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Self, Otherness, Theology, and Ontology: A Critical Engagement between Tillich and Kristeva, Levinas, and Bataille

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Paul Tillich would no doubt be fascinated with postmodern thinkers, whom—to a considerable extent—he had anticipated in his critical appreciation of Nietzsche, Expressionism, depth psychology, and the "death of God" theologians. My purpose here is to analyze Tillich's conceptions of self with respect to postmodern thinkers who characterize the self as the displaced self, anti-cogito, or the self as constituted by otherness. Postmodern thinkers summarily assert that the self is to be conceptualized in relational terms vis-à-vis the alterity of the other, who is trace, infinity, or lordship (Emmanuel Levinas), abject (Julia Kristeva), or ecstatic rupture (Georges Bataille). These perspectives interrogate Tillich's theology as to its capacity to accommodate notions of otherness. They deconstruct concepts and images that totalize (e.g., being), privilege the unity of the self, or reduce otherness to sameness. They therefore present a formidable challenge to Tillich's system, including, for example, his notions of self-centeredness, self-transcendence, and the basic ontological structure of self and world. My essay, however, attempts to render this tension productive by highlighting the fruits for both interlocutors.

My thesis is three-fold. First, I affirm sustainability of Tillich's project by probing the relationship between self, other, ontology, and theology through the mediation of Oliver Davies's recent work. Second, I argue that critical engagement between Tillich and Kristeva, Levinas, and Bataille exposes the limits of Tillich's notions of otherness, particularly with respect to alterity, transcendence, and embodiment. Third, I contend that Tillich's concepts of symbol and love as reunion preserve participation and selfhood and problematize notions of meaninglessness and subjugation of self to other in Kristeva, Levinas, and Bataille.

The Sustainability of Tillich's Ontology in the Contemporary Contexts

Is Tillich's ontology still tenable within the antimetaphysical milieu of postmodernity? To ascertain the answer we will consider the recent work of Oliver Davies. In *A Theology of Compassion: Meta-physics of Difference and the Renewal of Tradition*, Davies reconceptualizes the language of being to construct a kenotic Christian ontology of difference. Appealing to Levinas and Ricoeur to address relationality in the post-Holocaust context of annihilation, Davies reinterprets being as "the medium of relation between self and other"[1] and ontology as a narrativity of being disclosed through language-based exchanges.[2] Davies problematizes conceptions within traditional metaphysics that emphasize being as a unity[3] because they perpetuate essentialism and exclude and vitiate the concrete other. Yet, given the postmodern emphasis on fragmentation and attenuation of the self, Davies affirms the necessity of retrieving the language of being: "[T]he language of being offers an important resource for articulating and drawing forth the intrinsic unity of the self which, albeit deferred, is the ground for the knowledge of the world as such."[4] He therefore develops a theology of compassion that construes ontology as relationality committed to "the absolute primacy of the ethical relation with respect to the concrete other."[5]

Davies posits that the self's affirmation of otherness concomitantly enriches or deepens the self's existence, that is, the self's being. Compassion compels kenosis, "a riskful giving and an opening of the self before existence,"[6] that interconnects existence and ontology because "heightened existence represents a higher degree of ontological density."[7] Moreover, Davies envisages that self-displacement of compassion "sets up a flow of enriched existence which draws others towards those who in this way, as if by the attraction of being itself"[8] and reinscribes self and other in terms of being and existence.

Davies, however, notes that the ontologies of Tillich, Bultmann, and Rahner "seem out of place in the vigorously language-centred and deconstructive landscapes of the present day."[9] There are no additional references to Tillich's ontology, but evaluation of the criticisms with respect to Rahner can be illuminating for study of Tillich. Davies writes: "We differ from Rahner then to the extent that knowledge of the other is determined by…the ethical particularity of the relation of the self to the other, and that transcendence is a possibility which awakens *from within* that relation and not from an a priori ground of all knowing which encompasses it."[10] I contend that this worry about an a priori ground negating relationality and difference appears misplaced. Among possible Tillichian rejoinders,[11] Tillich's in-

heritance of various aspects of Schelling's philosophy disavows essentialism and accounts for otherness. Tillich affirms the interconnections between essence and existence: "[Schelling] did not, however, abolish what Hegel and he had done before. He preserved a philosophy of essence. Against this he put the philosophy of existence. Existentialism is not a philosophy which can stand on its own legs. Actually it has no legs. It is always based on a vision of the essential structure of reality."[12] This attempted fusion of existence and the essential structure of reality frames Tillich's correlative method and his conceptions of self and reality (e.g., the tension between life and system and being and non-being).

Schelling attempts to reintegrate essence and existence because he integrates the "negative philosophy" of the a priori system of absolute Essence and the "positive philosophy" of absolute Existent. Schelling's thought bears the influence of Jacob Boehme, whom Schelling first encountered in the work of Franz von Baader. This influence compels Schelling to posit that God assumes Being through a dialectic of Yes and No; in similar manner, humans experience freedom as spirit, but through contradiction.[13] Drawing upon Boehme's notion of abyss in God, Schelling in *Ages of the World* states: "Because the Godhead, in itself neither having being nor not having being, is, with respect to external Being, *necessarily* a consuming No, it must therefore also…necessarily be an eternal Yes, reinforcing Love, the essence of all essences."[14]

