of demand. In my reading, the former pertains to participation, or freedom shaped in and through relationships and communities, and the latter pertains to transcendence, or a transcendent imperative over external circumstances. This dynamic helps illuminate our earlier discussion of freedom as participation in a global context, but it also contributes the unique dimension of transcendence.

The Socialist Decision touches upon one aspect of the participation-transcendence dynamic, namely, the historical and universal character of the socialist principle. The socialist principle instantiates this dynamic because it "is a particular principle"[18] yet "is rooted in the primordial human element."[19] Put differently, bearing the influence of Heidegger, Tillich submits that "[t]he universal and the particular element—human being [*Sein*] and the proletarian existence [*Dasein*]—therefore do stand alongside each

other in an unrelated way."[20] This relationship creates tension, but, unlike political romanticism that is fettered by contradiction or "the subjective, accidental, arbitrary elements in that which contradicts itself,"[21] the socialist principle experiences conflict—and here Tillich appropriates Schelling's abyss and Kant's antinomy that locate conflict in freedom itself—conflict that "is not rooted in the knowing subject, in the accidental and arbitrary, but in the thing itself."[22] The conflict of socialism lies in the fact that it seeks to "break through national limitations"[23] but in a way that "is dependent for its own realization on national powers of origin."[24] Socialism converts itself when it does not fully repudiate the consciousness of origin, maintains its "rational form"[25] and therefore avoids the tendency to relapse into "utopianism,"[26] but challenges critically in and through its prophetic character. Socialism's prophetic character, instantiated in the Hebrew prophets' impassioned pleas for righteousness and justice or Marx's resistance to objectification, preserves freedom because it marshals "the counter-movement against this process of dehumanization, against the tendency of capitalism to turn people into psychological mechanisms calculable pleasure-pain reactions."[27]

The prophetic character of socialism becomes critical in its demand for justice that expands participation.[28] The powers of origin are interrogated, restrained, and transformed by the critical corrective of democracy, which itself is radicalized and restrained. As Tillich writes, "[t]he construction of the socialist state must be carried out within the tension between the powers of origin that support the structure of society and the democratic corrective that subjects it to the demand of justice."[29] In unifying power and justice, particular and universal converge in a necessarily perduring tension that one transcends, but from which one does not fully separate.[30] Jean Richard, who, like Gregory Baum, applies the insights of The Social Decision to contemporary discussions of the Province of Quebec and Canadian nationalism, envisages an analogy between the nation and the family. Jesus' prophetic critique reconfigures the family into a more inclusive model of neighbor love, where the family "is broken but it is not abolished nor eliminated. It is broken in so far as it is opened to a wider, more universal dimension."[31] To be sure, upon coming to the United States, Tillich evacuates his earlier language of central planning and the utopian ideals of socialism; nevertheless, he retains socialism's vision of the prophetically critical universal dimension. The smaller community of the nation remains present, but it is transmuted into a more inclusive notion of the reunion of the whole.

In later writings, Tillich continues to expatiate on the dynamic of participation and transcendence with respect to freedom and nationalism. In undertaking an extended historical excursus of courage vis-à-vis participation and individualization, Tillich in the Courage To Be juxtaposes, on the one hand, the mythologization of participation, including the "relapse to tribal collectivism [that] was readily visible in Nazism,"[32] and, on the other hand, the denial of participation, including the "romantic irony [that] elevated the individual beyond all content and made him empty: he was no longer obliged to participate in anything seriously."[33] Tillich later identifies the individuation-participation dynamic as one of the ontological polarities in his Systematic Theology. Transcendence also remains central to his analysis of nationalism because nationalism can assume the form of ultimacy.[34] This ultimacy frequently becomes demonic when nationalism "claims infinity without having it."[35] Tillich conflates nationalism and the demonic when writing in 1938 during the zenith of Nazi power: "At the present time nationalism is the most evident and the most dangerous incarnation of the demonic principle in general, especially where, as in various places, it has assumed an explicitly religious form."[36] Nationalism signifies the collective consciousness of origin, but the critical consciousness of the prophetic voices necessitates transformation and transcendence. Tillich preserves the tension of the participation-transcendence dynamic when he defends the irreducible value of German nationalism in the postwar context. Writing in 1944, he upholds the prerogatives of German sovereignty and integrity: "But if Germany is divided into three sovereign nations…then the greatest irredenta in world history will be created."[37] These two passages, one condemning the demonic character of nationalism and the other affirming the self-determination of Germany, illustrate the complexity of the participation-transcendence dynamic.

