

PAUL TILlich AND PROCESS THEOLOGY

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THE TEMPORALIZING of the great chain of being has been one of the most important shifts in the modern history of ideas.¹ Both Paul Tillich and the process theologians share in this great revolution, the former through the Hegelian tradition, the latter through the impact of modern biology and physics on philosophy. One would imagine more fruitful dialogue between these two traditions than actually existed. The mutual isolation can in part be accounted for on the basis of the European background of Tillich as opposed to the British-American background of the process tradition. The differences, however, are primarily and genuinely philosophical and religious. Our purpose in what follows is to trace the discussion that did occur, isolate the fundamental issues, and question whether the issues can be resolved.

AREAS OF AGREEMENT

There are many areas of agreement, theologically and philosophically, between Tillich and the process theologians. First, both criticize their understanding of classical theism in favor of a more philosophically and religiously adequate doctrine of God. Theism is inadequate either because it makes God one being alongside other beings (Tillich) or because it entails static perfectionism (Hartshorne). In agreement with classical theism, but each in his own way, both maintain there is an infinite distinction between God and creatures, Hartshorne in the sense that there is a literally infinite gap between a finite-infinite individual and a merely finite individual,² Tillich in the sense that God is beyond all finite distinctions. Furthermore, the element of mystery remains in the doctrine of God for each man, for Tillich in terms of the abysmal character of God, for Hartshorne in terms of God's concrete character (namely, why He should be my God now). Tillich no less than Hartshorne rejects the notion that God is pure act, that is, that God is actuality with no potentiality. Potentiality and actuality, along with the other distinctions which derive from the distinction between being and becoming, apply to God, though secondarily and symbolically.³

There are, likewise, fundamental similarities between the metaphysi-

¹ Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (New York, 1960) chap. 9.

² Charles Hartshorne, "Tillich and the Other Great Tradition," *Anglican Theological Review* 43 (1961) 259.

³ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1 (Chicago, 1951) 246.

cal frameworks of each. The metaphysical doctrines of panpsychism and internal relations, what are, of course, central to process philosophy, have analogues in Tillich's metaphysics. Although Tillich never did (or could) embrace these specific doctrines, his commitment to creativity and emergence in his ontological concept of life puts him in line with the evolutionary and organismic mode of thought characteristic of process philosophy.⁴ The specific doctrine of the multidimensional unity of life, as opposed to the doctrine of a hierarchy of levels, entails such ideas as the interrelatedness of events, the continuation of the structures of earlier realms into later realms in a new way, and the presence of psychic qualities, at least potentially or by analogy, in simpler structures.

The most fundamental area of agreement, however, which has simultaneously metaphysical and theological implications, is their clear rejection of the static absolute. Tillich no less than Hartshorne is committed to the idea of the temporalizing of the great chain of being, not only in terms of his rejection of a static hierarchy of being but also in terms of his understanding of the category of being-itself. Tillich's orientation toward becoming in his understanding of being can be detected at several points in his metaphysics. First, he is oriented toward a philosophy of existence instead of a philosophy of substantialism.⁵ His objective is a philosophy of life in both the existential and metaphysical sense, namely, a philosophy of human existence and of the actualization of potential being. Second, the philosopher cannot speak of being without also speaking of becoming.⁶ Becoming is just as genuine in the structure of being as what remains unchanged in the process of becoming.⁷ Third, his use of "absolute" does not carry the static connotations which the phrase "the absolute" has carried in much previous philosophy and theology. Tillich claims he does not use the phrase "the absolute," although he does on occasion. There can be no doubt, however, that his search is not for one or many things which are static and never change in any sense of the word. This can be illustrated in his view of the metaphysical categories.⁸ These categories are absolute in the sense that they are a priori. But a priori does not mean static in the sense of being eternally changeless. A priori refers to the structures of experience which can be known by way of a critical analysis of experience. The structures, however, are not changeless. Another cosmic

⁴Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3 (1963) 11-30.

⁵John E. Smith, *Themes in American Philosophy* (New York, 1970) pp. 203-4.

⁶Paul Tillich, "On God and His Attributes," in *Philosophical Interrogations*, ed. Sidney and Beatrice Rome (New York, 1970) p. 376.

⁷Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, 181.

⁸Paul Tillich, *My Search for Absolutes* (New York, 1969) chap. 1.

epoch might produce another structure of being.⁹ What Tillich seeks is the "relatively static a priori," as opposed to an absolutely static one; that is, a priori that deal with the structure of present experience, not static absolutes. The same thing must be said with respect to the absolute of being. Being is not an absolute to which the ideas of change, becoming, and motion cannot be applied in any appropriate way.

The question of why Tillich disagreed with the process theologians is made more complicated when one admits that Tillich either misunderstood some process doctrines or inadvertently misrepresented some process doctrines. His misunderstanding is illustrated in his claim that "life" is a better word than "process" or "becoming" for the dynamic character of being because the latter two terms are inadequate for describing life as a whole; specifically, the latter two terms allegedly do not account for the new in history.¹⁰ The possibility of engaging in serious discussion was also thwarted by his misrepresentation of process theology as proposing a finite God, saying that life and death are equal, equating God and nature or process, saying there is no a priori structure of experience or being, dissolving the structure of process into process and so sacrificing persisting identity, making God fragmentary because the temporal blessedness of a "becoming" God cannot be nonfragmentary eternal blessedness.¹¹

PROCESS CRITICISMS OF TILlich

Charles Hartshorne, Schubert Ogden, and Bernard Loomer have all written substantial critical essays on Tillich's metaphysics and his doctrine of God.¹² Their fundamental argument is that Tillich's understanding of the concept of being-itself is inconsistent with some of the dynamic and relational elements of his thinking. Specifically, his is in the end still a classical philosophy of being, and therefore his concept of being-itself is in the end, with all of the apparent revisions, an unrelated absolute. Although there are genuine elements of change and relation in his language about God, his final commitment to a philosophy of being

⁹Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, 166.

