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Department of Religious Studies
Cocke Hall
Robert P. Scharlemann, Secretary-Treasurer

University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia 22903
Editor

• NEW HARMONY 1993

The International Meeting of the North American Paul Tillich Society, Inc., took place in New Harmony, Indiana, from June 17-20. The original idea for the conference was that of John Carey; and it was through his work that funding was obtained to make the meeting possible. These funds were provided by grants from the Lilly Foundation and the Blaffer Trust Fund. To both the Foundation and the Fund, as well as to John Carey, the Society is much indebted for making the meeting possible.

The arrangements of the meeting were expertly handled in detail by Mary Ann Stenger of the University of Louisville and Frederick Parrella of the University of Santa Clara. They saw to it not only that there was a certain coherence to the program's content but also that such external matters as transportation to and from the airports were efficiently and dependably provided. Anyone who has ever been responsible for such meeting arrangements knows the amount of time they require and how much difference it makes for a meeting when they are managed well.

A list of participants of the New Harmony meeting is included in this mailing of the NEWSLETTER.

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• The Tillich Museum

Jane Owen provided a unique opportunity for participants at the New Harmony meeting by opening her private collection of Tillichiana for a visit. Included among the items located in that museum are photographs of Tillich that have never been published. One of them in particular could not fail to catch the attention of those who have

read Tillich's account of his experiences as a chaplain during World War I. He recounts the impact that witnessing the destruction of the War had upon him, so great in fact as to have brought him to a kind of mental collapse from which he took months to recover. Tillich's autobiographical account is expressive in its own way. But it lacks the visual force of a certain picture in Mrs. Owen's museum. It is a picture, from that same period, of nothing more than Tillich's face, a desolate face on which there is, as it were, inscribed—more vividly and unforgettably than in any of Tillich's written accounts—the War's devastation. Placed next to it in the museum is another picture, this one of Tillich after the War. The contrast between the two faces was aptly described by Mrs. Owen as the difference between crucifixion and resurrection.

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• Kairikos and the SPCA2

Participants in the New Harmony meeting seemed to have a good time. Does a good time belong to *chronos* or to *kairos*? The question is asked here not in order to give an answer, or even to suggest that it is a good question, but to call attention to an incidental benefit the meeting. What is meant is the benefit of having focused

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attention, for a moment at least, on the correct form of the adjective for the noun *kairos*. A few "kairotic's" too many led to a movement of reform. What is the adjective for the noun *kairos*? Everyone who reads Tillich knows about *kairos* and the difference between *chronos* and *kairos*. But who knows that the adjective for the noun *kairos* is "kairic" (in Greek *kairikos*) or "kairological" but not "kairotic." Those present at a certain session of the New Harmony meeting should know it by now. But lest one forget, here is the point:

Tillich apparently never used the adjectival form of the word at all. But in the interest of remembering our (etymological) roots, the unformed and disorganized group known as the SPCA2—the Society for Preserving the Correct Adjective Too—herewith puts everyone on notice that, henceforth, it is not enough just to know the difference between *chronos* and *kairos*; it is necessary also to know the correct adjectives. The punishment for using the word *kairotic* within hearing range of the SPCA2—or, for that matter, of either the secretary-treasurer of the Tillich Society or Fred Parrella—will be to write, as it were, in a timely fashion, "Nature has the chronic and chronological; history has the kairic and kairological. Neither has the kairotic." And anyone who wants to know what *kairosis* and the *kairotic* might be can consult Hjalmar Frisk, *Griechisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1968), s.v.

• The Deutsche P.-Tillich-Gesellschaft

The Deutsche Paul-Tillich-Gesellschaft met this year from April 16 to 18 at its old meeting place, the Evangelische Akademie at Hofgeismar, with sessions in the Schloß Schönburg, on the theme of "unconditional concern." Presiding was Gert Hummel of the University of Saarland in Saarbrücken. There were visible signs and traces—as well as sounds and sights—of building renovations going on. Nonetheless, the meeting in this favored place of the Gesellschaft marked a new beginning after some troubled years.

• SOMETHING ELSE NEW

It was fitting that, at this year's meeting of the DPTG, announcement was made of another Tillich

Society about to be born—the Tillich society of the Netherlands and Belgium. The PAUL TILlich GENootSCHAP, Nederland/België, will come into being on 28 October 1993. The organization owes its existence largely to the efforts of Aad S. L. Woudenberg of Harderwijk, the Netherlands. The society-to-be already has a newsletter in publication, and its 1993/3 issue contains a brief but informative report on the April meeting of the Deutsche Paul-Tillich-Gesellschaft.