Section Three: Headscarves, Secularity, and Religious Freedom

In 1905, France ratified the Law of Separation, where Article One of the Constitution affirmed France as a republic, indivisible, secular, democratic, and social, and resolved the issue of church and

state. The pursuit of secularity, *laïcité*, enabled France to disentangle itself from perceived Catholic coercion. Nearly one hundred years later, the government imposed a ban on conspicuous religious symbols in public schools, or neutral spaces, which was, according to a Chirac spokesperson, "a decision that respects our history, our customs, and our values...To do nothing would be irresponsible. It would be wrong."[38] Critics point to the ambiguity of the term "conspicuous" as politically motivated, given that it allows smaller Christian crosses but disallows the larger Islamic headscarves and Sikh turbans. The five million Muslims in France, roughly eight percent of the population and expanding, have demonstrated, but largely complied with the ban since its enactment into law this past September.

The meaning of the veil, particularly its re-emergence in the last few decades, has generated polemical debates: is it repressive to Muslim women, a tool of patriarchy, or is it a symbolic vehicle for Muslim women to reclaim their Islamic identity and retain respectability in an increasingly secularized world? The confounding problem of otherness, eloquently articulated by Edward Said and others, continues to exacerbate understandings between Western and Arab views of freedom. Frequent misunderstandings regarding *hijab* (religious modesty) through veiling such as reductionism problematize these debates and obfuscate the tremendous diversity of cultures of the Arab Middle East, including different forms of veils. I cannot adequately address such debates here, but our earlier discussion of contradictory spaces again becomes relevant. Through interviews with Muslim women of varying ages, nationalities, and life-situations, Helen Watson argues that such narratives illustrate the ways "[e]ach woman is 'caught between worlds' in the sense of facing conflicting pressures and managing competing cultural values, tradition and persons aspirations."[39] The interstitial space between worlds, what Tillich identified as the boundary, reflects the intersection of traditional values and globalized contexts.

Given his interest in participation and transcendence as well as remarks about the perils and necessity of nationalism, how might Tillich respond to the banning of religious symbols in public schools? Tillich's writings on religion and nationalism attract the attention of many thinkers, including the United States Supreme Court which consulted Tillich's writings to adjudicate the claims of conscientious objectors in *United States v. Seeger*, 380 U.S. 163 (1965).[40] Tillich would be attentive to the implica-

tions of the ban as part of his theology of culture: "A theology which does not deal seriously with the criticism of religion by secular thought and some particular forms of secular faith, such as liberal humanism, nationalism, and socialism, would be '*a-kairos*'—missing the demand of the historical moment."[41] Does the *kairos* compel us to consider the ban as disclosive of the meaning of participation in a polycentric and deliberatively secular society? Tillich's concerns regarding the ban would pertain to the blunting of depth-content and self-formation and the envisioned separations between culture, morality, and religion. Self-transcendence occurs in and through participation, but, in light of our earlier analysis of globalization and Tillich's own reflections, this participation cannot be limited to the nation: "There is no self-transcendence under the dimension of the spirit without the constitution of the moral self by the unconditional imperative, and this self-transcendence cannot take form except within the universe of meaning created in the cultural act."[42] The ban not only fractures culture and religion, but it also seeks to eliminate the interpenetration of participation and transcendence.

Tillich calls the denial of the symbols that express ultimate concern—symbols that reconfigure freedom and self-formation as transcendent but mediated by participation—a sacramental social attitude. In his 1923 "Basic Principles of Religious Socialism," he writes: "The personality is completely dominated by sacramental relations to the soil, possessions, the family, the tribe, the class, the nation, and the politico-cultic hierarchy."[43] The demand for justice, heard in the prophetic critique of justice and expressed as the moral imperative, enjoins neutrality, but this neutrality cannot, according to Tillich, remove risk, courage, or doubt. In *Dynamics of Faith*, Tillich discusses two cases, one where society and the community of faith are nearly identical and one where they are distinct. In the rare case of the former, Tillich explains that if "[civil authorities] try to enforce spiritual conformity and are successful they have removed the risk and courage which belong to the act of faith."[44] In the case of latter, which resembles the situation in France, Tillich points to a common denominator that holds different religious groups together in a democratic society; he cautions that this denominator may be constitutionally upheld but that it cannot usurp ultimate concern:

