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Paul Tillich and Asian Religions

1 Introduction

1.1 Tillich and Religions

Among the numerous articulations of the theological identity of Paul Tillich (1886–1965), such as theologian of culture, existential theologian, apologetic theologian, etc., he is seldom regarded as “theologian of religions.”¹ This negligence is partly justified by the fact that Tillich himself neither worked out a complete theory of “comparative theology” or “theology of religions” nor regarded his whole theological enterprise as inter-religious dialogue. However, we find that the concept of “religion” or “religions” had intellectual significance throughout Tillich’s life. In an intellectual biographical sketch, Tillich had examined some non-Christian religions in his early thesis on Schelling’s history of religions in 1910 and participated in a dialogue with Japanese Buddhism during the 1960’s. Many interpreters noticed that, following his intensive engagement with Japanese Buddhism during the 1960’s, Tillich himself was not only immensely personally inspired by the dialogue, but also, more importantly, his entire theological construction was somehow shaken after this encounter. Tillich’s dissatisfaction with the writing of the volume three of *Systematic Theology*, which was published in 1963, was not a secret. In Lai’s study on Tillich’s theology of religions, the encounter with Buddhism not only aroused Tillich’s interests in inter-religious dialogue, but also produced various unexpected theological problems he had not faced before.²

Tillich had participated in Christian-Buddhist dialogue with two Zen masters: Daisetz Suzuki, in New York and Ascona (1951 and 1953); and Hisamatsu Shin-ichi in Harvard (1957), before his trip to Japan in 1960.³ After his trip,⁴ Till-

1 A few exceptions are Robison B. James, *Tillich and World Religions* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2003) and John J. Thatamanil, *The Immanent Divine: God, Creation, and the Human Predicament* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2006).

2 Pan-chiu, Lai, *Towards a Trinitarian Theology of Religions: A Study of Paul Tillich’s Thought* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1991).

3 For the dialogue between Tillich and Hisamatsu Shin-ichi and some of his lectures on the topic of the encounter of world religions, see Tillich *The Encounter of Religions and Quasi-Religions*. Ed. Terence Thomas (Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1970), 75–170. For a general analysis and interpretation of Tillich and his dialogue with Buddhism, see Marc

ich conducted his Bampton lectures (delivered in 1961 and published in 1963)⁵ mainly on the issues of the inter-religious encounter. After that, in 1963, volume three of Tillich's *Systematic Theology* was published in which his pneumatology and eschatology were completely disclosed. Compared with his Matchette lectures on the problem of the encounters between other non-Christian religions (1958), it seems that Tillich's early idea of the Protestant principle was enriched by his later pneumatological perspective.⁶ In addition, his last public lecture, entitled "The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian," was remarkable as the preliminary reflection on the future of theology within the framework of the history of religions following the seminar with Mircea Eliade in Chicago from 1963–65. Though Tillich never further developed this so-called "new" theological formulation,⁷ it is undisputable that, in his later period, Tillich was fully occupied by the numerous questions about Christianity and its relationship with other world religions and quasi-religions, especially Buddhism. In this introduction, we will examine two main topics: Tillich's theology of the history of religions and Tillich's perspectives towards different themes in Buddhist-Christian dialogue. Likewise, the reception of Tillich's idea of ultimate concern in Asian religions, especially Confucianism and Mahayana Buddhism, will be explored. Finally, the essays included in this volume will be briefly introduced.

Boss, "Tillich in Dialogue with Japanese Buddhism: a paradigmatic illustration of his approach to inter-religious conversation," in *The Cambridge Companion to Paul Tillich*, Ed. Russell Re Manning (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 254–272.

4 The documents about Tillich's trip to Japan were later published. See Tomoaki Fukai, Ed. *Paul Tillich – Journey to Japan in 1960* (Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2013).

5 The Bampton Lectures were published in book form as Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1963).

6 The title of the lecture was "The Protestant Principle and the Encounter of World Religions." This information is from, Tillich, *The Encounter of Religions and Quasi-Religions*.

