

1-1-1962

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NOTES

NATURAL LAW IN THE THOUGHT OF PAUL TILLICH*

The following remarks incidentally include a brief review of *Theology of Culture*, but the main attention is focused on giving a systematic, though incomplete, sketch of the natural law elements in the thought of a man who is generally conceded, in this country at least, to be one of the two greatest living Protestant theologians (the other being Karl Barth). After briefly summarizing the contents of *Theology of Culture* (henceforth abbreviated "TC"), I shall turn to my major theme, here drawing heavily on a small book, *Love, Power, and Justice*¹ (abbreviated "LPJ"), which is the most extensive treatment of ethics Tillich has yet published.

I

The *Theology of Culture* assembles fifteen articles, written between 1940 and 1957, all of which have been previously published, but mostly in rather inaccessible places. The subjects dealt with are extremely diverse, ranging from treatments of religion and philosophy to discussions of psychoanalysis, artistic style, ethics, education, religion in America and Russia, and an essay of intellectual autobiography. Nevertheless, the unifying theme is the "theology of culture," for, as the author says in the Foreword, "most of my writings—including the . . . volumes of the *Systematic Theology*²—try to define the way in which Christianity is related to secular culture . . . the present volume attempts to show the religious dimension in many spheres of Man's cultural life." (TC iv)

While all of the ideas in this book will be at least somewhat familiar to those who have read widely in Tillich's other writings, at least four topics are developed more fully than anywhere else. "The Nature of Religious Language" (TC 53-67) is the most extensive available statement of Tillich's theory of symbolism. His analysis of the history of existential philosophy (TC 76-111), which appeared originally in the *Journal of the History of Ideas* (1944), has long been appreciated by students of that subject. Another essay which has something of a reputation in certain circles is "The Two Types of Philosophy of Religion" (TC 10-29), in which he ranges himself with Augustinianism against Thomism. His "Evaluation of Martin Buber" (TC 188-200) also deserves to be widely known, for it makes clear his indebtedness to that understanding of human existence which emphasizes the "I-Thou" relation.

* Reflections prompted by Paul Tillich's *Theology of Culture* (Ed. by Robert C. Kimball), New York: Oxford University Press, 1959. Pp. ix, 213. \$4.00.

1. New York: Oxford University Press, 1954.

2. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Vol. I, 1951, Vol. II, 1957.

II

The only article which specifically mentions the natural moral law is "Moralisms and Morality: Theonomous Ethics." (TC 133-145) It, as well as the more extended discussion in *Love, Power, and Justice*, may very well confuse the reader. For, at first glance, Tillich's ethics look like neither fish, nor fowl, nor good red herring. His views fit into none of the usual pigeonholes. What purports to be a classical natural law position is mixed with a Lutheran ethics of love and with what appear to be splashes of German romanticism, idealism, historicism and existentialism. We have here either a hodgepodge or a synthesis of genius. I am inclined to think that it is the latter.

A good many of Tillich's formulations seem to me unnecessarily obscure or inappropriate, and he has not himself presented a comprehensive and detailed exposition of his ethics; nevertheless, as I understand the basic structure of his system, it seems to me to represent a genuine strengthening of the natural law position. The absoluteness of the moral law is fully maintained, but it is combined with an adequate account of historical and cultural differences. Relativity is not dealt with in such a way as to make the claim to absoluteness implausible. Nor are absoluteness and relativity combined in the "situationalist" manner which so affirms the absoluteness of love as to make rational rules and calculations impossible. Nor does Tillich follow what he described as Kant's procedure of establishing "a system of ethical forms without ethical contents." (TC 135) On the contrary, his version of natural law makes it possible rationally to specify what the "good act" is more often than do traditional formulations. Further, he better explains the relation and coinherence of the two sides of morality, motive and act, virtue and law. On the theological level, the traditional sharp distinctions between natural and supernatural morality, between justice and grace, are overcome. Justification and sanctification are analyzed in such a way as to show that the basic positive emphases of Catholicism and of Reformation Protestantism (especially Lutheranism) are not incompatible, and that the historical interconfessional dispute on these points must, at the very least, move to a new level. Lastly, those who accuse natural law theory of committing what has come to be known as the "naturalistic fallacy" are answered much more effectively than has usually been the case.