Tillich traces shifts within Schelling's corpus, notably Schelling's transformation from his early philosophy of identity between nature and spirit (articulated as a philosophy of nature in his 1800 *The System of Transcendental Idealism*) to his examination of the self-contradiction of the will and the problem of evil (expressed in his 1809 *On the Nature of Human*) to his later exploration of the dynamic of the finite and the infinite and the affirmation of existence in positive philosophy (discussed in his 1811-1815 *The Ages of the World* and the most influential on Tillich). The later Schelling's concept of potency of being is particularly fecund for Tillich's understanding of ontology, self, and otherness.[15] From his reading of Schelling, Tillich places emphasis on the divine process of dialectical Yes and No that undergirds God's existence as a personal being: "Now, however, Schelling asserted: God *exists*. He has separated himself from his ground and has won existence [for himself] as living personality,

by letting his ground hold sway over itself and by struggling against it."[16] Tillich asserts that without the otherness within God, there would no being, no life, and no personal God.[17] To be sure, there are differences between Tillich and Schelling,[18] but it is apparent that Schelling significantly informs Tillich's understanding of the relationship between self, otherness, and reality. Tillich's nuanced understanding, in my judgment, gainsays Davies's criticisms and attests to the viability of Tillich's writings in a postmodern context.

Postmodernity, Otherness, and Ontology: Bataille on Ecstasy and Nonknowledge

Bataille, Kristeva, and Levinas in disparate ways address suffering, exploitation, and annihilation in the world;[19] each is concerned with the relationship between self and other in terms of communication—but not communication couched in terms of rational discourse or systematic project. Bataille asks: How can one communicate to the other the excess of desire and experience without explaining away the profundity of this experience or this other? Through Nietzschean inspired fragments, Bataille insists that one must disentangle knowledge, communication, and self: "If we didn't know how to dramatize, we wouldn't be able to leave ourselves...But a sort of rupture—in anguish—leaves us at the limit of tears: in such a case we lose ourselves, we forget ourselves and communicate with an elusive beyond."[20] This anguished rupture functions to undercut the totality of knowledge or the "satisfaction"[21] of the "prison"[22] of the Hegelian project, Bataille's primary target.[23] Rupture unfolds ecstasy, which Bataille understands to be a "contestation of knowledge"[24] or "the defeat of thought"[25] that discloses excess without annihilating otherness and demands supplication of the self in the "horror of surrender."[26] This horror of surrender entails anguish and despair, yet it is manifested as rapture and joy. Shorn of the limits of discursive experience that enclose the self and sublimate otherness, ecstasy engenders an "inner presence which we cannot apprehend without a startled jump of our entire being, detesting the servility of discourse."[27] In the realm of inner presence, ecstasy, sacrifice, eroticism, laughter, and the sacred converge in a transcendence that eviscerates project and creates a situation "whereby life situates itself in proportion to the impossible."[28]

A conspicuous example of ecstatic attempts to surmount the "servility of discourse" occurs in

Bataille's contemplating the image of a decapitated Chinese man. Subjected to gruesome torture or, as Bataille puts it, laceration, the afflicted man paradoxically appears to Bataille to be in a sublime state of joy. Despite ethical questions regarding instrumentality raised by interpreters such as Amy Hollywood,[29] contemplating the victim induces rupture in Bataille: "I loved him with a love in which the sadistic instinct played no part: he communicated his pain to me or perhaps the excessive nature of his pain, and it was precisely that which I was seeking, not so as to take pleasure in it, but in order to ruin in me that which is opposed to ruin."[30] No narrative can explain this relationality, for that would be tantamount to Hegelian satisfaction, not transcendent ecstasy. This ecstatic experience constitutes a sacrifice that is effusive in that "it destroys the depths of the heart, the depths of being, by unveiling them."[31] Though Bataille abrogates the soteriological[32] underpinnings of the Passion, the cross communicates intense pain that disabuses self-interested project.

Tillich's Response to Bataille: Ecstasy and Rational Structure

Is Tillich's work tantamount to "project"? To address Bataille's criticisms, let us consider Tillich's employment of the term ecstasy. Tillich conceives of ecstasy in terms of a self-transcendence experienced in and through rational knowledge; unlike Bataille, Tillich does not perceive an incompatibility between ecstasy, knowledge (reason), self, and other. Tillich's basic ontological structure of self and world does not preclude notions of otherness or ecstasy; *a fortiori*, ecstasy is necessitated by the otherness of non-being that threatens self and world. Tillich describes the tumultuous, but intimate relationship between reason, ecstasy, and the encounter with non-being:

> The threat of nonbeing, grasping the mind, produces the 'ontological shock' in which the negative side of the mystery of being—its abysmal element is experienced. 'Shock' points to a state of mind in which the mind is thrown out of its normal balance, shaken in its structure. Reason reaches it boundary line, is thrown back upon itself, and then is driven again to its extreme situation.[33]

Tillich, therefore, concurs with Bataille's vision of the traumatic effects of ecstasy, but he does not equate this disorientation with Bataille's non-knowledge. Appropriated from Scriptural and Neo-platonic, sources,[34] ecstasy according to Tillich "is the classical term for this state of being grasped by the Spiritual Presence" that "drives the spirit of man beyond itself without destroying its essential, i.e., rational, structure."[35] In contrast to the destruction of the demonic, ecstatic reconfiguration is creative because it promotes self-transcendence, yet it preserves participation within the ground of being. This transcendence/ participation dialectic occurs in and through the theonomous interpenetration of reason, ecstasy, and revelation, for "[e]cstasy occurs only if the mind is grasped by the mystery, namely, by the ground of being and meaning. And, conversely, there is no revelation without ecstasy."[36] Ecstasy, reason, and revelation converge in ultimate concern, where ecstasy is not reduced to project but is self-transcending reason that assumes disparate forms, including prophetic witness, agapic love, and prayer..[37]

Julia Kristeva on Alterity and Embodiment

Influenced by Freud and Lacan, Julia Kristeva's work intersects semiotics, psychoanalysis, and feminism. She shares Bataille's disquiet towards the hegemony of the Hegelian project in the Western mindset. Kristeva characterizes otherness as the abject or the discarded that destabilizes self and society. In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva construes abject as "the jettisoned object [that] is radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses."[38] Similar to Bataille's notion of ecstasy as communicating non-knowledge and, as we will see below, Levinas's repudiation of totality, Kristeva's abject resists reduction to preconceived meanings. Abject precludes simple elision between self and other, "[f]or the space that engrosses the deject, the excluded is never *one*, nor *homogeneous*, nor *totalizable*, but essentially divisible, foldable, and catastrophic."[39] Moreover, just as Bataille interweaves anguish and rapture, Kristeva associates annihilation of the self and jouissance or radical joy.