7 The question of whether Tillich delivered something "new" in his lecture "The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian" is open to debate. Mircea Eliade clearly believed that he had when he commented " ... In the course of that superb and moving lecture, Prof. Tillich declared that, had he time, he would write a new Systematic Theology oriented toward, and in dialogue with, the whole history of religions ... At a certain moment during our joint seminar, I thought that Paul Tillich was in the process of elaborating a theology of History of Religions. But very soon I realized that his mind was working in another direction. What he was accomplishing in our unforgettable evenings was a *renewal of his own Systematic Theology*." See, M. Eliade, "Paul Tillich and the History of Religions," in *The Future of Religions*. Ed. J. C. Brauer (New York: Scribner's Son, 1966), 31–33. (Emphasies are author's).

1.2 Tillich's Theology of the History of Religions

Tillich was not a religious studies scholar in the strictest sense though he “remains the unacknowledged theoretician” of the field of religious studies in the US (Jonathan Z. Smith). His early theological reflections involved trying to re-establish the relationship between the religious *Gehalt* and the cultural *Form* after WWI through the rejection of the supernatural exclusivism and naturalist inclusivism. In his spirit of remaining “on the boundary”, Tillich’s theological vision was always multi-, poly- and trans-disciplinary in nature and within it different fields of study is blurred without losing their own identities. In this section, we will discuss several important locations to illustrate the role of religions within Tillich’s theological development and try to argue that, in his later period, Tillich was *on the way* to a “theology of religions”, though he never completed it.

In order to locate the question of religions in Tillich’s thought, we should probably start with his early essay on Schelling (1910) and his earlier articulations of the idea of theology as *theonome Systematik* in his *System of Sciences* (1923). Tillich’s first attempt to conceive the problem of the history of religion may be found in his early thesis on Schelling. Victor Nuovo notes the similarity between Tillich’s earlier articulation on Schelling’s idea of the history of religion and his last thoughts on this problem.⁸ For Tillich, Schelling neither accepted the Hegelian dialectical process of the absolute Spirit through which the absoluteness of Christianity was entitled, nor asserted the “supernatural” distinctiveness of Christian religion grounded by revelation. Schelling understood “history is essentially history of religion,” and the beginning of history is the fall of the ideas.⁹ He packaged the whole historical process under the potency of God through which the dialectical construction of the history of religion was presented. The pre-historical stages were ruled by the first potency, the mythological age was the struggle between the first and the second potency, and the final stage was anticipated with the presence of the third potency. These three stages of religious history were closely related with three potencies of God, and it seems that Tillich re-articulated this threefold structure as the three elements (sacramental, prophetic and mystical) of the “Religion of the Concrete Spirit” which was highly emphasized in his last lecture. Schelling’s Trinitarian structure of God was profoundly disclosed through the dialectical tension founded in the nature and

⁸ V. Nuovo, “Translator’s Introduction,” in Tillich, *The Construction of the History of Religion in Schelling’s Positive Philosophy*. Trans. Victor Nuovo (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1974), 26–32.

⁹ Tillich, *The Construction of the History of Religion in Schelling’s Positive Philosophy*. Trans. Victor Nuovo (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1974), 77.

human consciousness. For Tillich, Schelling understood God as the perfect spirit, “he [sic] is spirit, inasmuch as he includes within himself the triad of his mode of being, and he is perfect spirit because he is free from each one of these three forms. He is nor even bound to the third.”¹⁰ It seems that Schelling, like Tillich, identified pneumatology as the unifying principle to integrate the content of history and Christ,¹¹ and to maintain the tension (balance) between the universal manifestation and the concrete particularity. Tillich asserts that, for Schelling

... the third potency ... refers to the Johannine testimony of the coming of the Spirit after the glorification of the Son... The unity of the universal and the individual in the Trinitarian personalities could give all three potencies a mythological character... In the idea, the *antithesis of abstract universal and concrete individual is overcome* ... the absolute idea is the identity of the absolute universal and the absolute individual.¹²

It should be noticed that the tension of divine universal manifestation and particular disclosure was also one of the main themes of Tillich’s later theological struggle and the underlying rationale of his proposed “theology of religions.”