Tillich might very well be made uncomfortable by this rather alarming list of "improvements." The refurbishing of natural law theory is not something which he has deliberately set out to accomplish. Indeed, he rarely speaks of it; when he does, however, it is to express his agreement with what he considers its basic affirmations. It is this which warrants looking at his ethics, as we shall do, as a restatement of these affirmations.

Those trained in natural law theory may find it difficult to take many of his restatements seriously. They are too unconventional, above all in their mode of expression. The normal reaction may well be to dismiss them out of hand. But, fortunately or unfortunately, there is no quick, and at the same time responsible, way of doing this. Tillich is not the builder of a modern deductive system, in which an error in an initial premise clearly destroys the whole, but rather he utilizes what he terms the "descriptive" and "analytical" method of

the classical ontologists. What he tries to do is to describe the structures of being *qua* being as these appear in any and every encounter with reality, and to clarify the concepts which are used in this endeavor. Verification can thus only be a matter of "intelligent recognition" of the adequacy of the suggested descriptions. (LPJ 23-24) The various parts of what tries to be a total ontological description are to some extent independent of each other and so must be tested one by one. They cannot be either rejected or accepted *en bloc*. In addition, as already hinted, much of Tillich's ontology is presented as a clarification and generalization of the basic notions of classical (Platonic and Aristotelian), as well as more modern, metaphysics. It is this which prompts me to believe that proponents of the natural law tradition can find much that is instructive in his thought even if they have reservations about some of what he says.

III

As I do not return later to epistemological issues, it will be well to start with the last of Tillich's contributions mentioned above: the treatment of the "naturalistic fallacy." This is not explicitly discussed, but Tillich clearly states principles which, if accepted, enable one to avoid this difficulty. He in effect admits the contention of analytic philosophers that one can never move by purely objective rational means from the "is" to the "ought," from knowledge of what is natural (or, to use his preferred term, "essential") to the recognition that it is obligatory. He avoids the difficulty by moving in the opposite direction from the obligatory to the natural. That is, he argues that in the situation of ultimate moral seriousness, one cannot avoid perceiving that what one then acknowledges as absolutely normative is, in fact, the law of one's true self, of what is one's essential nature. To obey is a matter of life or death. To disobey is recognized as, in the most radical sense, "being untrue to oneself." Not to think of the moral imperative as rooted in one's essence is *ipso facto* to miss the fundamental characteristic of moral life. When this is done, the moral law becomes something which can be viewed with detachment, which one can imagine not being obligated to obey. This is true no matter how one conceives the moral law, whether as the product of utilitarian calculation or as the external command of the divine will. In both cases one can then view it as similar to a positive human law. One can question its justice, one can ask why one should obey it. But this is impossible when the command is the law of one's essential being. On this particular point Kant was right. A truly categorical imperative must be self-imposed. One should, to be sure, go beyond Kant. One must affirm, in view of the doctrine of creation, that the law of one's essential nature is equally the law of God. Yet this does not deny the fundamental insight that it is because the law is of one's essence that it is imperative, and that it is in its imperativeness that its essentiality is experienced. (TC 136-137; LPJ 76-77)

But it must not be thought that this view excludes rational and objective knowledge of the essential and normative structure (that is, the *telos*) of human nature. The ontological description of the normative *telos* is not a function of

ethical passion. What is true, however, is that one perceives that the rationally discerned structure is "essential" (rather than a statistical average or a freely projected ideal) only insofar as one admits that man has an essential nature which cannot simply be reduced to empirically describable properties; and this admission occurs when one sees that the only adequate way to characterize the moral demand when it is experienced as unconditioned is in some such terms as "the law of one's true being."