This denominator may be more secular or more religious. In any case it is an outgrowth of faith, and its expression—as in the American Consti-

tution—is affirmed in an attitude which sometimes has the unconditional character of an ultimate concern, but more often the conditional character of a preliminary concern of the highest degree. Just for this reason the civil authorities should not try to prohibit the expression of doubt about such a basic law, although they must enforce the legal consequences of it.[45]

The ban on religious symbols prohibits expressions of doubt and courage and, with them, the possibility of self-criticism. Tillich's development of the participation-transcendence dynamic upholds freedom as uniquely experienced but determined in and through relationality, community, and the experience of ultimate concern. Freedom becomes actualized as an imperative that, though transcendent, calls us to be who we are as we self-critically transform ourselves in our globalized contexts.[46]

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[1] For a good overview of contemporary literature on globalization, please see Mauro Guillén, "Is Globalization Civilizing, Destructive or Feeble? A Critique of Five Key Debates in the Social Science Literature," *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 (2001): 235-260.

[2] Robertson, "Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity," in *Global Modernities*, edited by Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson, London: SAGE Publications, 1995, p. 40.

[3] Sassen, *Globalization and Its Discontents: Essays on the New Mobility of People and Money*, New York: The New Press, 1998, p. XXXIV.

[4] Ibid., 87.

[5] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996, p. 14.

[6] Ibid., p. 147.

[7] Ibid., pp. 160-161.

[8] Tillich, "The Jewish Question: A Christian and a German Problem," *Bulletin of the North American Paul Tillich Society* XXX:3 (2004): p. 22, Translated by Marion Pauck and Wilhelm Pauck, Introduction by Marion Pauck, Lecture 4.

[9] Chua, *World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability*, New York: Doubleday, 2003, p. 9.

[10] Ibid., pp. 36-37.

[11] Ibid., p. 285.

[12] Ibid., p. 268.

[13] Sen, *Development as Freedom*, New York: Anchor Books, 1999, p. 17 original emphasis.

[14] It is important to note that Sen advocates more adamantly than Chua the import of democracy as sustaining bulwarks for these opportunities. For example, Sen argues that democracy provides India's stability and security because its working democracy holds together India's "ungainly, unlikely, inelegant combination of differences" (*Development as Freedom*, p. 157) and, through more equitable distribution of income for destitute people, helps prevent famine (Ibid., pp. 178-184). In developing the latter point, Sen asserts that "[s]ince independence and the installation of a multiparty democratic system [in India], there has been no substantial famine" (p. 180).

[15] Ibid., p. 261.

[16] Ibid., p. 116 and p. 201.

[17] Baum, *Nationalism, Religion, and Ethics*, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001, p. 63.

[18] Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, Translated by Franklin Sherman, New York: Harper and Row, 1977, p. 64.

[19] Ibid., 64.

[20] Ibid., 64.

[21] Ibid., 64.

[22] Ibid., 64.

[23] Ibid., 87.

[24] Ibid., 87.

[25] Ibid., 110.

[26] Ibid., 104.

[27] Ibid., 133. Influenced by critical theory and Heidegger, Fred Dallmayr perceives culture as a form of resistance against globalization: Culture is important as an antidote to the ongoing process of global standardization and Westernization, a source of resistance for non-Western societies in the grip of Western hegemony" (*Alternative Visions: Paths in the Global Village*, New York: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, 1998).

[28] In terms of the expansion of participation, Tillich declares: "*The exercise of power appears to be just when all members of a society can acknowledge that their own will is contained in the will of the whole*" (Ibid., p. 139 original emphasis).

[29] Ibid., p. 142 original emphasis.

[30] This resembles Tillich's account of ecstasy that transcends reason and ontological structure without severing the connections with them.

[31] Jean Richard, "The Question of Nationalism," *Religion in the New Millennium: Theology in the Spirit of Paul Tillich*, edited by Raymond Bulman and Frederick Parrella, Macon: Mercer University Press, 2001, p. 42.