Between 1919 and 1923 Tillich sketched a formal system of the scientific understanding of theology located within the structure of human science (*Geisteswissenschaften*) in particular and science (*Wissenschaften*) in general.¹³ According to Tillich, there are three divisions within each human science subject: philosophy (aims at clarifying the nature and characteristics of the subject), spiritual / cultural history (demonstrates the typology of historical manifestation of the subject) and systematics (normative articulation of the subject combining the previous two parts).¹⁴ Therefore, the threefold framework of “philosophy-spiritual history-systematics” formally constituted his earlier understanding of theology. However, Tillich never actualized this whole project, only partially fulfilling the task by elaborating the *philosophy* of religion (1923)¹⁵ and the *systematics*

10 Ibid., 61. This understanding of God as Spirit is perfectly matched with Tillich’s later articulation of God as Living and Spirit in the volume one of *Systematic Theology*.

11 “This is the content of all of history: the work of Christ, namely, to sacrifice his natural being in order to find himself again in spirit and in truth; this is the content of history because it is the essence of Spirit.” Ibid., 111.

12 Ibid., 153. Emphasis ours.

13 Tillich, *The System of the Sciences: According to Objects and Methods*. Trans. Paul Wiebe (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1981).

14 Tillich, “On the Idea of a Theology of Culture,” *What is Religion?* Ed. James Luther Adams (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1973), 157.

15 Tillich, “The Philosophy of Religion,” *What is Religion?* Ed. James Luther Adams (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1973), 27–121

of religion (theology) in Marburg (1925).¹⁶ Obviously, the middle part of the original planning (spiritual history) remained undeveloped in Tillich's German period. Under his original construction, the "philosophy" element articulates the formal basic structure of the subject, religion, and the "systematics" element aims at providing the normative articulation of religious substance under the concrete standpoint. Therefore, the middle part, the history of culture/religion, is designed to *bridge* between the former philosophical and the latter normative dimension of theology. In early Tillich, it is clear, albeit in a subtle way, that the universal history of religions and cultures is essential in articulating a theological project in the sense that it provides the material content for a theologian to substantiate formal and normative consideration on the one hand, and that it also plays a role in balancing the universal-ontological elements (philosophy) and the revelation claims (systematics) on the other. Therefore, we can assert that the importance of the history of religions in Tillich's theological framework was noticed from the very beginning and is clearly demonstrated in his early writings. In addition, it should be noted that we should distinguish the concept of the "history of culture/religion" in his early phase from that of his and in the last lecture. Those particular and concrete religions in the world remain unnoticed in early Tillich.

The theme of the history of religion re-appears in the section on "sources" in Tillich's first volume of *Systematic Theology* (1951). In rejecting all sort of heteronomic revelatory claims, Tillich emphasizes the experiential-participation elements of the biblical writers whose "participation was their response to the happenings which became revealing events through this response."¹⁷ Interestingly, Tillich asserts that the reason why the materials contained in the Bible should be regarded as the source of theology was *not* based on its historical documentation but rather on the *pneumatic* power manifested through historical-philological exegesis. Once again, the historical findings obtained through the historical-critical method in biblical studies or church history are not Tillich's main concern, but theologians can use all those materials *freely* based on their relation with the ultimate concern.¹⁸ According to Tillich, nothing should be in principle or *a priori* exclusive from the ultimate concern in theologizing. Positively speaking, all beings are made available to the systematic theologian through a critical and ultimate concerned way.

¹⁶ Tillich, *Dogmatik: Marburger Vorlesung von 1925*. Herausgegeben, eingeleitet und mit Anmerkungen und Registern versehen von Werner Schüßler (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1986).

¹⁷ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* Volume One (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 35.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 36.

Returning to the history of religion Tillich mentions two distinctive reasons why a systematic theologian should take it seriously: practical and polemical-constructive reasons. Theologians and theological thinking are always context laden and those expressions in cultural, religious and secular realms “in which he [sic] has grown up and from which he [sic] takes some content in every moment of his [sic] life, in his [sic] theological work and also outside.”¹⁹ This practical way raises the question of how and for what purpose to select the material to use. Tillich directed us to another three considerations. Firstly:

A theological history of religion should interpret theologically the material produced by the investigation and analysis of the pre-religious and religious life of mankind. It should elaborate the motives and types of religious expression, showing how they follow from the nature of the religious concern and therefore necessarily appear in all religions, including Christianity in so far as it is a religion.²⁰

Secondary, “a theological history of religion also points out demonic distortions and new tendencies in the religious of the world, pointing to the Christian solution and preparing the way for the acceptance of the Christian message by the adherents of the non-Christian religions.”²¹ Lastly, “a theological history of religion should be carried through in the light of the missionary principle that the New Being in Jesus as the Christ is the answer to the question asked implicitly and explicitly by the religions of mankind.”²² For a theologian, the history of religion should be understood under the topology provided by the ontological expression of the essence of religion. This operation is analogous to the relationship between the “philosophy” elements and “spiritual history” elements in early Tillich. Also, the history of religion is polemical to provide the materials concerning the correlational matrix of existential question (questions) and the Christian message (answers). Finally, in volumes one and two of *Systematic Theology*, the “question-answer” correlational mechanism still functioning within a strictly *Christological*-orientated theology should be noted.