For Tillich, however, such references as these to a "true being" which is in some sense distinct from the empirical self are, as he puts it, "symbolic." True, or essential, human nature should not be said to exist "literally" if one wishes to make oneself intelligible in the modern context where the word "existence" tends to be applied only to the objects of empirical knowledge. But the symbolic mode of speech is not an inferior one. It alone is adequate for certain purposes. Those who deny its legitimacy interpret "is" univocally in its literal empirical sense and so insist on the complete disjunction of "is" and "ought," of fact and norm. Consequently, as we have seen, they are unable to take account of that aspect of unconditional moral concern which can only adequately be described by the use of such "symbols" as "being true to what is deepest in oneself," or "becoming one's real self."

It will be impossible to go fully into Tillich's theory of symbolism (cf. TC 53-67), and yet a few comments must be made, for it is the occasion of perhaps more questions and objections than any other aspect of the system. It is frequently misinterpreted by readers who forget that symbols in Tillich's sense — e.g., "person" applied to God (TC 127-132) — say more than do literal statements about the same object. They are expressive of an aspect of reality which cannot be spoken of literally. Ontological language is also symbolic; but, in contrast to religious language, its symbols tend to be impersonal rather than personal. It is clear that Tillich's "symbolism" is in many ways comparable to Thomistic "analogy." Tillich, indeed, has on at least one occasion suggested that they are equivalents.³ I do not think that this is true, but at the same time I would maintain against certain Thomist critics⁴ that the essential aspects of the theory of symbolism (though not always Tillich's applications of the theory) are compatible with metaphysical analogy.

IV

Quite apart from one's decision on the more epistemological points which we have just discussed, it is possible to see a major contribution in Tillich's generalization of the fundamental "nature" or "law" of being. Generalization, if properly done, is also clarification. It enables one to see the diverse applications of concepts. In this particular case, as we shall see, the clarification of

3. In *Symbol and Knowledge*, 2 JOURNAL OF LIBERAL RELIGION 203 (1941).

4. E.g., Gustave Weigel, *Myth, Symbol and Analogy*, in RELIGION AND CULTURE: ESSAYS IN HONOR OF PAUL TILlich 120-130 (Ed. by Walter Leibrecht. London: SCM Press, 1959). Despite good work which Fr. Weigel has previously done in the interpretation of Tillich, it seems to me that he is here sadly — though perhaps excusably — confused. This is illustrated by his citing *smoke* as a "symbol," in Tillich's sense, of *fire*. (p. 124)

the basic law of being makes possible, Tillich believes, the exhibition of the ultimate unity of love and justice. From this unity result most of the "improvements" of natural law theory which we previously enumerated.

Tillich's description of the fundamental character of being is in harmony, he believes, with at least one point on which Plato, Plotinus, and Augustine, and, even more, Aristotle and Aquinas, agree. The basic character of being is to drive towards the maximum of actuality, the fullness of power and reality. Tillich's own terminology is less traditional. Being is essentially "power," the power to conquer non-being (LPJ 37), that is, "to realize oneself with increasing intensity and extensity" (*id.* at 36), to take "non-being into one's own self-affirmation." (*id.* at 40) Despite terminological differences, the essential agreement on this point with the *philosophia perennis* is, I think, clear.

Tillich, however, advances beyond the tradition in the consistency with which he generalizes this concept of being as self-affirming power driving toward fulfillment. He makes all the forms — or, as he prefers to say, "qualities" — of love, even the most self-sacrificing ones, manifestations of this power. This is true even though the fundamental structure of love seems on a superficial level to preclude this interpretation. Love, as the Platonists especially have affirmed, is essentially a striving towards union. "Love drives everything that is towards everything else that is . . . Love is the drive towards the unity of the separated." (LPJ 25) However, this understanding of love is not in any real opposition to the notion of being as power. It is the most banal of all observations that "in union there is strength." Thus the *nisus* towards fullness of being expresses itself when possible — i.e., on the level of life — in a striving towards union with others. "Love is the moving power of life" (LPJ 25), "the *appetitus* of every being to fulfill itself through union with other beings." (LPJ 33)