• Association Paul Tillich d'Expression Française

Montpellier 1993

The French Tillich society meets every second year. This year, the meeting was held from May 14 to 16 at the Protestant Theological Faculty at Montpellier under the general theme of art and religion. International representation was provided by Gert Hummel (Saarbrücken) and Erdmann Sturm of the University of Münster, from the Deutsche Paul-Tillich-Gesellschaft, and Robert Scharlemann of the University of Virginia from the North American Paul Tillich Society. Plans are being made to publish the papers of the 1993 sessions as was done with those from 1991.

Readers of past issues of this NEWSLETTER will no doubt be interested in knowing that, yes, in 1993 the French society did again have, as part of its business meeting, something called a "moral report" and that everything was in good order.

Those who attended the meetings both of the Deutsche Paul Tillich Gesellschaft and of the Association Paul Tillich d'Expression Française might have noticed a certain difference of style in conducting the business session. When the business session of the DPTG is about to begin, all windows and doors to the room are closed, and care is taken to assure that everyone in the room is a member of the society. Only then do matters begin, and only when all business has been transacted and the session ended are the windows and doors opened again. ("In warm weather," one person said, "that may be a good way of keeping the business meeting short.") By contrast, when the business meeting of the French society is about to begin—it begins. And thus did it begin in Montpellier. Even the treasurer's report was given

while one or two people were still coming in. Moreover, *windows and doors were still open*, and no one made a move to close them when the financial report was read.

• Annual Meeting 1993 - Washington

The October issue of this NEWSLETTER will contain the program for the annual meeting of the North American Paul Tillich Society in Washing-

ton, D.C. The meeting will again be held in conjunction with the American Academy of Religion, beginning on Friday afternoon, November 19, at 2:00, with the banquet at 6:00 p.m.

A banquet reservation form will be included in the October issue of the NEWSLETTER.

The Ground of Being and the Return of the Material Maternal

Robert S. Corrington

Drew University Theological School

From his two Schelling dissertations to his final analyses of the correlation of Christianity and other religions, Tillich probed into the internal rhythms of the ontological difference. Whether this ultimate form of difference appears in the categorial terms of "unconditioned" vs. "conditioned," "the gods of space" vs. "the god of time," or "the ground of Being," vs. "a being," the inner logic remains the same, namely, that the divine is radically other in nature from the innumerable orders of the world that collectively constitute creation. To be in the world is to be an eject from the primal and self-othering rhythm of the ground of Being that lives by handing over its inner dynamisms to the complexes of nature. God resides on only one side of the ontological difference, even while manifest, *qua spirit*, within and between the orders of the world (cf. Corrington 1992). The ambiguity always remains: how can God be the sustaining ground of the world, in its reality as the ground of Being, while having efficacy within finite causal and teleological orders?

Tillich sharpens the ontological difference, but in the process makes it difficult to frame or even evoke the dialectical tensions between Being and the innumerable orders of the world. In what follows, I propose to transform Tillich's ontology

I propose to transform Tillich's ontology in two directions.

in two directions, one showing a more complex relation between God and the ontological difference, and the other showing how the ground of Being can be transfigured to show its relation to a realm known to psychoanalysis as the lost object. The convergence of ontological and psychoanalytic languages will be less jarring than might appear at first sight, even though contemporary versions of psychoanalysis have engaged in a misguided polemical campaign against ontological discourse.

Tightening up Tillich's language we can say that ontological discourse deals with categories that attempt to have the same scope as the manifest orders of the world. To speak of dynamics and form, or of participation and individualization, is to make claims about whatever is in whatever way, namely, that no being will fail to embody these and similar categories. Of a

subaltern nature are those regional ontologies that delimit specific orders of relevance, for example, categories like "gestalt of grace" or "style," which point to configurations that have unique or order-specific traits, in this case in the aesthetic domain. Tillich

worked on both sides of the ontology/regional ontology divide. What is the status of his more basic theological reflections on

It is easy to privilege difference over continuity, but there is a presence that doesn't easily fit into the division between identity and difference

God?

Beneath ontological and regional categories lies the precategory of Being itself. This category is different in kind from those pertinent to the basic ontological elements of his system. Being is not approached through a generic phenomenological analysis of recurrent traits, but through the breach of the shock of non-Being. In the words of Tillich, "The ontological question, the question of being-itself, arises in something like a 'metaphysical shock'—the shock of possible nonbeing" (Tillich 1951: 163). Needless to say, there can be no analogical bridge between the conditioned orders of the world, and the ground of Being. Both dialectical and absolute nonbeing 'surround' and permeate Being, making its appearance a mystery that cannot be overcome by categorial fiat. Put differently, there can be no appeal to the Leibnizian principle of sufficient reason to 'explain' the dark irruption of the ground of Being from the forces of nonbeing.