We can conclude that the problem of the history of religion was by no means a “new” topic for Tillich, rather that the location and the function provided by the history of religion *was* determined by his much earlier theological construction. However, we should bear in mind that the phrase “history of religions” (plural!) as it appears in Tillich’s last lecture is essentially *different* from the previous, singular term he employed. The latter is concerned with the history of some par-

¹⁹ Ibid., 38.

²⁰ Ibid., 39.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

ticular and concrete living religions, while the former is still an abstraction (though material based) from the presumption of the formal structure of the essence of religion.

From volumes one and two to volume three of *Systematic Theology*, Tillich's overall systematic construction of theology underwent a "shift" from being Christological to being pneumatologically orientated. This is not a "turn" because we find that Tillich employs the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in volume three to re-conceive and respond to the problem of Christology, which was regarded as the matrix of "universality-particularity," created in volumes one and two. However, Tillich's intention with regards to the role of pneumatology was definitely not only to reopen numerous questions and to carry the polemical burden as he mentioned in the "introduction" of the volume three,²³ but also extends the significance into the theology of the history of religions, as Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen mentioned.²⁴

Undoubtedly, the universality of the presence of the Holy in everything finite is highly emphasized in volume three of Tillich's *Systematic Theology*. Thus, in Tillich's last lecture, exclusive Christocentricism is absolutely rejected not because the particularity of Christological claim should be abandoned, but because it succumbs to the danger of reductionism in which the scope and the boundary of revelatory experience would be narrowed and limited within a certain sphere.²⁵ Therefore, to affirm the value of the "history of religions" is to affirm the universal revelatory experience within the human kind, although it is always received in a distorted form. Therefore, no religion, including Christianity, can claim to be the absolute, highest and final.²⁶ Likewise, Tillich starts to doubt whether one single center of the history of religions existed.²⁷ This center should

23 Tillich, *Systematic Theology* Volume three (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 5.

24 Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen had noticed the relationship between Tillich's pneumatology and his last lecture on the theology of the history of religions. He classifies the dynamic-typological theology of religions of Tillich's "Religion of Concrete Spirit" as essentially Christocentric, but contended that it "betrays a definite pneumatological orientation." Veli-Matti, Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 231.

25 The particularity and universality of the theological circle presented in volume one of Tillich's *Systematic Theology* should be packaged under his doctrine of the incarnated *Logos*, and this Christological foundation was shifted into a pneumatological presence in his volume three. See, Keith Chan, "Paul Tillich's Understanding of Theology: A Pneumatological-Christological Perspective," *Sino-Christian Studies* 20 (2015), 33–86.

26 Tillich, "The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian," *The Future of Religions*. Ed. J. C. Brauer (New York: Scribner's Son, 1966), 81.

27 Tillich said, "... there may be – I stress this, there *may* be – a central event in the history of religions ..." Ibid., 81.

function as a concrete historical embodiment of the divine with universal validity in and throughout human history. In order to maintain the polar tension between universality and particularity, Tillich even pushes his hard criticism towards all types of jesusology in which the universal significance seems distorted.²⁸ Facing the validity of those historical religions, if the revelation, salvation and empowerment are interpenetrated as Tillich claims, the only way is to universalize the center (if any). That means, within Tillich's system, *the pneumatological revelatory experience is universally present and manifested as the New Being, which was historically embodied in the Jesus as the Christ.*