The exclusion from this definition of any reference to the emotional elements in love is thoroughly deliberate. Emotion is not prior, but posterior, to the ontologically founded movement. (LPJ 27) It is only through an ontological definition that one can state the essence of love: i.e., state what is common to all the emotionally diverse qualities of love. *Epithymia* (desire) strives towards material union; *eros* is directed towards union, by means of knowledge and appreciation, with the true and the beautiful; *philia* and *agape* strive in different ways towards union between persons. These types of love always exist in a mixture. *Agape*, for example, neither can nor should exist apart from some admixture of *eros*. These are, as we already said, simply different qualities of the same fundamental striving towards increase of being through union. It is this fundamental ontological structure which accounts for the fact that we call extremely diverse emotions by the single name of love. (LPJ 26-33)

It will be observed that the emphasis in this analysis is distinctly different, perhaps not from Augustinian, but from Aristotelian, versions of the natural law. The fundamental striving towards fullness of being is not to be thought of as basically a matter of actualizing one's own potentialities. Rather, the actualizing of potentialities is subsumed under the drive to overcome separation. However, it would seem to be possible for the Aristotelian also to look

at the matter from this angle. He agrees that it is through material, cognitive, and personal unions that human potentialities are actualized. He admits that it is not correct to say that one seeks the object in order to realize oneself. Rather, one seeks the object for its own sake or, more precisely, in order to share more of the fullness of being, both through participating in the actuality of the other and through the correlative heightening of one's own powers. An associated point is that appetite should not be understood as fundamentally directed towards assimilating the other. To be sure, this is the only way in which union on, for example, the level of nutrition can take place. But appetite on higher levels strives beyond this towards union with beings whose attractiveness lies precisely in their greater power which makes it impossible for them to be absorbed. In short, it would seem that an Aristotelian can agree with Tillich's identification of the *telos* of love, the overcoming of separation, with the *telos* of the fundamental dynamism of being.

If this is granted, however, it leads to fundamental revisions of the traditional natural law theory. All natural laws can then be subsumed under the law of love. This, to be sure, is not an entirely novel insight. Augustine saw this, but without working out the detailed implications. Aquinas went further when, as in the third book of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, he presents all creaturely activity as arising from love of, desire for union with, the Fullness of Being who is God. But St. Thomas did not, Tillich would say, draw the necessary conclusions. He did not consistently draw out the implications of this radical teleological unification. If there is one final end which all others subserve, then that end is alone absolute. All others are relative, and the natural laws which are specified by these subordinate ends are also relative. The morality of all precepts and all acts is ultimately to be tested by the essential law of being, the increase of the power of being through the reuniting of the separated.

Tillich's originality, of course, does not lie in making love the sole moral absolute. That has been done many times. And the results have generally been a "situationalist" chaos devoid of general rules and thus indistinguishable, at least in theory, from complete relativism. This, however, is because love has been understood as an emotion. When it is understood ontologically it can, in contrast, constitute a genuine norm capable of giving concrete guidance to the moral life. It becomes possible to specify rationally, though not infallibly, what is right or wrong, just or unjust. It is in his analysis of justice that Tillich takes the first steps in this direction.

Justice is defined as "the form adequate to reuniting love." (LPJ 57) There is a tension in love, for it is, as we have seen, not only a striving towards unity but a striving towards the increase of the power and being in the united elements. If the drive towards union, so to speak, is excessive, it will defeat its own purpose by suppressing or cutting off elements which would have enriched the union if they had been preserved. On the other hand, the retention of certain types of recalcitrant factors will also counteract the enrichment of being by weakening the union. Justice is the balancing of these two tendencies. It is the honoring of the claim of every being not to have its power sacrificed save

for the sake of a union which brings greater power, greater good. It is, in short, "the form adequate to reuniting love."