Kristeva extends her analysis further by juxtaposing the abject and the maternal body. The maternal body, particularly with its the liminal boundaries constituted by the fusion of fluids, dependencies, and identities, has been muted in Western thought such that a woman "will not be able to accede to the complexity of being divided, of heterogeneity, of the catastrophic-fold-of-'being.'"[40] Additionally noted by Levinas,[41] the maternal body's unrepresentable abject stands in opposition to the complicity of the

linguistically and socially constructed narcissism. In *Tales of Love*, Kristeva contends that the image of the Virgin cannot express the otherness of motherhood because it signifies "the woman whose entire body is an emptiness through which the paternal word is conveyed…[and thereby] had remarkably subsumed the maternal 'abject.'"[42]

Tillich's Response to Kristeva: Body as a Dimension of the Person

Tillich's treatment of the body is admittedly limited, though his attention to the ontological structure of self and world does not obviate considerations of the body. In *Dynamics of Faith*, Tillich develops his concept of self-centeredness, where "body, soul, and spirit are not three parts of man. They are dimensions of man's being, always within each other."[43] Centeredness of the self enables Tillich to account for these distinct, but interrelated spheres of human existence. Perhaps Tillich's most sensitive treatment of embodiment, assessed by interpreters such as Mary Ann Stenger,[44] is illustrated in his critique of the father-image of God within Protestant theology. Tillich suggests that "[t]he attempt to show that nothing can be said about God theologically before the statement is made that he is the power of being in all being is, at the same time, a way of reducing the predominance of the male element in the symbolization of the divine."[45] Kristeva concurs with Tillich's hermeneutics of suspicion vis-à-vis gendered theological construction, but she would problematize Tillich's perduring image of self-integration. According to Tillich, self-integration coalesces body and mind, "for only then is mutual strangeness and interference excluded."[46] Kristeva's concern for the ineluctable "heterogeneity" of the body therefore appears underappreciated by Tillich even if he is acutely aware of estrangement.[47]

Levinas: Totality, Communication, and Otherness

Writing in a post-Holocaust context, Emmanuel Levinas censures the totalizing tendencies of Western thought from Parmenides to Hegel to Husserl to Heidegger. These various models cannot appreciate otherness: "Western philosophy has most often been an ontology: a reduction of the other to the same by interposition of a middle term that ensures the comprehension of being."[48] Levinas argues that his philosophical mentors subsume otherness into rubrics of intelligibility (Husserl's transcendent reductions and the search for absolute foundations) and homogeneity (Heidegger's preoccupation with *Dasein*[49]). Levinas intends to debunk the Western project of ontology and its proclivity toward totality. Consequently, he embraces the hyperbolic, the superlative, the exteriority, and that "which is not a mode of being showing itself in a theme."[50]

Ontology reflects the domestication and reduction of otherness; it is encapsulated in what Levinas denominates as the said, "the birthplace of ontology."[51] Levinas affirms communication between self and other, but communication as the saying whose "articulation and signifyingness [are] antecedent to ontology."[52] Levinas upholds saying because it does not efface the other, it does not imprison the infinity and trace of the other, and it functions as "exposure"[53] and not (Hegelian) "recognition"[54] in that it induces the self to denude, strip itself, and submit to otherness. Levinas insists that to be truly for-the-other one must experience an intersubjective encounter with otherness that puts one's entire being into question. Levinas holds that ethics is metaphysics, not ontology, because metaphysics invites desire, infinity (e.g., the Good beyond Being in Plato and Plotinus because "[t]he Good is before being"[55]), fracture (because "the breakup of essence is ethics"[56] manifested in the "[r]upture of being *qua* being"[57]), and otherness that precede the thematizing and totalizing character of ontology. This otherness imposes "unlimited responsibility"[58] that denies individual freedom: "It is because there is a vigilance before the awakening that the *cogito* is possible, so that ethics is before ontology. Behind the arrival of the human there is already the vigilance for the other. The transcendental *I* in its nakedness comes from the awakening by and for the other."[59]

This primordial "awakening" challenges Tillich's ontological structure of self and world. Levinas contends that otherness annuls this structure:

> To transcend oneself, to leave one's home to the point of *leaving oneself*, is to substitute oneself for another. It is, in my bearing of myself, not to conduct myself well, but by my unicity as a unique being to expiate for the other. The openness of space as an openness of self without a world, without a place, utopia, the not being walled in, inspiration to the end, even to expiration, is proximity of the other which is possible only as responsibility for the other, as substitution for him…[I]t is because newness comes

from the other that there is in newness transcendence and signification.[60]

Responsibility for the other, not the essential character of the self, radically shapes the formation of the self's conscience. Levinas asks: "Is not the face of one's fellow man the original locus in which transcendence calls an authority with a silent voice in which God comes to mind? Original locus of the Infinite?"[61]