Likewise, the "universal-particular" embodiment should be coupled with theological criticism. All living religions should manifest the prophetic criticism in order to critique the distorted divine embodiments in the history of religions. In overcoming the demonization of all religions, self-criticism must always be constituted from the outside (secularity) and the inside (prophetic attack). In the process of fulfilling the inner *telos* and attacking the inner demonization of all religions, the identification of the concrete historical religions with the Ultimate is rejected and anticipated within the framework of pneumatology. Tillich calls this eschatological ultimate *telos* and universal embodiment "The Religion of the Concrete Spirit", a designation which integrates the three dynamic elements: sacramental, prophetic and mystical. Each religion embodies these three elements to different degrees. In Tillich's volume three of *Systematic Theology*, the sacramentality of the finite forms and beings is confirmed by the universal presence of the Holy Spirit, the personal mystical experience is grasped by the manifestation of the Spiritual Presence manifested in faith and love, and the prophetic self-criticism presented in the Protestant principle is transformed as the pneumatological gestalt in which form-creating and form-criticism are combined. For Tillich, all religions, including Christianity, are historically committed into the ambiguity of the religion in the quest for the self-transcendence of the spirit. From the standpoint of the dialectical union of acceptance and rejection with all the tensions and ambiguity towards other non-Christian religions presented in his Bampton lectures, in his last lecture Tillich asserts that all religions would involve the dynamic struggle for the sake of fulfilling the ultimate *telos* under the structure of the Religion of the Concrete Spirit.²⁹

28 Ibid., 83.

29 Tillich, "The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian," 90.

1.3 Tillich on Buddhist-Christian Dialogue

Concerning the main points of Tillich's conversation with Buddhism in the US and Japan, we can find an excellent summary in Marc Boss's essay in which Boss concludes that, after the encounter with Buddhism, Tillich's system underwent a shift which "is neither methodological nor doctrinal, but kairological."³⁰ The question of whether Tillich intended to amend his earlier doctrinal position remains unanswered, but the inter-religious dialogue absolutely played an important role in Tillich's later period. In the "introduction" of volume three of *Systematic Theology*, Tillich asserts that,

Another important characteristic of the present situation is the less dramatic but increasingly significant exchange between the historical religions, dependent partly on the need for a common front against the invading secular forces and partly on the conquest of spatial distance between different religious centers. Again I must say that a Christian theology which is not able to enter into a creative *dialogue* with the theological thought of other religions misses a world-historical occasion and remains provincial.³¹

It seems that Tillich's emphasis on the correlational method of "question-answer" was shifted into the consideration of religious *dialogue*. Other non-Christian religions share the same role as Christianity in providing not only the existential questions but also the *religious answers*. After immigrating to America, Tillich was becoming aware of the limitation and arrogance of philosophical and theological "provincialism" which mainly engendered from his German soil and blood.³² For him, maintaining his German heritage and remaining open to other possibilities in the context of American culture and theology was his "both-and" alternative. In his words, "America can save you from European and other provincialisms, but it does not necessarily make you provincial itself."³³ Before the encounter with non-Christian religions, what remained in Tillich's mind was the possibility of *intra*-denominational ecumenical Christian theology (e. g. Protestant and Catholic traditions, European and American theology) without reaching the consciousness of *inter*-religious dialogue. If the American life in a certain way saved Tillich from his European intellectual provincial-

³⁰ Marc Boss, "Tillich in dialogue with Japanese Buddhism: a paradigmatic illustration of his approach to inter-religious conversation," 270.

³¹ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* Volume Three (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 6 (Emphasis ours).

³² Tillich, "The Conquest of Intellectual Provincialism: Europe and America," *Theology of Culture*. Ed. Robert C. Kimball (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 159–176.

³³ *Ibid.*, 160.

ism, his authentic experience of Christian-Buddhist dialogue would probably redeem him from *religious* provincialism.³⁴ In this part, we try to summarize Tillich's position on Buddhist-Christian dialogue in two main categories: ontological-mystical and ethical-social perspectives.