From this, as can easily be seen, the traditional rules of attributive, distributive, and retributive justice follow immediately. (LPJ 63-64) Retributive justice, for example, is the work of love destroying that which is against love. It takes power away from a being in proportion to the latter's destructive work. (cf. LPJ 49)

For each of the qualities of love previously distinguished, there is a corresponding quality of justice. This applies also to material things. A tree, for example, has a just claim to be appreciated and be spared from wanton destruction. (LPJ 63) On the level of human relations, justice requires that we meet other persons as "egos," not as things. The depersonalizing of others is the fundamental injustice. And, like all injustice, it harms the perpetrator. To refuse to meet the other as a "Thou" is to give up one's own "ego-quality." (LPJ 78) Tillich believes that this is true because he follows Buber in holding that "I-Thou" relationships are constitutive of human selfhood. "There is no other way of becoming an 'I' than by meeting a Thou and accepting him as such." (TC 189)

It is no doubt true that it is impossible to specify deductively exactly what concrete actions are commanded by such principles, but it would be a mistake to suppose that traditional natural law theory succeeds notably better in this respect. As far as I can see, it is more specific only in some of the rules governing sexual behavior and in the absolute interdiction of suicide. And it may be argued that even these need not be greatly relativized by a Tillichean approach. For instance, the natural law against suicide becomes formally comparable to that against murder. In both cases it is the *unjust* taking of life, whether of oneself or of another, which is condemned. This cannot properly be called a relativization of suicide unless one is willing to admit that the interdiction of murder is, as traditionally expounded, also relativistic. The only cases in which self-destruction would be justified, on Tillich's principles, are those which actually are instances of just self-sacrifice. This occurs only when the power of being is, on the whole, enhanced rather than diminished (LPJ 69, 85), as might be considered to happen, for example, when there are solid reasons for believing that self-destruction is the only way to avoid revealing secrets fatal to others. Whatever one may think of cases such as this, however, it must be granted that an ethics of just love in its Tillichean form provides guidance in large areas where traditional natural law formulations are silent. To cite just one example, love towards one's enemies (qualified, to be sure, by a just concern for the being of those threatened by the enemy) becomes a positive moral precept grounded in man's essential nature.

Tillich recognizes at least as emphatically as do the representatives of classical natural law that a consideration of general principles, important as this is for certain limited purposes, is still far removed from the flesh and blood of the moral life with its network of specific demands and obligations. These cannot be deductively arrived at, but are products of the moral wisdom and experience of former generations. (TC 139) As a modern man, Tillich recog-

nizes more clearly than has generally been done in the past that they are relative to a given society and culture, but this does not destroy their morally binding character. The general principle here is that, except for the sake of a clearly greater good, it is unjust to endanger the unifying functions of a society by violating the positive laws and customs — the established social, political, cultural, and economic arrangements — which are the warp and woof of the unity which it fosters.

V

So far we have been considering what might be called the conservative aspects of Tillich's ethics, but there is also a revolutionary side. This affects his treatment of the individual, of society, and of theology. The influence of Luther, of German romanticism, idealism and historicism, of existentialism, psychoanalysis and socialism are all apparent. Certain of the basic concerns of all of these can, Tillich maintains, be included in the natural law ethic of just love.

This is made possible through the radical unification of ethics under the single absolute criterion of love and of justice: "fulfilment [of every being in accordance with its potentialities] within the unity of universal fulfilment. . . . The religious symbol for this is the Kingdom of God." (LPJ 65) Anything which does not contribute to this, or to the closest approximations of it possible under a given set of circumstances, is not just, is not in the ultimate sense morally good. This is true of acts, of laws, of the forms of social, cultural, and economic life. All are under judgment.