Tillich's Response to Levinas

In contrast to Levinas's notion of the silent voice induced by the face of the other, Tillich contends that the silent voice of the moral imperative, the confrontation with one's essential being, becomes actualized in and through one's own conscience. Tillich conceives of conscience as a fundamental mechanism for overcoming the problem of the dividedness of the self. Though Luther's view of conscience as an inner voice informs Tillich's understanding of conscience, Heidegger's appeal to silence also has significant import for Tillich's view. Heidegger describes the call of conscience as declaring a silent nothing: "In the appeal Dasein gives itself to understand its own potentiality-for-being. This calling is therefore a keeping-silent…Only in keeping silent does the conscience call."[62] Though Tillich appropriates Heidegger's image of conscience as the silent voice,[63] he does amend Heidegger's conception. Tillich submits that "the self to which the conscience calls is the essential, not as Heidegger believes, the existential self. It calls us to what we essentially are, but it does not tell with certainty what that is."[64]

It is critical, however, to note that Tillich does not disengage this silent call of the essential from relationality. For example, in a 1943 radio address, Tillich impels his German listeners not merely to confront an abstract evil but also to undertake practical measures in response to the suffering of others: "So speak the voices from the land of the dead to you, the voices of the Jewish children and women and old people murdered by the Nazis under your noses. And when you ask where this voice of the dead is speaking to you, you yourselves know the answer: it is the voice of your own conscience…You can no longer silence this voice within yourselves."[65] This convergence of essence (the inner voice) and existence (the voices of the suffering) underlies the reasons why conscience is both "the most subjective self-interpretation of personal life"[66] and a trans-moral judgment "according to the participation in a

reality which transcends the sphere of moral commands."[67] Levinas worries about "our indifference of 'good conscience' for what is far and what is near;"[68] Tillich similarly disabuses this indifference with respect to the demands of essence (an absolute imperative) and existence (the particular circumstances of the situation).

Does this analysis of conscience mitigate the claims that Tillich's ethics constitutes an overly individualistic ethic (and thus reinforces Levinas's critiques of totality)? Eberhard Amelung points to individualistic tendencies in Tillich's thought: "Tillich has done more than most German philosophers and theologians in order to overcome the individualistic approach of German idealism. And yet, perhaps due to the influence of C.G. Jung and psychotherapy, the self remains the center of the system. As Tillich grew older this tendency became stronger. In the course of this development his ethic also remained strongly individualistic."[69] Thomas Ogletree, in *Hospitality to the Stranger* that engages Levinas and Ricoeur out of a framework of Christian ethics, deems compelling Tillich's appeal to a self-transcending moral imperative, but Ogletree too discovers shortcomings in Tillich's system with respect to encounters between others: "Consequently, we still do not find in Tillich's work an account of the actual manifestation of the material meaning of the moral imperative in the concrete encounter between persons. What is even more disappointing is that Tillich, while seeming to give central place to the I-thou encounter in the constitution of moral experience, continually subordinates that encounter to the dynamics of self-integration."[70] Ogletree concludes that a solution lies somewhere between a Tillichian self-integration and a Levinasian call of the other. Though Amelung and Ogletree are correct in pressing Tillich on this crucial issue of self and other, I argue that both thinkers do not fully appreciate the aspects of relationality and community (undertaken comprehensively in the third volume of the *Systematic Theology*) that underlie and sustain questions of self, otherness, love, and justice and to which we now turn to as a conclusion.

Tillich's Insights: Symbols and Love as Reunion

The dialogue between Tillich and the postmodern thinkers has revealed both the limits and insights of Tillich's ontology. One insight that has been discussed pertains to the dynamic between transcendence and participation, where the self is tran-

scended in its encounter with disparate forms of otherness, yet the self is irreducibly preserved in that it remains embedded in the essential structures of reality. Symbols constitute one dimension where transcendence and participation co-exist in a fruitful tension; symbols open the self to new levels of transcendence, but they affirm the presence of meaning even as they nullify and disintegrate this meaning.[71]

Love as the reunion of the separated functions similarly along the transcendence/ participation dialectic. As Tillich writes: "Love is the drive toward the reunion of the separated; this is ontologically and therefore universally true."[72] This drive toward reunion, exemplified in *agape* but funded by the desire of *eros*, entails "participation in the other one through participation in the transcendent unity of unambiguous life,"[73] and it is manifested as "participating knowledge which changes both the knower and the known in the very act of loving knowledge."[74] This "loving knowledge," even if fragmentary within the Spiritual Presence, mediates between absolutism and relativism and enables Tillich to respond to postmodern critics of ontology. Love as reunion affirms, yet transforms self and other, intersubjectivity, and justice, in ways that Bataille, Kristeva, and Levinas[75] appear to abdicate in their attention to otherness. As recent works in Tillichian scholarship[76] demonstrate, engagement between Tillich and postmodernity should continue to yield constructive conversations.

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[1] *A Theology of Compassion*, XVII.

[2] Davies explains the ways Bakhtinian dialogism and pragmatics pertain to an enhanced being: "Within such a dialogical view of the self, the encounter with the other as interlocutor becomes central to our own self-possession as speaking and reflexive creatures, and becomes, as we have argued, the epiphany of being, as the existential realization of our own dialectical self-transcendence" (Ibid., 159). To reify such connections between narrativity and being, Davies appeal to the stories of Holocaust victims Etty Hillesum and Edith Stein and an unnamed victim of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia.

[3] Davies implicates modern figures in his indictment of ontology: "We need not progress along the Leibnizean and Heideggerian path of asking what is the meaning of being as such, which would inevitably be to replace our preferred paradigm, which is concerned specifically with the self in relation to the other, with the model we have called 'Being and Oneness,' which focuses upon the medium of being itself, to the relative exclusion of the concrete being" (Ibid., 52).