In his Bampton's lectures, Tillich proposes a controlling *telos*-metaphor as the focus of the dialogue between Christianity and Buddhism. This "intrinsic aim of existence" seems to provide a basic framework of convergence and divergence for both religions. It is interesting that, in contrast with the conception of God, salvation, history and human being, Tillich emphasizes that the eschatological symbol of the Kingdom of God and Nirvana represented both religions' conceptions of reality. Actually, Tillich perhaps lacked of knowledge of "Pure Land Buddhism," otherwise the contrasting eschatological symbols of both religions would be more fruitful in comparison. Returning to the problem of the Kingdom of God and Nirvana, though the former is intensively personalistic, social and political in meanings and the latter is basically ontological, both symbols articulate a negative attitude towards the existence,³⁵ (Tillich emphasizes the distinction between essence and existence). These two eschatological symbols ultimately represent the universal presence of the holy: God will be all in all (Kingdom of God) and transtemporal blessedness (Nirvana).³⁶

However, Tillich emphasizes that the underlying contracting ontological-mystical element of the above two eschatological symbols is substantially different, Tillich emphasized. Christianity holds a kind of ontology of participation; Buddhism emphasizes on the ontology of identity. Tillich never agreed with the Buddhist perspective on the mystical union without the personal center in particular and he rejected all kinds of absolute mysticism in general. In fact, Tillich held a dialectical perspective towards mysticism. In his lecture on the history of Christian thought, Tillich warns us "do not make the mistake of identifying this (*concrete*) type of mysticism with the absolute or abstract mysticism in which the individual disappears in the abyss of the divine."³⁷ This kind of warning first occurs in his early thesis on Schelling, in which Tillich tries to identify

³⁴ In 1961, Tillich clearly states that we should avoid three kinds of provincialism: Christian provincialism, theistic provincialism and "quasi-religious" provincialism. See Tillich, "Christian and Non-Christian Revelation," (presented in Lycoming College, Williamsport, Pennsylvania) *The Encounter of Religions and Quasi-Religions*. Ed. Terence Thomas (Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 60–61.

³⁵ Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1963), 40–41.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 43.

³⁷ Tillich, *History of Christian Thought*. Ed. Carl E. Braaten (NY: Simon & Schuster, 1967), 136.

the synthesis between the principle of identity and the guilt-consciousness separation between God and human being: “the principle of mysticism triumphs, but *not in the form of mysticism, not as immediate identity*, but rather as personal communion that overcomes contradiction: it is ‘the religion of the Spirit and of freedom.’”³⁸ Also, in his *Systematic Theology*, Tillich reminds us that the problem of mysticism “neither is there solitude or communion, because the centered self of the individual has been dissolved.”³⁹ Moreover, for Tillich, it is dangerous for mysticism to neglect the existential and historical condition of beings without the eschatological criticism.⁴⁰ Although Tillich himself had a strong appreciation of Christian mystical traditions and he personally had certain kinds of nature-mystical experience, “participation not identity” is his uncompromising standpoint.

Following the above demarcation between ontological participation and mystical identity, Tillich emphasized another problematic which is the character of personhood within both religions. In contrast with Buddhist ultimate formulation on the human selfhood as “formless self,” Tillich asserted that, even in a radical sense of mystical experience, Christianity was “trying to preserve in the ecstatic experience the subjects of faith and love: personality and community.”⁴¹ In the dialogue with Zen Buddhist monks, the question whether Buddhism would be in danger of annihilating the centered self in Buddhist mediation was discussed at length. For Tillich, on the one hand the personal symbolism of the divine has overlaid the suprapersonal in much of Christian thinking, but on the other hand in the official doctrine and theological background of Buddhism the personal element is almost swallowed by the suprapersonal element. We are better to leave the question of whether the Buddhist claim on the ultimate reality is personal or suprapersonal, or what the intrinsic relationship between personal and suprapersonal is within Buddhist traditions for others to judge. In fact, Tillich’s position does not appear to be quite straightforward in emphasizing the “I-Thou” relationship in Christianity. When Tillich discusses the concept of radical doubt, the object of absolute faith is “God above God.” Tillich asserts that no concrete and special content would be articulated within this

38 Tillich, *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling’s Philosophical Development*. Tr. Victor Nuovo (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1974), 125 (Emphasis ours).

39 Tillich, *Systematic Theology* Vol. Two (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 72.

40 See James R. Horne, “Tillich’s Rejection of Absolute Mysticism,” *Journal of Religion* 58 (1978), 130–139; Donald F. Dreisbach, “Tillich’s Ambiguous Attitude towards Mysticism,” *Mystisches Erbe in Tillichs philosophischer Theologie*. Eds. Gert Hummel & Doris Lax (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2000), 402–414.