Thus as we move from the less to the more generic, that is, from regional ontologies to the basic ontological elements, we also come upon an abyss that violates the momentum of generic spread. While it has now become all too easy to privilege difference over continuity, there remains

Tillich limits God to one side of the difference.

the haunting presence of the self-othering and self-transfiguring depths of the world, a presence that doesn't easily fit into the difference vs. identity divide. Neither Hegel nor Heidegger, who speak respectively of "the identity of identity and non-identity" and "the Same," shed light on how the ontological difference positions the divine in such a way that it can be manifest on both sides of the difference. Tillich limits God to one side of the difference, and his trinitarian reflections only muddy the waters, rather than show how the divine can be both the ground of Being and an order of relevance within and among the innumerable orders of the world. To move toward a more encompassing perspective, it is necessary to allow the ontological difference to speak in a new way.

Put in stark categorial terms, God is both the ground of Being and an order of extreme scope

and complexity within the world. Is God of the same scope as the world? Yes and no. If by "scope" we mean "relevant to the identity of each order," then we must deny that God has the same scope as the world. There are orders where the divine is not relevant in altering or reinforcing traits. If, on the other hand, we mean by "scope" that God is "sheerly relevant to all orders in the same respect," then God is of the same scope as the world. In this dimension of the divine, God does represent the sheer power of Being that momentarily sustains each order of the world against dialectical nonbeing, and, we can infer, against the less clear presence of absolute nonbeing. The latter notion of scope is commensurate with Tillich's understanding of the creating/sustaining dimension of God. The former notion, while operative in a confused way in Tillich, points to a different conception of the relationship between God and the ontological difference.

God is ontologically unique in being on both side of the ontological difference, but in different respects. Let us remind ourselves of what a Tillichian can say about God qua ground of Being. This dimension of God is neither providential nor part of a self-gathering evolutionary matrix. Process versions of divine evolution operate on the

Tillich leaves unclear how to move from pre-personal ground to personality

'closer' side of the ontological difference and do not shed light on the pre-experiential unconscious rhythms of the divine. God, qua ground of Being, is something akin to a non-teleological self-othering potency that manifests its rhythms in and as the orders of the world. God is not a self, or a center of self-consciousness, but is the ground of personality. Tillich leaves us in the dark as to how we move from a pre-personal ground of personality to personality per se (remembering that Tillich privileges the human process as the place where the ontological elements become most fully manifest and self-conscious). But, at the very least, the ground of Being is friendly to the mysterious irruption of centers of awareness within the world, even if the evolutionary link is not rendered

intelligible.

Is there a more encompassing term than either "God" or "ground of Being" that can help us reconfigure the ontological difference and the unique position of God within the heart of the difference? And does this term help us to reframe the positioning of the difference itself? The term I propose is "nature" which I take to be the broadest term in the English language. All other ontological terms exist in a polarity in which their scope and identity is framed by an oppositional structure, for example, "life" and "death," or "the divine" and the "nondivine." "Nature" is unique in having no oppositional term. There is no such realm as the non-natural, which would have to be an order with no relevance to any other order, and hence such a term can only be a linguistic contrivance and not a true ontological or pre-ontological category.

Nature has no outer circumference or limit. It is without any shape and has no fundamental underlying essence or substance. It makes no sense to ask: just 'what' is nature? Nature is the availability of all 'whats' and cannot be reduced to the traits of any of its innumerable orders. Nature has neither origin nor goal and cannot be located in a more encompassing order. Consequently, it is important that we frame a coherent metaphysics of nature without falling prey to spatial and temporal images and metaphors that can only cloud the issue. Whatever nature 'is,' it is not a positioned structure that merely locates and shapes all that falls 'within' it (cf. Buchler 1989).

We have help in a classical distinction that is directly pertinent to the present analysis, namely that between the two primal dimensions of nature naturing and nature natured. This distinction

The distinction of nature naturing and nature natured can redefine the nature of the divine

represents a transformation of the ontological difference and moves our understanding of the difference in a direction that can redefine the nature and scope of the divine. As is to be expected, nature naturing roughly corresponds to the ground of Being while nature natured corresponds less roughly to the orders of the world (beings in

totality). It is important to note that these two dimensions obtain in nature and do not split nature into two disconnected domains, one being nature per se and one being pre- or super-natural.