¹⁰Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, 26.

¹¹See "On God and His Attributes," p. 376; *Systematic Theology* 3, 11; 1, 205; 1, 167; 1, 181; 3, 404.

¹²The major Hartshornian criticisms of Tillich are "Tillich's Doctrine of God," in *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, ed. Charles Kegley and Robert Bretall (New York, 1952) pp. 164-95; "Tillich and the Other Great Tradition," *op. cit.*; "Tillich and the Nontheological Meanings of Theological Terms," *Religion in Life* 35 (1966) 674-85; *A Natural Theology for Our Times* (LaSalle, Ill., 1967) pp. 33-37. For Schubert Ogden's criticisms, see "Beyond Supernaturalism," *Religion in Life* 33 (1963-64) 7-18; *The Reality of God* (New York, 1966) pp. 44-54. For Loomer's criticisms see "Tillich's Theology of Correlation," *Journal of Religion* 36 (1956) 150-56.

instead of becoming prevents him from developing a concept of the absolute which is genuinely related.

Hartshorne admits that Tillich's philosophy and theology are not simply traditional metaphysics or supernatural theology. In reviewing Tillich's symbolic statements about God, Hartshorne notes there are many features in Tillich's meanings similar to process views. Tillich has gone beyond the older concepts of God as a being or as Being in the exclusive sense, that is, as exclusive of becoming. Thus Tillich recognizes that, at least symbolically, there is a polarity of finite and infinite in deity. "I therefore (joyfully) acclaim him as one of the rapidly growing company of 'dipolar' theists or 'panentheists' to which some of us are proud to belong."¹³ Hartshorne admits, however, that his interpretation of Tillich in this light is "not without its difficulties." There are three distinguishable problems with Tillich's doctrine of God from Hartshorne's point of view, problems which can be designated as religious, metaphysical, and linguistic.

1) Hartshorne criticizes Tillich in his assumption of what religious experience demands of a doctrine of God. The disagreement is not over the claim that these are interdependent, but over the character of the religious experience and its philosophical correlate.¹⁴ Hartshorne discovers two definitions of God by Tillich: God refers to whatever concerns us ultimately (that is, can be loved with all one's mind, soul, heart, and strength), and God refers to being-itself.¹⁵ The religious concern is primarily a total concern. But the unreservedness and inclusiveness of our concern is not the same thing as our concern being unconditional or without contingency. For example, our actual love of God is literally contingent. Had certain conditions been different, God would not have concerned us at all, for we would not have existed. Thus the philosophical correlates of unconditionedness and ultimacy do not follow as required by the nature of religious concern. "Total, integral, unreserved response seems to be what religion calls for, rather than the philosophical 'unconditioned,' 'ultimate,' 'absolute,' or 'infinite.'"¹⁶ The only philosophical requirement is an ultimate which is adequate for an unreserved and inclusive concern.

2) Hartshorne does not want to deny the absolute character of God. His question is what the absolute character of God means from a metaphysical point of view, that is, logically meaningful. His charge is that the philosophical side of Tillich's doctrine of God is inadequate not only

¹³ Hartshorne, "Tillich's Doctrine of God," p. 166.

¹⁴ For one of Hartshorne's basic discussions of the relation of religious experience to the doctrine of God, see *Man's Vision of God* (Chicago, 1941) chap. 3.

¹⁵ Hartshorne, "Tillich and the Other Great Tradition," p. 245.

¹⁶ Hartshorne, "Tillich's Doctrine of God," p. 168.

because he extrapolates philosophical correlates not implicit in or required by religious experience, but also because of an inadequate metaphysical understanding of the absolute character of God. Both Hartshorne and Tillich admit change and persistence in being, Hartshorne in his notion that within becoming something becomes and something does not, Tillich in his notion of the polarity of dynamics and form within being. The fundamental difference is in "what status is assigned to the togetherness of the two," namely, of persistence and change. The question can be stated as, what characterizes their togetherness? The metaphysical understanding of the absoluteness of God hinges on the answer to this question.

To understand more fully Hartshorne's criticism of Tillich's formulation as philosophically inadequate, it helps to state Tillich's way of answering this question. The classical philosophies of pure actuality, he claims, swallow dynamics in pure form, while the philosophies of becoming do the opposite. Thus the only way, in Tillich's view, of avoiding the cul de sac of a static God and the cul de sac of a finite God is to state that "being comprises movement and rest." This avoids identifying absoluteness and static and provides a philosophically acceptable way of protecting the absoluteness of God.

Hartshorne's essential criticism is that, even in this formulation, being is still absolute in the sense that it is literally exempt from any change. The usual alternatives of changelessness and finitude, however, are not the only alternatives. The togetherness of being and becoming can be stated in such a way that God can be literally conditioned and still absolute. But in the end the philosophies of being, including Tillich's, can only swallow, digest, and denature the idea of becoming, if not by denying it, at least by relegating it to a symbolic becoming, thus retaining a philosophical concept of absolute which precludes the dynamic elements which were intended to be included.

Hartshorne's criticism of the philosophical inadequacy of Tillich's notion of absoluteness is in the end a logical one. "While a total reality cannot be literally 'immutable' unless everything in it is immutable, a total process-up-to-now can very well be succeeded by a literally *new* total containing the old, and even something neither new nor old but eternal!"¹⁷ Thus he holds it is philosophically (logically) possible to state the absoluteness of God apart from immutability and including (literal) change.