[32] Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, Second Edition, Introduction by Peter Gomes, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000, p. 97.

[33] Ibid., p. 117.

[34] In *Dynamics of Faith*, Tillich describes the character of nationalism as an ultimate concern, which "demands that all other concerns, economic well-being, heath and life, family, aesthetic and cognitive truth, justice and humanity, be sacrificed" (*Dynamics of Faith*, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957, p. 2).

[35] *Dynamics of Faith*, p. 11. Tillich concludes: "The reaction of despair in people who have experienced the breakdown of their national claims is an irrefutable proof of the idolatrous character of their national concern" (pp. 17-18).

[36] "The Kingdom of God and History," *Theology of Peace*, edited and introduced by Ronald Stone, Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990, p. 49. The Nazis failed to appreciate the destructive and finite character of their envisioned thousand year reign: "Whether a group comes into existence in the natural way or in the way of common interest, it is a transitory group. It must come to an end when the technical or biological conditions of its existence vanish" (*Dynamics of Faith*, p. 119).

[37] "Power and Justice in the Postwar World" in Ibid., p. 100. Tillich reckons that economic and administrative work can mitigate excessive nationalism: "If the masses realize that they can live and that there is hope for their future—something they had entirely lost under the system of social insecurity of disintegrating capitalism, no nationalistic propaganda" (p. 101).

[38] As quoted in Noelle Knox, "Effort To Ban Head Scarves In France Sets Off Culture Clash," *USA Today*, from www.usatoday.com (consulted June 28, 2004).

[39] Watson, "Women and the Veil: Personal Responses to Global Process," in *Islam, Globalization, and Postmodernity*, edited by Akbar Ahmed and Hastings Donnan, London: Routledge, 1994, 151. Other scholars point to the positive dimensions of the veil. Soroya Duval describes the freedom of mobility enjoyed by women where "they are able to move freely, attend lessons and weddings with the other sisters, without requiring the consent of their husbands, fathers, or brothers" ("New Veils and New Voices: Islamist Women's Groups in Egypt," in *Women and Islamization*, p. 62). Additionally, Anouar Majid describes the veil as a means to retrieve one's identity: "In countries where the veil is not mandated, many women choose it both as a reaction to the failed bourgeois nationalist program of the postindependence era (although there is still a great deal of male coercion) and as part of the mainstream, middle-class rejection of the secular ideologies that have dominated public life" (*Unveiling Traditions: Postcolonial Islam in a Polycentric World*, p. 117).

A Journey behind the Canvas:

[40] *United States v. Seeger* involved the rights of three conscientious objectors to claim exemption from military service under section 6(j) of Congress's Universal Military Training and Service Act. One of the objectors did not appeal to a traditional belief in God, but rather belief in intellectual and moral integrity espoused by Plato, Aristotle, and Spinoza. The Court determined that the beliefs of the objectors met the criteria that qualified them for an exemption. In arriving at its decision written by Justice Clark, the Court consulted various theologians, including Tillich, "whose views the Government concedes would come within the statute, [and who] identifies God not as a projection 'out there' or beyond the skies but as the ground of our very being." (website: http:caselaw.com; consulted October 24, 2004). To justify its granting the requests for exemption, the Court quotes *The Shaking of the Foundations* where Tillich describes ultimate concern and the dissolution of traditional conceptions of God.

[41] *Systematic Theology*, Volume 3, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963, p. 6.

[42] Ibid., p. 95.

[43] Tillich, "Basic Principles of Religious Socialism," translated by James Luther Adams and Victor Nuovo, in *Political Expectation*, introduction by James Luther Adams, New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1971, p. 73.

[44] *Dynamics of Faith*, 27.

[45] Ibid., pp. 27-28.

[46] Among myriad examples in Tillich's writings, we can point to a passage affirming that the unconditional character of the moral imperative cannot be imposed upon us from without: "We cannot be obedient to the commands of a stranger even if he is God. Nor can we take unconditionally the content of the moral imperative from human authorities like traditions, conventions, political or religious authorities. There is no ultimate authority from them. One is largely dependent on them, but none of them is unconditionally valid" (*Theology of Culture*, 136).