On the level of personal life, the romantic, existentialist, and psychoanalytic resonances are particularly strong. True morality affirms vital energies, insists upon "authenticity," involves psychological health. An ethics, no matter how formally "good" the specific acts it recommends, is morally disastrous for those who accept it heteronomously as an alien and oppressive law. This follows because being is essentially self-affirming, a drive towards the fullness of spontaneous and creative life. However, self-affirmation of the romantic sort cannot be absolutized, for "it may be highly unjust, insofar as it makes a balanced center impossible and dissolves the self into a process of disconnected impulses." (LPJ 70) Thus neither a purely heteronomous nor a purely autonomous ethic is moral, for the first, in the name of unity, peace and harmony, suppresses the creative actualization of potentialities, while the second, in the name of self-affirmation and self-expression, attacks the unities through which this alone can truly take place. In traditional language, the problems of motivation and virtue cannot be separated from those of determining what is the objectively moral act in a given situation. It might be said that Tillich, following Luther, universalizes a principle which has traditionally been recognized in Catholic thought as applying only to the counsels of perfection (i.e., poverty, celibacy, perfect obedience, etc.). Following the counsels is evil for those who obey out of fear or ambition, rather than love. For such the result is a diminution, rather than an enhancement of being.

Nevertheless, this does not justify the purely autonomous, immoralist conclusion that "laws which I cannot spontaneously follow are not laws for me." Men in their fallen and disrupted state, separated from their essential nature,

need to be controlled even if it is by a heteronomous conscience which coerces by psychological compulsions or by threats of punishment and reward. Tillich does not dispute this. He simply disputes the view that such a conscience is properly moral. It is rather a social necessity in a state of sin.

In order to avoid misunderstanding, however, a number of additional distinctions need to be made. First, Tillich agrees with what he takes to be Luther's position that even though "civil righteousness" (i.e., loveless obedience to the law) is not more genuinely virtuous for the person involved than is its opposite, still doing "the strange work of love" by using power to maintain peace and order will inevitably involve the inculcation of at least some obedience of this sort. (LPJ 49-51, 94-96) Secondly, however, this position does lead to a certain sympathy with creative rebellion even when it is of the immoralist sort. It is certainly to be preferred to wholly heteronomous moralism. At the same time it should be noted that this sympathy does not extend to chaotic or criminal rebelliousness, which is simply destructive. In the third place, one must remember that there are all sorts of transition stages between sheer heteronomy and the pure virtue of doing what is objectively good spontaneously, joyfully and lovingly. Tillich does not disapprove of the acceptance of external ethical authorities, but he does insist that their authority should be approved by one's reason rather than be purely heteronomous. (TC 139; LPJ 89-90)

When we turn to a consideration of society, we discover that Tillich employs the same pattern of analysis, although here certain motifs derived from idealism, historicism, and religious socialism are also visible. Just as, in this ethics of love, the problem of what is the "moral act" for the individual cannot be considered in isolation from virtue, creativity, and psychic health, so the problem of the "just society" cannot be separated from that of the creative and healthy one. It is in Tillich's theologies of culture and history that he examines the relationships between these factors and shows how the societies which exemplify them arise. These analyses are widely considered his most important contribution. They were the center of his attention during the first half of his productive life before he came to America in 1933, and they still remain an integral part of his thought. However, we shall look at them from a severely limited point of view, asking simply about their relationship to the natural law themes which have more recently emerged in his writings.

This constitutes a problem because some of Tillich's formulations are open to the historicist interpretation that morality is completely relative to culture. He contrasts autonomous and heteronomous cultures with the "healthy" theonomous ones. In these latter, the whole society is truly unified by sharing the same basic convictions as to what is ultimately important. In them, all cultural, social, economic, and political activities and forms are suffused with a sense of genuine meaning and significance. Under these circumstances, religion (defined as "ultimate concern") is fully the "substance of culture," and "culture is the form of religion."⁵ Every facet of life is transparent to the divine depths, and so we may speak of a "theonomous situation." Both early Greece and the

5. See PAUL TILlich, *THE PROTESTANT ERA* 44-65 (Chicago, 1948).

early and high middle ages of the Christian West are mentioned as basically, though of course not perfectly, theonomous.⁶ Every group in society, as well as every human function, was able freely to affirm itself, within the limits of the available possibilities, in a unified community of affirmation. Here, then, were earthly approximations — though still infinitely far removed — of absolute justice. Now the problem is that Tillich does not specifically ask whether one sort of theonomy is better, is more just, than another. It is this which gives a relativistic cast to his interpretation.