For Hartshorne, the absoluteness of God is an abstraction from His concrete actuality, namely, the absolutely fixed structure and the absolutely inexhaustible potentialities of the primordial nature of God.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

The character of the divine absoluteness can be elaborated by contrasting the absoluteness of God with other conditioned things. The "dipolar" way of contrasting God and all else may be expressed by saying that the relativity of God is itself, in its generic form, absolute. That is, "it is complete, adequate possession of all things *on condition only that they exist*."¹⁸ The correct statement, therefore, is absolute conditionedness, not mere unconditionedness. Only God reflects adequately, even infallibly, all that conditions Him or anything else. This statement does not mean that God is God only if there happens to be a world to possess. There had to be a world, and divine power is adequate to possess it. But what world there is is dependent on His and our decisions. This notion is not synergism, the notion that we co-operate with God on the same plane. "But how about our contributing to God, not indeed on the same plane—if that means without categorial difference—but still contributing according to a categorial analogy?"¹⁹

The closest Tillich comes to a dipolar doctrine, according to Hartshorne, is his notion that in God the polarities of rest and motion are present without "tension" or possible "dissolution." For Hartshorne, the inadequacy of this resolution of the question of the relative and absolute in the philosophy of being is clearest when Tillich says that in God these poles are "absolutely identical." To be superior to tension through an infallible power to harmonize the poles is one thing; the mere identity of the poles, or sheer nonpolarity, is quite another. Tillich seems to conclude that if God is not merely potentiality or merely actuality, then He can be literally neither. But Hartshorne maintains that literally containing potentialities is entirely compatible with literally containing actualities. Indeed, *every* actuality contains both and is never merely one or the other. "If we avoid the *non sequitur* of inferring 'not literally' from 'not merely,' then many sayings of Tillich become intelligible."²⁰ Hartshorne fully agrees with Tillich's intention, namely, the insistence that God cannot cease to be God, and that God is abysmally different from all else. But it does not follow from this insistence that God is now simply what He was before or that God is absolute in the sense of changelessness.

May we not say that God is always Himself, but that He is never *merely* himself? He is always Himself, but now in "real connection" (Tillich phrase) with this world state, and now also (and forever after) with the world state. No self is, indeed, ever merely itself. Identity through change is an aspect of life, not the totality. The totality is always process-now.²¹

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* "Absolute, categorial participation is divine; we are capable only of something indeterminately less than sheer participation" (*ibid.*, p. 185).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

²¹ *Ibid.*

3) Hartshorne's third criticism, a linguistic one, is that in the end Tillich *must* conceive of God as unrelated and immutable. The reason is that what change and relatedness do apply to God apply as exclusively symbolic, never literal, ideas. Thus God can never be literally related to or conditioned by the world in any sense. Only a literally relative divine reality can include anything relative. God, therefore, must be literally finite (in some sense) rather than (only) symbolically living and changing. For Hartshorne, God is the model for finitude because He is the eminent example of finitude. That is, God's finitude ("God's *definite* perception of just this, not that, when it *might* have been perception of that and not this"²²) is the definitive standard of finitude which we only imperfectly reflect. Correspondingly, God alone is literally infinite.

For of course the divine in its aspect of potentiality is potentiality itself, coincident with ultimate possibility, the logically conceivable. I am speaking now of the element of "pure" potentiality in God, abstracting from all "real" potentials, that is, those limited to some definite circumstance or moment of process.²³

The divine pure potentiality is infinite. Omniscience could possess and experience anything should it occur. Thus Hartshorne concludes that only a literally finite reality can include anything finite. But a divine reality which, taken as a whole, is relative, finite, and contingent, can contain not only all that is finite and relative but also whatever is nonrelative, nonfinite, and noncontingent; "for negations applicable to the included need not apply to the including, whereas it is otherwise with affirmation."²⁴

Tillich's fear is that such a concept of a literally relative, finite, and contingent God will inevitably involve a denial of the abysmal contrast between God and all else. Hartshorne, however, maintains that this distinction is fully maintained in the process view, "though it is described in a fashion different from the usual one." Specifically, Hartshorne argues "God is finite, but not simply as we are. The difference, moreover, is an 'essential' one, a difference in principle, not merely in degree."²⁵ Such a superiority-in-principle he calls "categorical supremacy." Ordinary superiorities can never be fully and literally stated, for they involve factual differences which escape full conceptualization. But God's eminent superiority can be stated.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 179; see also p. 191.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 180-81.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

He has strictly adequate knowledge of man's religious growth; He knows it without qualification, just-knows it. That makes God finite. For man's religious growth might have been otherwise; and this otherwise is known to God only as a possibility, not as actuality. God actually knows as actual only what is actual, and this is in some respects limited and bounded. . . .

*This finitude . . . infallibly and adequately embraces all actual finitude in a single actuality. No other finitude does anything of the sort, not even that of "the universe;" for this, so far as it can be distinguished from God, is not a single actuality.*²⁶

God's "inessential finitude," namely, what happens to characterize Him now as our God, is a mystery. "Here indeed we have only symbols. I hope this lessens the distance between our distinguished author and myself."

We must note here that Hartshorne, no less than Tillich, wants to avoid the phrase "becoming God." This phrase suggests that God can be born, that God could degenerate and die, that there could be something prior to the divine process or subsequent to it, or that God is "subject to a process which is completely open to the future and has the character of absolute accident." The question, however, is this: "If ordinary self-identity can be maintained through *some* changes, why not an eminent self-identity maintained through *all* changes, without possibility of beginning or ending?"²⁷ For Hartshorne, the power of being does not have to be identified with being-itself, or what is beyond the polarities of rest and motion in an absolute or unconditioned reality. Thus the phrase "being-itself" is inadequate to the genuine elements of change and relativity Tillich intends in his idea of God but is able to ascribe only symbolically. The phrase "being-itself" must be replaced by the phrase "process-itself" (or he sometimes prefers the phrase "reality-itself"). "Ordinary process has this power [to create and preserve] in an ordinary manner, eminent Process in an eminent, definitive manner."²⁸