[4] Ibid., 53.

[5] Ibid., 73. Davies explains: "Compassion is the recognition of the otherness of the other, as an otherness which stands beyond our own world, beyond our own

constructions of otherness even. But it is also the discovery of our own nature, as a horizon of subjectivity that is foundationally ordered to the world of another experience, in what Paul Ricoeur has called 'the paradox of the exchange at the very place of the irreplaceable.' It is here then, in the dispossessive act whereby the self assumes the burdens of the other, and thus accepts the surplus of its own identity, that we should recognize the veiled presence of being" (17).

[6] Ibid., 33.

[7] Ibid., 35.

[8] Ibid., 220.

[9] Ibid., 158.

[10] Ibid., 43. Davies does commend Rahner's ontology for its anti-reductionistic character, yet he asserts that Rahner ontology continues to disqualify notions of the self as ineluctably mediated by otherness: "But [Rahner's ontology] is still in a Kantian-Heideggerian world, governed by the cognitive faculties of the self, rather than a world that comes to existence only as the self is given over, without remainder, into the alien power of the other" (Ibid., 158).

[11] For Tillich and Davies, there is a dialectic relationship between ontology and existence that disavows total essentialism. Moreover, both thinkers envision the encounter between self and other in self-reflexive terms. Davies describes this impact on the self as transfiguration, or the appropriate word for transcendence that "retains the irreducible mutuality of self and other, albeit as unity in opposition" (Ibid., 43). Tillich speaks of the self-reflexive impact on the self as insight, conversion, or reunion (albeit ambiguously experienced) of the self with self, other, and world.

[12] *A History of Christian Thought, 438. Tillich offers a similar assessment in* Theology of Culture, *92, original emphasis, when he asserts that "Schelling follows Hegel in emphasizing the 'subject' and its freedom against Substance and its necessity. But while in Hegel the 'subject' is immediately identified with the* thinking *subject, in Schelling it becomes rather the* 'existing' *or immediately experiencing subject." In his own writing, Schelling identifies Hegel's method as one demanding that "[philosophy] should withdraw into pure thinking, and that it should have as sole immediate object the pure concept" (*On the History of Modern Philosophy, *134).*

[13] In *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling's Philosophical Development*, 31, Tillich describes this contradiction: "Guilt-consciousness is the religious expression for the absolute contradiction between God and man." Emil Fackenheim, "Schelling's

Conception of Positive Philosophy," *The Review of Metaphysics* VII (1954), 565. Fackenheim clarifies Schelling's characterization of negative philosophy: "Negative philosophy is not metaphysics, but the search for the metaphysical principle" (579). He concludes (582) that Schelling's fusion of negative and positive philosophy—while historically undervalued—ultimately fails. For further study of Schelling's philosophy and its reception, please see Dale Snow, *Schelling and the End of Idealism*, Robert Brown, *The Later Philosophy of Schelling*, Robert Scharlemann, "Tillich and Schelling on the Principle of Identity," *The Journal of Religion* 56 (1976): 105-112, and Thomas O'Meara, "F.W.J. Schelling," The Review of Metaphysics XXI (1977): 283-309.

[14] *Ages of the World*, 73. Schelling's contentious claim of the Yes and No of God is further intensified by the order envisaged by Schelling: "The negating, contracting will must precede into revelation so that there is something that shores up and carries upward the grace of the divine being, without which grace would not be capable of revealing itself. There must be Might before there is Leniency and Stringency before Gentleness. There is first Wrath, then Love. Only with Love does the wrathful actually become God" (83). Robert Brown, in *The Later Philosophy of Schelling*, 269, comments that here Schelling moves beyond Böhme: whereas Böhme accounts for the dialectical character of God's freedom, "*Ages* moves only in the opposite direction. God begins as a duality, and attains his unity only as an achievement, a voluntary duality-in-unity."

[15] Tillich renders potency as "[t]he real, dark principle of the philosophy of nature [that] is nothing other than the actualization of this contradiction. Freedom is the power to become disunited from oneself. Consistent with the meaning of the word, Schelling now calls this power *potency*" (*The Construction of the History of Religion in Schelling's Positive Philosophy: Its Presuppositions and Principles*, 48). Schelling makes the same point in *The Ages of the World*, Section 226, 17: "A being cannot negate itself as actual without at the same time positing oneself as the actualizing potency that begets itself."

[16] Mysticism *and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling's Philosophical Development*, 99 original emphasis. In *The Courage to Be*, 180, Tillich further elaborates on the importance of the Yes-No dialectic for the living God: "Nonbeing makes God a living God. Without the No he has to overcome in himself and in his creatures, the divine Yes to himself would be lifeless. There would be no revelation of the ground of being, there would be no life."

[17] In *Systematic Theology*, Volume 3, 421, Tillich elaborates on this point with respect to the Trinity: "There is no blessedness where there is no conquest of the opposite possibility, and there is no life where there is no 'otherness.' The trinitarian symbol of the Logos as the principle of divine self-manifestation in creation and salvation introduces the element of otherness into the Divine Life without which it would not be life."

[18] For elaboration on these differences, please see Jerome Stone's "Tillich and Schelling's Later Philosophy," in *Kairos and Logos: Studies in the Roots and Implications of Tillich's Theology*, edited by John Carey, 3-35. Stone's list includes some straightforward distinctions (e.g., Schelling was not a theologian), but it also notes an important "shift between Schelling and Tillich from the language of speculating to the language of symbol" (35). Additionally, Ian Thompson, in his *Being and Meaning*, 89, writes: "Schelling tends to subordinate theology to the philosophy of art, whereas in Tillich's case art is put to use in the service of theology."