But when one takes these formulations in conjunction with certain other analyses,⁷ it is clear that Tillich does make qualitative distinctions between *types* (not simply degrees) of theonomy. A theonomy which is dynamic, open to the future, and in principle capable of being universalized does evidently approximate more closely to the absolute criterion of justice than does a static and intrinsically exclusive theonomy. A polytheistic culture is necessarily of the latter sort, while the former could only be based on a monotheistic religion. A pagan theonomy may, on occasion, exemplify the greater justice from the point of view of its noncoercive (i.e., creative) internal harmony, but not when it is looked at in terms of its necessarily exclusive relation to other groups and to genuine novelties.

It would take us too far afield to explore the implications of this theology of culture for all the problems of political justice. I shall simply point out that it provides a theory and description of what might be called “just revolution” which goes far beyond anything offered by traditional natural law expositions. Although Tillich insists that a society is in no sense literally an organism (LPJ 91-94), nevertheless he does emphasize its unitary character.

The silent acknowledgement received by a ruling group [which exists in every society, no matter how democratic] from the whole group cannot be understood apart from an element which is derived neither from justice nor from power but from love . . . It is the experience of community within the group . . . This communal self-affirmation, on the human level, is called the spirit of the group. The spirit of the group is expressed in all its utterances, in its laws and institutions, in its symbols and myths, in its ethical and cultural forms. It is normally represented by the ruling classes . . . They stand and fall with it. (LPJ 98-99)

Consequently the internal justice of a society is directly related to the extent to which the ruling minorities represent the group consensus. “They cannot exist if the whole group definitely withdraws its acknowledgement. They can prolong their power by physical and psychological compulsion, but not for ever.” (LPJ 98) In other words, revolution (whether sudden or gradual, violent or non-violent) then becomes inevitable. It is not only inevitable, but also justified when it expresses a new and better vision of what is supremely and universally important, and as long as it does not fall into Marxist or other utopian illusions of bringing the Kingdom of Heaven to earth. It was some such view as this

6. 1 SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY 85-86.

7. *The Struggle Between Time and Space*, in THEOLOGY OF CULTURE 30-39.

which made Paul Tillich into a religious socialist at a time when socialism in Germany was a genuinely revolutionary force.⁸

VI

We must now, in conclusion, say something of the specifically theological implications of this ethics of love. Paul Tillich is fundamentally a systematic theologian, and so it is not surprising that it is in this area that the most radical consequences emerge. Through the unification of justice and love the traditional distinctions between natural and supernatural law, between God's justice and His grace, are eliminated. Grace itself is included in the realm of justice, but in such a way, Tillich believes, that its character as grace is not subverted.

There are two ways of discovering the just claims of a being: by objective observation and "rational calculation" on the one hand, and, on the other, by participating in another being through love. To the first correspond the notions of justice developed in traditional natural law theories, while it is on the second that "creative justice" is founded. These two types of justice cannot be neatly separated. An element of creative justice is found in all justice worthy of the name, for complete lovelessness is equivalent to total indifference or to hostility and so could not possibly be concerned about the just claims of anything. Conversely, love does not exclude the rational evaluation of claims but goes beyond this, and so discovers by its loving participation in others that they need, if their separation and alienation is to be overcome, to be listened to, to be given to and, above all, to be forgiven. (LPJ 84) This last means

justification by grace . . . to accept as just him who is unjust . . . Nothing seems to contradict more the idea of justice than this doctrine . . . But nothing less than this has been called the good news in Christian preaching. And nothing less than this is the fulfilment of justice. For it is the only way of reuniting those who are estranged by guilt . . . In accepting him into the unity of forgiveness, love exposes both the acknowledged break with justice on his side with all its implicit consequences and the claim inherent in him to be *declared* just and to be *made* just by reunion. (LPJ 86)

The argument here is simply that, as we have before emphasized, the ultimate criterion of justice is "fulfilment in the unity of universal fulfilment." (LPJ 65) What effectively works towards this fulfilment is just, and so the *agape* quality of love, which manifests itself supremely in the forgiving of the unworthy, takes the form of justice insofar as it serves this end.