Along with the religious criticism (total, not unconditioned concern), philosophical criticism (absoluteness needs not be changelessness), and linguistic criticism (no literal statements), we might add a fourth and perhaps even more basic criticism, which might be designated phenomenological. Tillich attempts to establish one literal statement about God in his assertion that God is being-itself. However, Hartshorne argues, this assertion cannot be taken literally when our experience, itself a process, discloses only processes and what can be abstracted from them.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

A "being" which is not any process or any datum constituent of process cannot have literal meaning, for nothing of the sort appears in experience. Thus the final appeal is to the nature of experience. "At best, 'being' in this sense seems a reference to traditional metaphysics, by faith taken as a symbol of what no experience could exhibit. So we return to question three as most crucial."²⁹

TILLICH'S RESPONSE TO HIS PROCESS CRITICS

We have noted that there are many ways in which Tillich is closer to the process viewpoint than he is to classical theism. This conclusion is even more compelling when one includes Tillich's symbolic statements about God. The question, then, is why Tillich refused to accept a process framework, and why he continually insisted there is a fundamental difference between the two modes of philosophy, especially on the question of the relation to being-itself and becoming. Why does process theology present an inadequate absolute as its answer to this ancient question? In order to answer these questions, we will focus on Tillich's argument that the concept of being-itself as infinitely transcending the polarities of rest and motion is not only possible but necessary.

There are several reasons why Tillich was unable to accept a process framework. One reason, to be sure, was autobiographical. He simply was not trained in that kind of philosophical language, and his own biography did not support that kind of philosophical perspective.³⁰ Central to this latter reason is his claim that the process perspective does not take as seriously the polarity of life and death as an existentialist ontology does.³¹ We shall return to this criticism later in the attempt to locate one of the most basic differences between him and the process theologians in an existential difference. His metaphysical argument, however, is that,

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 195. That question is: "Has Tillich good reason for rejecting, or failing to adopt, the principle of process, that the togetherness of what-does-not-become-and-what-becomes itself becomes (generally, the togetherness of the negative and the positive is positive, of the valueless and the valuable is valuable, of the unconscious and the conscious is conscious), with the consequence that reality in its inclusive sense coincides with process (as something *indicated*, not merely named; process-now, not just process taken generically) and the further consequence that God, or reality itself, is Process-itself, our God now, more inclusive than He is immutable or eternal Being-itself?" (*ibid.*, p. 194).

³⁰Paul Tillich, *On the Boundary* (New York, 1969) pp. 46-58.

³¹Tillich's frequent criticism that process philosophy does not take nonbeing in the sense of negation, death, and the threat of nothingness as seriously as existentialist philosophy does is supported by Hartshorne's claim that becoming is not basically addition *and* subtraction but sheer addition. "The negative side of these dualities is an illusion resulting from confusing the perspective of being and that of becoming, or from an impure use of the language of events or happenings as opposed to the language of beings or substances" (Charles Hartshorne, "Process Philosophy as a Resource for Christian Thought," in *Philosophical Resources for Christian Thought*, ed. Perry LeFevre [Nashville, 1968] p. 47).

helpful as the process notion of becoming is for describing the dynamic and relative character of reality, being instead of becoming must be given finally the highest ontological rank. The questions are what he means by this claim and why he argues this point.

Why does Tillich argue for the priority of being in an age that assumes the dynamic, changing, and relative character of all reality? The answer to this question resides, in part, in an understanding of what Tillich means by "being." Tillich consistently argued, against the nominalists in general and the analytic philosophers in specific, that being is not primarily a logical idea, namely, the highest abstraction.²² Neither is being to be identified with the static absolute. On these points Tillich agrees with the process criticisms of classical philosophy (insofar as classical philosophy is subject to this criticism). Instead, being is an ontological idea as opposed to a purely logical one in the sense defined above. In this assertion Tillich means to claim there are metaphysical and phenomenological grounds for retaining the concept and maintaining the priority of being when one says there is anything. Being is an ontological or metaphysical idea in the sense that it is the prius of all thought and action. Nothing can be thought without being as the presupposition of thought. Being is a phenomenological idea in the sense that "it is the expression of the experience of being over against non-being."²³ Critics of the phenomenological meaning claim this is a "purely psychological" meaning, that is, a crutch created for security in an otherwise alien world. But Tillich takes this to be a meaningful word not only in the sense that it is metaphysically required for any thought, but in the sense that it is derived from two "profound experiences," one negative and the other positive. These experiences are not psychological crutches conjured for security; they are the most profound experiences a human being can have. The one experience is the shock of nonbeing; the other is the experience of love, "the love of being as such, a mystical relation to being-itself."

One could also call it a feeling for the holiness of being as being, whatever it may be. This "being" transcends everything particular without becoming empty, for it embraces everything particular. "Being" in this sense is power of being, and it is an infinitely full, inexhaustible but indefinite absolute. It is the basis of truth, because it is the transcendence of subject and object. It is the basis of the good, because it contains every being in its essential nature and (as we shall see) the

²²See, e.g., Paul Edwards, "Professor Tillich's Confusions," in *Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Norbert Schedler (New York, 1974) pp. 186-205, and Sidney Hook, *The Quest for Being* (New York, 1963) pp. 147-58.