[19] Each of these writers themselves experienced these phenomena in varying degrees. Bataille battled a pulmonary disease throughout his life to the point where it became debilitating; Kristeva emigrated from Bulgaria to France; and Levinas endured a double tragedy: his family died in the Holocaust, and as a French soldier, he became a prisoner of war in Germany.

[20] *Inner Experience*, 11.

[21] Ibid., 43.

[22] Ibid., 59.

[23] Though Bataille concentrates his critiques on Hegel, Amy Hollywood describes the extent to which Bataille's disdain toward project also distinguishes his views from Sartre's: "Sartre's and Bataille's opposing attitudes toward human projects are crucial here. Sartre insists that to be human is to engage in projects; Bataille argues that inner experience is the opposite of project; thus he generates endlessly recursive negations of his own attempt to provide a method for attaining inner experience" (*Sensible Ecstasy*, 30). Indeed, there is a certain paradox within Bataille's writing in that he seeks to refute system by constructing his own system of atheology or of the unfinished system of nonknowledge.

[24] *Inner Experience*, 12.

[25] *The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, 203.

[26] *Inner Experience*, 52.

[27] Ibid., 113.

[28] *The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, 21. Bataille reiterates that "[t]he impossible is the loss of the self" (Ibid., 24).

[29] Amy Hollywood castigates Bataille's use of the tortured victim on ethical and ideological grounds: "Bataille's practice is problematic in that he seems to use another human being's unchosen suffering as a means toward his own ecstatic anguish. Even if we read that ecstatic anguish as itself an ethical response to the meaninglessness of the other's radically contingent torment, problems remain, for it is not clear that *who* suffers is in fact so radically contingent. Rather, differences in race, class, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity make it more likely that members of one or another particular group will be the subject of physical torture and thus serve as the noncontingent means through which the contingency of human bodily experience finds experience" (*Sensible Ecstasy*, 95).

[30] *Inner Experience*, 120.

[31] Ibid., 104.

[32] Among a myriad examples, Bataille contends that "the will to salvation signifies the resolution to escape the impossible" (*The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, 21). Bataille does acknowledge affinities between ecstasy and mystical theology or negative theology, but he avers that ecstasy equates to atheology that is "totally negative" (Ibid., 146). Contemplation of the cross can be efficacious to the extent that one substitutes oneself for Christ: "Essentially, we must reflect on the crucifixion and place ourselves in the situation of personal assumption, abandoning respect in the name of transgression" (Ibid., 236).

[33] *Systematic Theology*, Volume 1, 113.

[34] In terms of the Scriptural sources, Tillich locates the presence of ecstasy in the writings of Paul: "The unity of ecstasy and structure is classically expressed in Paul's doctrine of the Spirit. Paul is primarily the theologian of the Spirit" (*Systematic Theology*, Volume 3, 116). Paul further envisages the fusion of ecstasy and structure through Spirit in his letter to the Corinthians: "In the hymn to *agape* in I Corinthians, chapter 13, the structure of the moral imperative and the ecstasy of the Spiritual Presence are completely united. Similarly, the first three chapters of the same letter indicate a way to unite the structure of cognition with the ecstasy of the Spiritual Presence" (Ibid., 117). Tillich additionally points to the Gospels as illustrative of ecstasy: "Ecstatic experiences appear again and again in the Gospel stories. They show the Spiritual Presence driving Jesus into the desert, leading him through the visionary experiences of temptation, giving him the power of divination with respect to people and events, and making him the conqueror of demonic powers and the Spiritual healer of mind and body" (Ibid., 144). In terms of the philosophical sources, Plato but es-

pecially Neo-Platonists such as Plotinus uphold the unique place of ecstasy. Tillich identifies the Middle Platonist Philo as one of the earliest figures who "developed a doctrine of ecstasy, or *ek-stasis*, which means 'standing outside oneself.' This is the highest form of piety which lies beyond faith" (*A History of Christian Thought*, 13). This philosophical conception of ecstasy has subsequently impacted Christian theologians and mystics, including Origen, Pseudo-Dionysius, and Bonaventure.

[35] *Systematic Theology*, Volume 3, 112; Ibid., 112. Ecstasy therefore helps further clarify the experience of God as being-itself or the ground of being enables one to speak rationally and ecstatically at the same time. This speaking about God refers back to the self and its ordinary/ ecstatic experience of holiness: "The term 'ecstatic' in the phrase 'ecstatic idea of God' points to the experience of the holy as transcending ordinary experience without removing it. Ecstasy as a state of mind is the exact correlate to self-transcendence as the state of reality. Such an understanding of the idea of God is neither naturalistic nor supranaturalistic. It underlies the whole of the present theological system" (*Systematic Theology*, Volume 2, 8).

[36] Ibid., 112.

[37] Tillich describes prophetic witness ("Prophets speak in terms which express the 'depth of reason' and its ecstatic experience" *Systematic Theology*, Volume 1, 143), agapic love ("As the ecstatic participation in the transcendent unity of unambiguous life, *agape* is experienced as blessedness" (*Systematic Theology*, Volume 3, 136), and prayer ("A union of subject and object has taken place in which the independent existence of each is overcome; new unity is created. The best and most universal example of an ecstatic experience is the pattern of prayer." Ibid., 119).

[38] *Powers of Horror*, in *The Portable Kristeva: Updated Edition*, 230.

[39] Ibid., 235 (original emphasis)

[40] *Tales of Love*, 248-249. Kristeva further elaborates on this heterogeneity: "We lives on that border, crossroads beings, crucified beings. A woman is neither nomadic nor a male body that considers itself earthly only in erotic passion. A mother is a continuous separation, a division of the very flesh. And consequently a division of language—and it has always been so." (Ibid., 254).