41 Tillich, *Systematic Theology* Volume Three (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 143.

idea.⁴² Because all concrete ideas and images of the God of theism would be suspended under human radical doubt. In facing this extreme and radical painfulness situation, Tillich pointed out two alternatives, mysticism and divine-human personal relation, are in vain because personal relationship would be broken in radical doubt and the function of mysticism is also preliminary. Tillich argues that the only solution for a human being in radical doubt is to insist the God above God through absolute faith. However, the God above God is beyond the God of theism and the God of mysticism and *without concrete and definite content*. Because the God above God is the object of all mystical longing, but mysticism also must be transcended in order to reach him.⁴³ And the God above the God of theism is present but hidden in personalism, but personalism should be transcended because the subject-object scheme would be transcended in the God above God. Therefore, in an ultimate sense, the personal relationship with God would be transcended, and the personal element of God would also be suspended. Therefore, Tillich emphasizes the personal-communion apparatus within the Christian traditions on one hand, but on the other he asserts that the ultimate dimension of God is not personal, or rephrasing his words, God is the ultimate ground of everything personal.

Furthermore, in Tillich's mind, the Buddhist notion of identity suggests that it would be of more benefit for us to abandon the scientific-technological framework towards the nature. Buddhist compassion "is a state in which he (sic) who does not suffer under his (sic) own condition may suffer by identification with another who suffers ... he suffers his suffering through identification."⁴⁴ Comparing this with the Christian concept of agape, Tillich reminds the reader that Buddhist compassion lacks the double characteristic of "the acceptance of the unacceptable, or the movement from the highest to the lowest, and ... the will to transform individual as well as social structures."⁴⁵ As Lai observes in his lecture, this comparison is oversimplified because Tillich overlooks the element of compassion in Christian tradition, e.g. the parable of the Good Samaritans and Jesus' compassion towards "sheep without shepherd." And Buddhism may also have certain elements in common with Christian agape.⁴⁶ Even though

42 Tillich, "God above God," *Paul Tillich. Main Works/Hauptwerke* Volume 6. Ed. Gert Hummel (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1992), 418.

43 Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1952), 186.

44 Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions*, 44–45.

45 *Ibid.*, 45.

46 Prof. LAI Pan-chiu's lecture on "Paul Tillich and Inter-religious Dialogue" in Chinese University of Hong Kong on 8 April, 2014 (unpublished).

Tillich did not provide a comprehensive comparison of Christian agape and Buddhist compassion, his direction was fruitful in further developing the discussion.

For Tillich, the concept of agape and the revolutionary character of the Kingdom of God would lead to a social transformation and bring about an impact on human history.⁴⁷ Even though certain conservative tendencies would be able to suppress these elements in these symbols, Tillich insists that, compared with Buddhism which emphasizes “not transformation of reality but salvation from reality,”⁴⁸ many revolutionary movements in the West are affected by the Christian idea of history. Obviously, Buddhist mysticism features a complex matrix of the affirmation of the world and the detachment from the world. Many contemporary Buddhist movements are radical enough to be more “this-worldly” and produce numerous discourses concerning social transformation. However, for Tillich, based on his insight into the relationship between religion and culture, the fundamental question concerns how Japanese democracy can find its roots in Japanese religions, i.e. Buddhism or Shintoism.⁴⁹ This open-ended question crystallizes Tillich’s profound criticism of Japanese religions and culture.

2 The reception of Tillich’s Concept of Ultimate Concern in Asian religions

Tillich was arguably one of the main Protestant theologians to be well received in East Asia, especially in the 1970’s and 1980’s, and the research potentiality of his thought has never ended.⁵⁰ This is partly as a result of the strength of Tillich’s theology and philosophy which became apparent to scholars in East Asia at that time. Yet Tillich himself also contributed to this rising interest in East Asia. In his later years, Tillich was interested in Asian religion in general and Buddhism in particular. As shown before in this introduction, he had personal contact with famous Buddhist monk-scholars like Daisetz T. Suzuki and Shin’ich Hisamatsu. He was fascinated by Buddhism which is drastically different from the Abrahamic tradition. This new interest in Oriental religions eventually led

⁴⁷ Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of World Religions*, 45.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁵⁰ For a good summary of Chinese receptions of Tillich, including translations, doctoral theses and monographs from Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan scholars, see Junjie YANG, “Paul Tillich and China. Ein noch zu erwartender Dialog,” *Jesus of Nazareth and the New Being in History. International Yearbook for Tillich Research / Internationales Jahrbuch für die Tillich-Forschung* 6 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 221–235.