²³Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 2, 11. For a psychological reduction of the concept of "being," see Walter Kaufmann, "Existentialism and Death," in *The Meaning of Death*, ed. Herman Feifel (New York, 1959) pp. 39-63.

norms of every ethical command. And it is identical with the holy, the ground of everything that has being.³⁴

In the light of this understanding of being we can isolate three strands in Tillich's rejection of becoming as the final metaphysical category. He rejects becoming as the candidate for logical, phenomenological, and religious reasons. (1) In discussing the appearance of a new dimension in life, Tillich maintains that the priority of becoming must be rejected logically because

it is the universal character of actual being which, in the philosophies of life or process, has led to the elevation of the category of becoming to the highest ontological rank. But one cannot deny that the claim of the category of being to this rank is justified because, while becoming includes and overcomes relative non-being, being-itself is the negation of absolute non-being; it is the affirmation that there is anything at all. Indeed, it is under the protection of this affirmation that becoming and process are universal qualities of life.³⁵

Or again:

You can deny every statement, but you cannot deny that being *is*. And if you ask what this "is" means, you arrive at the statement that it is the negation of possible non-being. "Is" means "is not not" . . . You can deny anything particular whatsoever, but not being, because even your negative judgments themselves are acts of being and are only possible through being. Being is the basic absolute.³⁶

These logical requirements—of the power of being to resist absolute nonbeing and the logical meaningfulness of "*is*"—follow from Tillich's understanding of the nature of what it means to say "to be." (2) But becoming is also inadequate for phenomenological reasons: it ignores the primordial intuition of all being and knowing. Man as an existing and knowing being experiences the power of being at the depth of his own being and knowing. As we shall see, philosophers of becoming reject any such intuition or primordial experience, but for Tillich such an experience is obvious to any reflective person. (3) Finally, being as ontologically prior to becoming must be preserved in order to protect the holiness of God.³⁷

Tillich does defend dynamic elements within the being of God. But he

³⁴Tillich, *My Search for Absolutes*, p. 82. For an outstanding discussion of Tillich's use of the term "being-itself," see William L. Rowe, *Religious Symbols and God* (Chicago, 1968) chap. 2.

³⁵Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, 25–26. Although becoming includes relative nonbeing, being only can be the negation of *absolute* nonbeing.

³⁶Tillich, *My Search for Absolutes*, pp. 80–81.

³⁷Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, 248.

rejects the idea of a becoming God *in any sense*. This is clearest in his discussion of God as related.

God as being-itself is the ground of every relation; in his life all relations are present beyond the distinctions between potentiality and actuality. But they are not the relations of God with something else. They are in the inner relations of the divine life. The internal relations are, of course, not conditioned by the actualization of finite freedom. But the question is whether there are external relations between God and the creature. The doctrine of creation affirms that God is the creative ground of everything in every moment. In this sense there is no creaturely independence from which an external relation between God and the creature could be derived. If God is said to be in relation, this statement is as symbolic as the statement that God is a living God. And every special relation participates in this symbolic character. Every relation in which God becomes an object to a subject, in knowledge or in action, must be affirmed and denied at the same time. It must be affirmed, because man is a centered self to whom every relation involves an object. It must be denied because God can never become an object for man's knowledge or action. . . . The unapproachable character of God, or the impossibility of having a relation with him in the proper sense of the word, is expressed in the word "holiness."⁸⁸

Tillich agrees with the process theologians in turning against the *actus purus* doctrine (on the basis of the thought of Boehme, Schelling, and Bergson). Indeed, he concedes at one point that the phrase "divine life," even if used symbolically, necessarily implies an element of becoming within the divine ground of being and so an element of temporality. The eternity of God is not timelessness, and the directing activity of God works for what is "better" for His creatures *and* for Himself, namely, reunion of the estranged. Nevertheless, he recoils from the obvious revisions of the classical doctrine of the unconditionedness of God required by such language. He says:

But in spite of my agreement with Hartshorne in these important points, I cannot accept his assertion that these elements which characterize finite being can be applied to God "literally," because that would make God finite; and a "finite God" is a contradiction in terms. Certainly, one must say that God has the finite (and its categories) "within" himself, not alongside himself—which also would make him finite. But he is not subject to finitude; he is the infinite who comprises his infinity and his finitude. If this is denied, he becomes another name for the process of life, seen as a whole, and is subject to the tragic possibility which threatens every finite process. Then not only is the world a risk taken by God, but God himself is risk to himself, a risk which may fail.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 271.

⁸⁹ Tillich, "On God and His Attributes," p. 376.

And again:

I am not convinced by any of the criticisms of my use of the phrase *esse ipsum* as the first (certainly not the last) assertion about God, that it can be omitted or replaced by anything else. *Being as the negation of possible non-being is the basic cognitive position*, which precedes in logical dignity every characterization of being. I am not disinclined to accept the process-character of being-itself. On the contrary, the idea of a living God seems to me to contradict the Aristotelian-Thomistic doctrine of God as pure actuality. But before this can be said, being *qua* being must have been posited. If I assert that potentiality as well as actuality is in God, I add that these are not separated in God as in finite beings. If this is true, the two terms are not used in the sense in which they are created through experience and reflection, but they are used analogically or symbolically. The same is true of essence and existence.⁴⁰

Tillich's final disagreement with the process theologians reveals the very foundation of his philosophical theology. His reply to Scharlemann, whose ontological revisions he found more attractive than Whitehead's or Hartshorne's, but whose revisions were similar in some ways to theirs (namely, the subject and context is as much a part of "being" as the object and structure, so the concept of God must include by definition relational elements⁴¹), reveals how fundamental the difference between the process theologians and Tillich is. This reply to Scharlemann is identical to his reply to his process critics. "I consider them [his criticisms] as emphases on particular points with which I largely agree—except that one point in which one who has experienced the shock of non-being cannot make any concession, the ultimacy of being."⁴²

In the end Tillich tries to reduce the difference between him and his critics to a merely verbal disagreement. Indeed, he thinks this reduction finally carries the day for him.

Finally, I suspect that the discussion about "being" and "becoming" as basic concepts is merely verbal. If being means static self-identity, becoming must be the ultimate principle. But if being means the power that conquers non-being in every life process, then even the process philosopher must acknowledge that being, namely, the negation of non-being, precedes in ontological dignity the polarity of the static and the dynamic. (*Philosophical Interrogations*, p. 377)

So near and yet so far. Tillich has conceded to his process critics almost everything that possibly could be conceded without capitulating to their revisions of classical theism. Yet in the end his insistence on the

⁴⁰Tillich, "Reply," in *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, p. 339 (italics added).