Nature naturing is constituted by innumerable potencies that are prepositional and presemiotic, that is, they have no signifying power or function. However, whenever a given potency gives birth to an order of relevance, that order becomes either virtually or fully semiotic. A virtually semiotic order would be one that is underway toward signification, such as an inorganic causal transaction. A semiotic order would be one that clearly points to something beyond itself in some respect (what Peirce would call generating an interpretant, cf. Corrington 1993). For our purposes, the important thing to focus on is the mysterious transition from a presemiotic and prepositioned potency to an attained order of relevance. How does all of this apply to God?

Tillich wishes to confine God to the domain of nature naturing, while admitting divine relevancy to the attained orders of the world through the economic trinity that operates within history and human community. Yet this leaves us with an unclear conception of how God relates to the mystery of the ontological difference. God can clearly be seen as part of the dimension of nature naturing. However, God does not exhaust the potencies of *natura naturans*. Nature is always the genus of which God is the species, which is to say that God represents the ultimate potency of nature naturing, but does not encompass all of the other potencies. On the other side of the great abyss

God does not exhaust the potencies of natura naturans

within nature, God is an order within the world and is of indefinite complexity. God emerges from the unconscious of nature, nature naturing, and grows into the full semiotic world of signs, objects, and interpretants. Yet this does not bifurcate God into something like a primordial and a consequent nature. The concept of primordially must be firmly rejected insofar as it entails a domain of attained and consciously envisioned Platonic forms. The current perspective affirms what could be

called a "developmental Platonism" in which forms or generals are themselves emergent products or habits that have their ultimate source in the sheer restlessness and self-othering of *natura naturans*.

The so-called consequent dimension of God is actually that of a plurally located and incomplete God who must struggle within and against the recalcitrant orders of the world. God is always in and of nature, and serves the unconscious of nature by moving away from the darkness of the potencies toward the realm of conscious semiosis. God's 'purpose' is not so much to have a plan for the human process and its communities, as it is to serve both sides of the ontological difference and to keep them more fully relevant to each other. God is an eject of nature naturing who must also find a way between and among the orders of nature natured. Put in metaphorical terms, God lives out of the unconscious of nature and brings a fitful light to the orders that do and will obtain within the world. Does this mean that God has its own unconscious dimension? Yes, for God cannot exhaust the darkness from which it is ejected. Does this in turn mean that God has a fragmented

God has its own unconscious dimension

conception of both itself and its world? Yes, for God can only know that which is internally relevant to its life. Some orders are only externally related to God and this limits any sense of divine omniscience. Thus God is limited in terms of its knowledge of its own origin and in terms of its knowledge of what does obtain. In the end, as at the beginning, nature naturing eclipses God, while the orders that are manifest contain pockets that exclude the divine mind.

To summarize what we have said thus far: God is a potency emergent from the 'nether' side of the ontological difference, the dimension of nature naturing. At the same time, but in a very different respect, God is an infinitely complex order within the world of manifest orders and is fully semiotic, that is, lives in and as sign systems that have innumerable forms of intersection. But what of the correlation of the ground of Being and the maternal? Have these categorial analyses prepared the way for the repositioning of both the ontologi-

cal difference and the divine natures? Moving to our second theme, that of the transfiguration of the ground of Being into the material maternal, we must show how the ontological and preontological structures relate to the return of the lost object that lies just beyond the reach of the attained world of signs and meanings.

In terms of Tillich's systematics, the inevitable passage is his oft-quoted reconstruction of the trinity along so-called feminine lines. This passage, found in volume III of his *Systematic Theology*,

A passage in ST III points to the possibility of the maternal in the ground of being

points to the possibility of the maternal as it emerges from, or is identical with, the ground of Being:

I want to point to the following possibilities. The first is related to the concept "ground of being" which is—as previously discussed—partly conceptual, partly symbolical. In so far as it is symbolical, it points to the mother-quality of giving birth, carrying, and embracing, and, at the same time, of calling back, resisting independence of the created, and swallowing it (Tillich 1963: 293-294).

The symbolic quality of the ground of Being points to a rhythm that emerges from the power of the maternal to spawn and yet devour the being-things of the world. The notion of "swallowing" may point to the Patriarchal fear of loss of power in the face of the darker forces of the maternal. Certainly the concept of the "death drive" is not out of place in this symbolic context. A given autonomous order of the world has some sense that it has emerged from an unconscious background that continues to infuse it with the power of Being. On the other hand, the Patriarchal power, manifest in the anxiety of the human process, fears the very origin that brought it into Being. Any move to accommodate the swallowing maternal presence is seen as a manifestation of the drive away from life, a denial of the erotic forces of participation that surround and support the autonomous self.