[41] Levinas describes the pure passivity demanded by the maternal body: "The-one-for-another has the form of sensibility or vulnerability, pure passivity or susceptibility, passive to the point of becoming an inspiration, that is, alterity in the same, the trope of the body animated by the soul, psyche in the form of a hand that gives even the bread taken from its own mouth. Here the psyche in the maternal body" (*Otherwise than Being*, 67).

[42] Ibid., 374.

[43] *Dynamics of Faith*, 106. In *Gilkey on Tillich*, 29, Langdon Gilkey indicates that Tillich subsumes the fusion of these dimensions in and through self-awareness: "In us, being is 'present to itself,' aware of itself, its body, its environment, its space and time, its future. Here the inorganic, the organic, the psychic, and what even transcends these, are wedded together in our awareness of our own being."

[44] In "Being and Word in Tillich's Doctrine of Spiritual Presence: Issues of Subjectivity and Relationality," in *Being versus Word in Paul Tillich's Theology?*, edited by Gert Hummel and Doris Lax, Stenger probes Tillich's interconnection of being and Word that funds his relational ontology through the Spiritual Presence. Though she concedes his appreciation of the body could be more extensive, Stenger holds that his relational ontology "resonates well with several feminist approaches [e.g., Sheila Davaney, Catherine Keller, Thandeka, Linell Cady] [because] it affirms the self, including the body, draws humans outwardly toward each other, and directs them toward that which is ultimate in a response of devotion and commitment" (296).

[45] *Systematic Theology*, Volume 3, 294.

[46] "Dimensions, Levels, and the Unity of Life," in *Main Works*, Volume 6: Theological Writings, edited by Gert Hummel, 404.

[47] Tillich's capacious conception of the person extends to displaced persons such as refugees; his vigilance against reducing them to things comports with Kristeva's perspective. In *Strangers to Ourselves* in *The Portable Kristeva: Updated Edition*, 265, Kristeva writes: "Let us not seek to solidify, to turn the otherness of the foreigner into a thing. Let us merely touch it, brush by it, without giving a permanent structure." Similarly, in "The Theology of Pastoral Care: The Spiritual and Theological Foundations of Pastoral Care," *The Meaning of Health*, 125, Tillich discusses the dehumanizing treatment of refugees as objects: "It was one of my early experiences in this country to come to the sharp realization that the refugees, who felt themselves to be persons, became objects and nothing more than objects when they were transformed into cases to be dealt with twenty minutes by the social worker. It often broke their self-awareness as a person. This example shows that the problem of becoming an object applies to all forms of taking care of someone, be it the social, the educational, the political, the

medical, or the psycho-therapeutic function. In all of them the heart of the subject-object problem is of decisive importance."

[48] *Totality and Infinity*, 43. Levinas contends that the Western tradition "guarantees knowledge its congenital synthesizing and its self-sufficiency, foreshadowing the systematic unity of consciousness, and the integration of all that is *other* into the system and the present" ("Philosophy and Transcendence" in *Alterity and Transcendence*, 12). Levinas's censure of ontology and system is not limited to the epistemological level; *a fortiori* Levinas claims that the totality of ontology and system underlies the totalitarianism of the state (e.g., Nazism): "Ontology as first philosophy is a philosophy of power" (*Totality and Infinity*, 46). Tillich contends that power underpins love and justice, but love and justice impose constraints on power.

[49] Levinas, in "Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas" (with Richard Kearney) in *Face to Face with Levinas*, edited by Richard Cohen, 20, contends that "*Dasein* is its history to the extent that it can interpret and narrate its existence as a finite and contemporaneous story, a totalizing experience of past, present, and future."

[50] *Otherwise Than Being*, 183. The face, in fact, "is the very collapse of phenomenality" (Ibid., 88).

[51] Ibid., 42.

[52] Ibid., 46.

[53] Ibid., 49.

[54] Ibid., 119.

[55] Ibid., 122. In Ibid., 156, Levinas develops the same point: "The Infinite does not enter into a theme like a being to be given in it, and thus belie its beyond being."

[56] Ibid., 14.

[57] *In the Time of Many Nations*, translated by Michael Smith, 111.

[58] *Otherwise Than Being*, 10.

[59] "The Proximity of the Other," in *Alterity and Transcendence*, 98. In consonance with Kristeva's analysis of maternity, Levinas asserts that otherness precedes one's own body: "The sensible—maternity, vulnerability, apprehension—binds the node of incarnation into a plot larger than the apperception of self. In this plot I am bound to others before being tied to my body" (*Otherwise Than Being*, 76).

[60] *Otherwise than Being*, 182 (my emphasis). In the same text, Levinas describes the same phenomenon where "one discloses oneself by neglecting one's defenses, leaving a shelter, exposing oneself to outrage, to insults and wounding" (Ibid., 49). The image of "leaving a shelter" further differentiates Levinas's account from Tillich's

notions of love, reunion of the separated, and morality, constitution of the person as person in the encounter with other persons. In "Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas" (with Richard Kearney) in *Face to Face with Levinas*, edited by Richard Cohen, 22, Levinas distinguishes his preferred notion of sociality from the reductive concept of unity: "Man's relationship with the other is *better* as difference than as unity: sociality is better than fusion. The very value of love is the impossibility of reducing the other to myself."