⁴¹Robert Scharlemann, "Tillich's Method of Correlation: Two Proposed Revisions," *Journal of Religion* 46 (1966) 92-103.

⁴²Tillich, "Rejoinder," *ibid.*, p. 185.

priority of being-itself and his refusal to make any literal statements about God put him in the camp of the classical theists; indeed, his "God beyond God" makes him a defender of one of the most extreme forms of the transcendence of God in terms of His aseity that classical theism has ever had.

Admirable as his final attempt to resolve the difference may be, no one, least of all Tillich, can assume that the issue is resolved. Our final task will be to locate the issues and to ask whether they can be resolved.

THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES

In an attempt to locate the differences between Tillich and the process theologians, we can specify four areas of disagreement.

1) Tillich takes the question, why is there something, why not nothing? to be a meaningful and answerable question in a specifiable way. This classical metaphysical question, going all the way back to Parmenides, provides the basis for one of the most fundamental differences between Tillich and Hartshorne. There are at least three possible answers to Parmenides' question: First, why not? Second, there must be something. Third, there is a power of being. It must be noted that the latter two answers, held by Hartshorne and Tillich respectively, require some concept of God. However, the God required is significantly different, especially with regard to their understanding of the question of how God is the "origin" (in the sense of ground) of the world. For Hartshorne, God and the world are coeternal; for Tillich, God is the ground of the world in the sense that God as the power of being is the presupposition of any world at all. Both propose to have essentially logical (as opposed to theological) answers to this specific question. The theological and religious aspects of their answers will be elaborated below.

For Hartshorne, there is a world because logically there must be a world.⁴⁸ There is no possibility of there being no contingent thing whatsoever, although it is certainly possible for any particular thing not to exist. That there is a world at all, like the fact that there is a God at all, is for him logically necessary. However, Houston Craighead has shown that the logical necessity of God's existence in Hartshorne's form of the Anselmian and Cartesian version of the ontological argument (as distinguished from the Augustinian-Tillichian form to be discussed below) is valid only insofar as it is necessary that a world exists.

For Hartshorne, how the world exists in any moment is contingent, but that the world, and so God, exist are necessary truths. His argument is

⁴⁸Charles Hartshorne, "Metaphysical Statements as Nonrestrictive and Existential," *Review of Metaphysics* 12 (1958). See also his "Could There Have Been Nothing?" *Process Studies* 1 (1971) 25-28.

exclusively logical.⁴⁴ First, to say that nothing might actually exist is to treat nothing as though it were something. Further, to talk as though "no world at all" were a conceivable though unrealized fact is to conceal oneself from the pure negativity of the idea. Since this is nonsensical, the belief that bare nothing is a genuine alternative to existence is false, and necessarily so. "Nothing exists" can be falsified but never verified, and the exclusive falsifiability means impossibility.

However, Craighead argues, apart from the fact that Hartshorne does not prove the necessity of there being anything at all, there are at least two arguments for the claim that any world is contingent and so Hartshorne's claim cannot be proved. The first argument is psychological. There is a sense of awe and amazement when one considers the fact that there *is* a universe. The radical contingency of *any* universe inspires such a sense of awe and amazement. The second argument is partly logical, namely, that "as a matter of fact it is contingent that there be any universe at all."⁴⁵ Logically, we can conceive that there might have been (or yet be) nothing at all. If the conceivable is the logically possible, then from our ability to conceive such a state we can conclude it is not necessary that there be a world. Hartshorne would argue that it cannot be conceived. To be sure, if conceived means "imagined," then total nothingness is inconceivable. Even to imagine total blackness is to imagine something. But one does not need to equate "conceive" and "imagine." One cannot imagine his own nonexistence. But it hardly follows that one's own nonexistence is inconceivable to him. One needs only to produce the requisite conditions to show its possibility; one does not need to imagine one's own nonexistence as a thing. Correspondingly, we can list enough conditions for total nothingness, namely, each thing which now exists would cease to exist and no thing would be replaced by anything else. Since everything now existing is contingent, each existing thing can be conceived not to exist. Take the example of trees. We know all trees are contingent. We can conceive that all trees cease to exist and are not replaced. Likewise, all beings are contingent (except God in a special sense). We can conceive all beings ceasing to exist and not being replaced. Craighead argues: "If this is absurd, if the notion of absolute nothingness is mere verbiage, because it does not 'make sense,' then the notion of there being no trees is likewise absurd—but clearly it is not."⁴⁶

Tillich does not argue specifically for the possibility of nonbeing in the sense that Craighead does. Indeed, he says that the question *in our*

⁴⁴For a secondary discussion of this argument, see Eugene Peters, *Hartshorne and Neoclassical Metaphysics* (Lincoln, Neb., 1970) pp. 22-23, 115-16.

⁴⁵Houston Craighead, "Non-Being and Hartshorne's Concept of God," *Process Studies* 1 (1971) 21.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 22.

originally stated form is meaningless.⁴⁷ He admits this, however, in the sense that proposed answers to that specific question are subject to the same question in an infinite regression. Nevertheless, I do not see any reason why Tillich would reject Craighead's argument. Nonbeing, to be sure, has a primary existential reference for Tillich; but it also has the metaphysical notion of nothingness. Furthermore, Tillich has, in his own unique form of the ontological and cosmological arguments, an answer to precisely this traditional question (even though it is not stated in the objectionable way). His form of the arguments is that being-itself or the power of being is the local requirement of anything at all in the sense that the power of being is the presupposition of all contingent beings and all thought. We have here a Tillichian form of the cosmological argument (God as the power of being is the presupposition—not inference—of all contingent beings)⁴⁸ and of the ontological argument (God as being-itself is the presupposition of all thought),⁴⁹ and so his answer to the question of why something and not nothing, of why nonbeing in both the psychological and ontological sense, is not the last word. Being-itself, which is noncontingent in any literal sense, is beyond all contingent beings in the sense that it is presupposed as the power of being for any contingent thing. In thinking about the existence or nonexistence of anything or everything, we presuppose the reality of what is not a particular being but accounts for there being something rather than nothing.