It should not be thought that this denies the validity of human law and of ordinary moral judgments. These are rightly "unforgiving" insofar as they exclude false versions of forgiveness which refuse to resist that which is against love, or which equate forgiveness with chaotic and destructive tolerance of evil. True forgiveness, as an act of just love, is possible only where it is an expres-

8. For Tillich's past and present view of religious socialism see THE PROTESTANT ERA 243-260; THEOLOGY OF PAUL TILlich 345-346.

sion of power working effectively towards the enhancement of being, the overcoming of separation. Thus only unconditioned power can unconditionally accept the unacceptable in such a way as not only to *declare* the unjust just — that by itself is sheer sentimentality — but so as, by this declaration, to *make* him just. The reason for this is that only the assurance of acceptance by a love which is unconditionally powerful can overcome the anxiety which is the root of alienation, of hostility, of sin. Thus only God can forgive radically and unconditionally (LPJ 121), for it is only in God and in the “new creation of God in the world” that love, power, and justice are fully united. (LPJ 115)

It can be seen from this that not only is God’s graciousness viewed as identical with his justice, but also that human love does not transcend the demands of human justice but fulfills them. There is no distinction between natural and supernatural commands, or between natural moral power and supernatural charity. All are equally rooted in man’s essence, for the law of this essence is ultimately the same as that of the God who is Being itself — self-affirmation working towards the overcoming of alienation and separation in a community of universal fulfillment. To be sure, in their sinful state, alienated from their essential being, men are capable of only a limited degree of just love. They ignore what nature demands of them, and so need to have their minds grasped by revelation so that they may see what they truly are. They are powerless to fulfill the law of their own being, and so need grace to reunite them with the power of their own essential nature which is rooted in the power of God. Thus Tillich, in basic agreement with Augustine, generalizes the distinction between “fallen” and unfallen” nature in such a way as to eliminate the need for an additional distinction between the “natural” and the “supernatural.”

The significance of this is, I think, considerable. Tillich has succeeded in combining an understanding of grace and justification which is basically Lutheran with the positive concerns of the natural law tradition. He makes clear the inseparability of “declaring just” and “making just,” overcomes the dichotomy between “civil righteousness” and “Christian righteousness,” and makes possible the consistent affirmation of culture as something which, in its place, is good. At the present time there is a growing recognition in both Catholic and Protestant circles that the historic interconfessional conflicts over justification and sanctification, over nature and grace, are in part the result of conceptual confusions in the theological interpretation of these realities. Tillich’s clarification can be immensely helpful to both parties even if they do not accept his system *in toto*. He stands with both. He is faithful to certain of Luther’s central affirmations and yet he is also a genuine representative of the natural law tradition.

That this conclusion is justified is, I hope, by this time apparent. Tillich is right in asserting his basic agreement with the Christian natural law tradition. There is, he says, a

law which is implied in man’s essential nature. It has been restated by Moses and Jesus (there is no difference between natural and revealed law in Bible and classical theology). The restatement of the natural law was, at the same time, its formalization and its concentration into one all-embracing law, the “Great Commandment,” the commandment of love. (TC 136)

"Whenever the ontological foundation of justice was removed, and a positivistic interpretation of law was tried, no criteria against arbitrary tyranny or utilitarian relativism were left." (LPJ 55-56)

The law given by God is man's essential nature, put against him as law. If man were not estranged from himself, if his essential nature were not distorted in his actual existence, no law would stand against him. The law is not strange to man. It is natural law. It represents his true nature from which he is estranged. Every valid ethical commandment is an expression of man's essential relation to himself, to others and to the universe. This alone makes it obligatory and its denial self-destructive. (LPJ 76-77)

It must be admitted that such statements are rare. Tillich does not generally use these traditional terms. And yet their import is clear. He must be classified among the proponents of the natural law.

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