[61] "Philosophy and Transcendence," in *Alterity and Transcendence*, 5. "God" as the Infinite Other receives significant treatment in Levinas's writings, particularly his reflections on the Talmud. Levinas conceptualizes religion in terms of moral experience ("Religious experience, at least for the Talmud, can only be primarily a moral experience," "Toward the Other," in *Nine Talmudic Readings*, translated and with an introduction by Annette Aronowicz), where, for example, "[t]he image of God is better honored in the right given to the stranger than in symbols" (Ibid., 28). When comparing these conceptions to Tillich's, we can thus note similarities (Tillich also unites morality and religion) as well as differences (Tillich prefers the language of symbols, not obligations to the others, as that which expresses the *imago Dei*. One should not overstate these similarities or differences. For example, I argue that there is significant resonance between Tillich's symbol of the "God beyond God" and Levinas's symbol of the transcendent face: "it is as if the face of the other person, which straightaway 'demands of me' and ordains me, were the mode of the very intrigue of God's surpassing the idea of God, and of every idea where He would be aimed at, visible, and known, and where the Infinite would be denied through thematization, in presence or representation" ("The Old and the New," in *Time and the Other (and Additional Essays)*, translated by Richard Cohen, 136-137, my emphasis). For an extended comparison between notions of God in Levinas and Christian theology, specifically Barth's theology, please see Steven Smith, *The Argument to the Other: Reason Beyond Reason in the Thought of Karl Barth and Emmanuel Levinas*.

[62] *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, as quoted by Frank Schalow in "The Typography of Heidegger's Concept of Conscience," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, Volume LXIX (1995), 260.

[63] For Tillich's presentation of the 'silent voice,' see *Morality and Beyond*, 24, 34 ("the silent voice of man's own essential nature"), and 80 ('mode of silence').

[64] *Theology of Culture*, 138-139. By contrast, Levinas submits that conscience "welcomes the Other" and "calls in question the naïve rights of my powers, my glorious spontaneity as a living being" (*Totality and Infinity*, 84).

[65] *Against the Third Reich*, 213.

[66] *Morality and Beyond*, 65.

[67] Ibid., 77. Thus, like Levinas where "transcendence is compressed into the sphere of intersubjective existence" (Edith Wyschogrod, "God and 'Being's Move' in the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas," *The Journal of Religion* 62 (1982), 146), Tillich affirms transcendence as encounter (e.g., the moment of *kairos* experienced as revelation) that supersedes the self. Yet, unlike Levinas, Tillich reinscribes this transcendence as constitutive of the formation of the moral and cultural dimensions of the self: "Religion, or the self-transcendence of life under the dimension of spirit, is essentially related to morality and culture. 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" (*Systematic Theology*, Volume 3, 95).

[68] *In the Time of Many Nations*, translated by Michael Smith, 110.

[69] "Life and Selfhood in Tillich's Theology," in *Kairos and Logos: Studies in the Roots and Implications of Tillich's Theology*, edited by John Carey, 182.

[70] *Hospitality of the Stranger*, 41.

[71] See, *inter alia*, "Das Religiöse Symbol," in *Main Works*, Volume 4: Writings in the Philosophy of Religion, edited by John Clayton, 213-228. There Tillich develops further distinctions, including the two levels of religious symbols, the first level of "religiösen *Gegenstandssymbole*" (objective religious symbols) and the second level of "religiösen *Hinweissymbole*" (self-transcending religious symbols) (Ibid., 221-224 original emphasis). In his *Dynamics of Faith*, 41-43, Tillich adumbrates six features of a symbol: it points beyond itself; it participates in that to which it points; it opens us levels of reality which otherwise are closed to us; it unlocks dimensions and elements of our soul which correspond to the dimensions and elements of reality; it cannot be produced intentionally; and it cannot be invented. In his 1961 "The Meaning and Justification of Religious Symbols," *Main Works*, Volume 4: Writings in the Philosophy of Religion, edited by John Clayton, 415-420, Tillich identifies slightly different characteristics of a symbol: it points beyond itself; it participates in the reality of that which it represents; it cannot be created at will; it has power to open up dimensions of

reality, in correlation to dimensions of the human spirit; and it possesses an integrating and disintegrating power. The negation of symbols, of course, derives from Tillich's Protestant principle that repudiates any notion of absolutism within symbols.

[72] *Systematic Theology*, Volume 3, 134. Put differently, "[l]ove as the reunion of those who are separate does not distort or destroy in its union" (*Systematic Theology*, Volume 1, 282).

[73] Ibid., 134.

[74] Ibid., 137.

[75] The issue of justice, or the appearance of the third, poses challenges for Levinas. He affirms the centrality of justice, but he does fully resolve tensions between the relationship of self and other as hostage and lord and the order and thematization of justice: "The third party introduces a contradiction in the saying whose signification before the other until then went in one direction. It is of itself the limit of responsibility and the birth of the question: What do I have to do with justice? A question of consciousness. Justice is necessary, that is, comparison, coexistence, contemporaneousness, assembling, order, thematization, the visibility of faces, and thus intentionality and the intellect, the intelligibility of a system, and thence also a co-presence on an equal footing as before a court of justice (*Otherwise than Being*, 157).

Theodore de Boer, in "An Ethical Transcendental Philosophy," in *Face to Face with Levinas*, edited by Richard Cohen, argues that the presence of the third problematizes Levinas's notions of unlimited responsibility: "The entrance onto the scene of the *third man* makes a comparison and weighing of responsibility necessary—and thereby also a thematizing and theorizing. This implies a certain correction, as Levinas puts it leniently, of the infinite demands that the other imposes upon me" (102, original emphasis).

[76] These works include *Dialogues of Paul Tillich* (2002) by Mary Ann Stenger and Ronald Stone, *Self-Love and Christian Ethics* (2002) by Darlene Fozard Weaver, *Religion in the New Millennium: Theology in the Spirit of Paul Tillich* (2001) edited by Raymond Bulman and Frederick Parrella, and *Tillich and World Religions: Encountering Other Faiths Today* (2003) by Robison James.