We have been arguing here that Tillich as much as Hartshorne gives a logical answer to the original question. But some clarity as to precisely what each means by "logic" in this context is in order if we are to understand more adequately the force of each argument as well as the differences. Both the conclusions that God and the world are coeternal and necessary are the result of logical *inference* for Hartshorne. Here we find one form of what Tillich calls "technical reason," a kind of logic which he rejects as fruitless when he repudiates the traditional forms of the cosmological and ontological arguments. Instead, God is a logical *presupposition*, not in the sense that God is inferred in the logical structure of thought or is a regulative idea, but in the sense that one comes to an awareness of the necessity of being-itself when confronting the awe-full question of why anything should exist at all. We find here that ecstatic, not technical, reason gives us the answer to this question. Although not logically legitimate in the strict sense of inference, being-itself is the presupposition of the question about the existence of any contingent thing at

⁴⁷Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, 163.

⁴⁸Malcolm Diamond, *Contemporary Philosophy and Religious Thought* (New York, 1974) pp. 325–31.

⁴⁹Rowe, *Religious Symbols and God*, pp. 85–93.

all. Nothing at all is possible in the sense that nonbeing is possible. In the face of this possibility, an intuition of being itself is advanced as the answer to the question of why something, why not nothing. It is an intuition of being-itself as the presupposition, or ground, of any world at all. Interestingly, Hartshorne also bases his logical inference on an intuition. His is in the form of an axiom instead of an intuitional presupposition, namely, to be is to be able to be known.⁵⁰

The deepest issue, however, cannot be stated in terms of a logical difference. As noted, each has a somewhat different understanding of logic as applied to our original question, and that difference, in turn, rests on a still deeper difference. We can point to that difference by quoting Smart's comments on our original question.

Now let us ask, "why should anything exist at all?" Logic seems to tell us that the only answer which is not absurd is to say, "Why shouldn't it?" Nevertheless, though I know how any answer on the lines of the cosmological argument can be pulled to pieces by a correct logic, I still feel I want to go on asking the question. Indeed, though logic has taught me to look at such a question with the gravest suspicion, my mind often seems to reel under the immense significance it seems to have for me. That anything should exist at all does seem to me a matter for the deepest awe.⁵¹

The difference is that Tillich shares this deepest awe, and so seeks a philosophical answer to this particular *religious* question, whereas Hartshorne finds no such awe in an apparently logically meaningless question. We will return to this deeper religious difference in our fourth point.

2) A second fundamental issue is whether the philosophical correlates of religious experience as interpreted by Tillich are actually required either philosophically or religiously. Hartshorne maintains that the negative theology of the Great Tradition, whose assumption is that all disjunctions, such as absolute-relative, finite-infinite, are exclusive, is both religiously and philosophically inadequate. In that tradition unreserved, the core of the religious concern, is taken to imply or require "unconditioned" as the character of the object of the religious concern. But, Hartshorne argues, the religious experience requires no such philosophical correlate. All it requires is an object adequate to justify unreserved love. A God in some respects conditioned is still worthy of worship. Furthermore, the disjunctions implied in the philosophical distinctions are not logically exclusive.⁵² For example, Tillich takes the

⁵⁰Peters, *Hartshorne and Neoclassical Metaphysics*, pp. 115 ff.

⁵¹J. J. C. Smart, "The Existence of God," in *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, ed. Anthony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre (London, 1955) p. 46.

⁵²Hartshorne, "Tillich and the Other Great Tradition," pp. 245-54.

disjunction between infinite-finite to require that infinity exhausts God to the exclusion of any characteristics of finitude. But the disjunctions need not be exclusive. God, to be sure, cannot be both in the same respect without contradiction, but God can be both in different and appropriate senses. Infinite, absolute, and unconditioned can be interpreted in such a way as to include the disjunctions. For example, infinite need only mean nonfragmentary, not nonfinite in every respect. God's capacity to be may be absolutely infinite, but it cannot be limitless, for to actualize is to limit. This same disagreement about the meaning and extent of the disjunctions can be seen in the debate about whether God is "a being" or not. For God to be "a being" means for Tillich that God is necessarily contingent in every respect and so inferior. For Hartshorne, however, "a being" is not necessarily inferior (unless becoming is by definition inferior). From Hartshorne's point of view, how becoming can be applied quite literally to God without making God into one being among others can be clearly stated.

We must note here, however, that this argument about the disjunctions and "a being" is not exclusively a logical or verbal argument, as both imply at times. The disjunctions and "a being" can be defined in such a way as to meet the needs (that is, the criterion of adequacy) of each user. The deeper issue is whether the disjunctions must be defined in the classical way of the Great Tradition. The answer to that question depends upon a fundamental religious orientation, not upon one's ability to define disjunctions. It is, more precisely, a question of whether the divinity of God can be protected only if the disjunctions are defined in the classical way. There is, clearly, a fundamental difference between Tillich and the process theologians on this question. Again, what seemed to be a purely logical problem ends as a religious one.

3) A related problem is whether the freedom of God, that is, His autonomy and power to ground a world, is dependent on a doctrine of external relations, and so necessarily expressed in terms of the aseity of God classically defined, or whether the freedom of God can be defined and defended within a doctrine of internal relations. Much disagreement exists on this question. For example, Langdon Gilkey and Ray Hart have argued that God has no such freedom within a doctrine of internal relations, primarily because He is subject to every category and so cannot autonomously ground the system.⁵³ God, that is, must be an exception instead of a chief exemplification of the categories if He is to be free. The argument, however, is again in part verbal. Can the freedom of God be

⁵³Langdon Gilkey, review of John Cobb's *A Christian Natural Theology*, in *Theology Today* 22 (1966) 538-43, and Ray L. Hart, "Schubert Ogden on the Reality of God," *Religion in Life* 36 (1967) 513-15.

adequately conceived on an analogy of human freedom within a categorial scheme presupposing internal relations, as in process theology, or must God's freedom (autonomy) be of such a nature that He is the final exception to the categories in the sense that He is "beyond" the categorial scheme, even the subject-object scheme, as ground and power?