For Tillich, the antiseptic concept of the ground of Being avoids some of the more frightening

overtones of the symbol of the maternal. The ground of Being does not swallow us, but the maternal does. The ground of Being is self-othering, but allows for autonomy and guilt, while the maternal seeks to devour us and return us to the dark unconscious of nature. The question becomes: can we transform the Tillichian sense of the maternal so that its demonic aspects get transfigured in a non-Patriarchal ontology in which the materiality of the maternal allows for a different sense of the status of autonomy and individualization?

At the outset, we said that there is a convergence between the ontology of the ground of Being and the psychoanalytic concept of the lost object. This correspondence must now be expressed so that the dual reconstruction of Tillich can be completed. The first reconstruction compelled us to see God both as a potency of nature naturing and as an infinitely complex order within the world. The second reconstruction correlates the return of the maternal with nature naturing, which lives on the other side of the Patriarchal fear of ingestion. In this reconstruction, the positioning of the ontological difference becomes much clearer,

The first reconstruction enables us to see God as a potency of nature naturing and as a complex order in the world

and God's own unconscious depth, and future transfiguration, become objects of thematic appraisal.

Following Kristeva and, in a slightly different respect, Irigaray, we can say that the maternal manifests itself through bodily rhythms that continue to exert an uncanny presence within the Patriarchal semiotic or symbolic codes of autonomous culture (cf. Kristeva 1984 & 1989). The codes represent the "Name of the Father" insofar as they privilege conscious semiosis and the enshrinement of positioned meaning. Yet the unthematic and prepositioned rhythms of the maternal continue to irrupt and displace the Patriarchal codes that reinforce an ersatz individuation. Returning to the language of the ontological difference, we can say that positioned semiotic codes belong to the domain of nature natured, while the elusive, but

fully embodied realm of the maternal, belongs to the domain of nature naturing.

God is thus positioned within the codes of the world, while bound by the nonthematic rhythms of the material maternal. Is God thus both maternal and paternal? Insofar as we wish to conflate gender language with ontological discourse, we can find these to be commensurate formulations. But here the plot thickens.

Tillich's early dialectic between mysticism and guilt-consciousness points toward a renewed understanding of the tensions between the maternal object and the autonomous and concupiscent self. The maternal, qua lost object, is disclosed through melancholy, rather than anxiety (which remains a Patriarchal mode of attunement). The source of melancholy is the elusive presence of the depth of nature that continues to send its prepositioned rhythms through the human process and its structured cultural codes. The depth dimension of so-called arbitrary codes is the natural momentum of semiosis that propels the self outward (guilt-consciousness), while opening it up to the transfiguring powers of the hidden origin (mysticism). This process is the most fundamental dialectic within the self, reminding it of the pres-

Tillich's dialectic between mysticism and guilt-consciousness points toward an understanding of a tension between the maternal and the self

ence of *natura naturans*, while holding before it the full plenitude and wealth of intra-worldly semiosis.

The maternal, which is experienced by the human process in its embodied and material form (which need not stem from nor be confined to the biological mother), is the origin of both power and meaning, even though only the Spirit truly unites power and meaning within the context of personal and social life. The maternal is fully embedded in the unconscious of nature (the *chora* or enclosed space). Yet it is also in the world in the form of a primal "not yet" that stands before the self as a unidirectional telos. The maternal thus propels the self into the domains of attained power and meaning, while coming back toward the self out of the not yet thematized eschaton. In temporal terms, the material maternal is both pretemporal

and post-temporal. It is pretemporal in that it lives prior to the origin of temporal orders (remembering that time is always in and of orders and not trans-ordinal). It is post-temporal in that it returns in the *kairos* that is not a product of the chronological orders of relevance.

What then is the final convergence of these two reconstructions? Put in simple terms we can say that God, qua ground of Being is also the material maternal that lives in the heart of nature naturing. However, this conception of the maternal is not akin to the demonic vision of the devouring (read as "castrating") mother, but points to the transfigured power of agape/eros on the other side of time and history. The material maternal is both the whence and the whither, even while remaining reticent to occupy the semiotic codes of the paternal orders. The ontological difference is no longer envisioned as some kind of empty or enabling abyss, but as a product and a gift of the maternal as it spawns both worlds and signs. The ontological difference, that between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, is positioned by the material maternal, which encompasses origins and goals. Is God itself a gift of the material maternal? To

answer this we would have to see yet more deeply into the unconscious momentum of self-fissuring nature and attain a perspective that remains hidden even from God.

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