The issue, however, is more fundamental than a verbal one. Tillich's assumption is that, although a doctrine of internal relations may not make God absolutely determined by what is (as the doctrine makes nothing absolutely determined by what is, man being the paradigmatic model), the freedom entailed in such a doctrine is inadequate. Specifically, freedom within the doctrine of internal relations is defined within the context of creativity, namely, the power of an actual entity to act in individuality. Although God may not be dependent on the world in every respect as all other actual entities are, and may even be absolutely free (independent) in His existence as such, God is not adequately free, that is, free in the sense of being the autonomous source and ground of the world system, a source not dependent in any way upon the actuality of the world. The question, of course, is how to determine an "adequate" concept of the freedom of God. Another way to state that question is to ask what is necessary to the freedom of God. This is simply one more way of asking philosophically a question which is at root religious. The more basic question is what is religiously adequate.

4) The fundamental difference between Paul Tillich and the process theologians, then, is a religious difference. Hartshorne argues that his dipolar reinterpretation of absoluteness, freedom, and mystery is both philosophically and religiously adequate while avoiding the problems of classical theism, and Tillich maintains that in the final analysis the process theologians have so sacrificed the religious and philosophical meanings of these notions as to be religiously inadequate. This can be seen not only in Tillich's assertion that a conditioned God in any sense is not God at all, but also in their respective formulations of the philosophical transformation of the religious doctrine of God. Tillich's question is how being-itself, if taken in an absolute sense, can account for the relativities of history.⁵⁴ The process formulation approaches the question from exactly the opposite side: instead of asking how that which is absolute can be personal, they ask how that which, by analogy with ourselves, is genuinely and eminently personal can also be conceived as absolute.⁵⁵

Both sides have philosophical arguments for their respective positions, Tillich's being essentially the argument that the philosophical qualities

⁵⁴Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, 231, 235.

⁵⁵Ogden, "Beyond Supernaturalism," p. 15.

he describes are necessary correlates of the religious experience he takes to be fundamental, Hartshorne's being essentially that the philosophical recasting of the traditional attributes is not only metaphysically true but in line with actual religious experience. There is no way to resolve this basically religious dispute, for the criterion of adequacy is what each assumes to be religiously adequate. Hartshorne can argue that the religious concern is a total, unreserved concern about the supreme person, not an ultimate concern about the ultimate. But that is a religious, not a philosophical dispute. Only if that dispute can be settled can the philosophical one be settled.

Some will want to argue that the dispute is finally a psychological one, based on the temperamental and cultural backgrounds of a German Lutheran chaplain driven to existentialism and a Midwestern Anglican logician. A more generous interpretation will be that the religious dispute is essentially a disagreement over the basic character of authentic religious experience. Tillich claims that authentic religious experience is an intuition of an unconditioned dimension in all being and knowing, an intuition of a power beyond all finite actualities. The divine is experienced fundamentally as holiness, a numinous quality cast as a shadow upon finite existence.⁵⁶ Such an Augustinian-mystical concept of the religious experience, most systematically developed for us in the twentieth century by Rudolf Otto, is simply absent from or peripheral to Hartshorne's experience or analysis of other religious experience. For Hartshorne and other defenders of the reformed subjectivist principle, the primary experience is the self as becoming in a world of becoming. There is no more primordial experience or intuition. Anything "beyond" this primary experience is an abstraction from the process, not a primordial intuition. Although a reductionist may want to psychologize one or the other of these experiences away, and so resolve the dispute as temperamental quirks in conflict, a more responsible resolution is to say that the differences are based on different fundamental and genuine religious perceptions. These different religious perceptions are at the root of the tensions between the Great Tradition and the Other Great Tradition.

Even if one is inclined to agree with the classical tradition instead of the process reformulation on this particular point—that being-itself instead of becoming is the necessary philosophical correlate of the primary religious intuition of the numinous quality of the divine (holiness)—the problem remains, as it has remained for centuries, of how to describe being-itself so that being-itself is not a static absolute and

⁵⁶This shadow imagery of the numinous has been suggested to me by Bernard Meland.

does not relegate becoming and relatedness to an inferior status. Two tantalizing revisions of Tillich's formulation of being-itself with the view of bringing these two traditions closer together have been suggested by Robert Scharlemann⁵⁷ and John E. Smith.⁵⁸ However, so far these have been merely suggestions and have prompted no more elaborate work. Thus at this point in time the two great traditions stand embodied in these two great figures, sometimes speaking to each other, but usually speaking past each other. The reason they usually spoke past each other is that each was unaware of the fact—or unwilling to concede the fact—that the deepest root of their difference was not metaphysical or logical but religious.

The question of whether this difference can be resolved stands as one of the most interesting problems of philosophical theology today. Can the two traditions be brought together, or must we conclude that the two great traditions are so different in their religious perceptions that a choice between them is the only possible solution? If this is the only solution, then the further question is this. Which is more intolerable for Christian theology today: denying that God is a being, and so not being able to apply directly any predicates to God, or making literal statements about God as a being, but not being able to distinguish absolutely God from all other actual being? This question is inevitably raised by the conflict between Paul Tillich and the process tradition. The answer to the question is not indubitably obvious.

⁵⁷Scharlemann, *art. cit.*

⁵⁸John E. Smith, "The Reality of God and the Denial of God," *Journal of Religion* 51 (1967) 83-102.