Tillich to travel to East Asia and deliver his lecture on world religions shortly before his death. Thus, taking East Asian religions into consideration and facilitating a dialogue with Christianity is, indeed, an endeavor initiated by Tillich himself. Tillich believed he was a “boundary man,” standing between the old and the new, between a tradition that emphasizes a sense of the sacred and the modern world of secularization. If one takes into consideration his engagement with East Asian religions, he would certainly agree that Tillich is a boundary man also in the sense that he attempts to facilitate communication between the West with the East. But, if Tillich’s religious idea “marches” across the boundary, then, dialogues or even mutual enrichment are the natural result. Tillich’s march was soon echoed in Asia.

After WWII, East Asian society steadily recovered. In the 1970’s and 1980’s, the political and social environment in East Asia, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong in particular, became relatively stable and matured into a suitable environment for the reception of Western philosophy and theology. More and more students went to the West to further their study and many of them were influenced by Tillich’s thought. They helped spread Tillich’s thought in Asia after they returned to their home countries. Some of them translated Tillich’s outputs and some devoted themselves to the study of his work. Through their efforts, Tillich became something of a fashionable subject for scholars and students of philosophy and religion in East Asia at that time. Some used Tillich’s ideas to interpret Asian culture while others made comparisons between Tillich and East Asian thought. For instance, LIU Shu-hsien (1934–2016), a representative Confucian scholar, did his doctoral dissertation on Tillich in 1966⁵¹ and Charles Wei-hsun FU (1933–1996)⁵² and NG Yu-kun went on to employ this concept in their discussion of comparative religion and Buddhism. Charles FU, in particular, further developed Tillich’s concept into a four-level understanding of religion.⁵³ Both similarities and differences between Tillich and Asian religions were mentioned by scholars as they employed the concept of ultimate concern in their studies.

51 Liu, Shu-hsien (1966). *A Critical Study of Paul Tillich’s Methodological Presuppositions*. (PhD Dissertation). Southern Illinois University.

52 Charles Fu developed Tillich’s concept of ultimate concern into four elements of religion, namely: ultimate concern, ultimate Reality/Truth, ultimate goal and ultimate commitment. See Charles Fu (1987), “From ultimate concern to ultimate commitment: a new study of the ultimate truth in Mahayana Buddhism,” [從終極關懷到終極承諾—大乘佛教的真諦新探] in *Contemporary*. No. 11, 16–26.

53 Ibid.

Among the many ideas borrowed from and inspired by Tillich, the concept of ultimate concern is no doubt the most influential. Basically, “ultimate concern” is an umbrella term that attracts many comparative religionists. The term is not intended to be used within one single religion; rather, it seeks to cover different religions so as to provide a bridge for religious communication. Such a catch-all term forms an easy platform for the comparative study of religion. In the study of East Asian religions, the concept is a popular term in comparative works.

The term “East Asian religions” refers to a wide range of religions yet, some are more influential than others. There are four major cultural elements commonly shared by peoples in the East Asian cultural circle, namely: Chinese characters, Confucianism, Mahayana Buddhism and Chinese law code.⁵⁴ In terms of religion Confucianism and Mahayana Buddhism are the two defining traditions in the East Asian world and are the fundamental cultural sources that shapes the East Asian mentality. Therefore, we shall focus on Confucianism and Mahayana Buddhism in our present discussion.

Tillich’s “ultimate concern” better serves Liu’s comparative intention than the traditional understanding of religion which usually adopts a theistic understanding. For example, it takes a god as the Creator of the world. Since these theistic elements are almost absent in Confucian teachings, it is thus difficult to discuss the religious dimensions of Confucianism. It is not surprising to see that Liu laments that “there is no adequate definition of religion that can apply to all the great world religions.” Defining religion as man’s belief in a higher spiritual power or powers would result in a paradox if this definition is applied to Oriental religions in general and Buddhism, in particular. Liu points out that, if such a narrow definition is applied, “Buddhism would be characterized as an ‘atheistic religion,’ which in English would almost amount to a contradiction in terms. The situation with Confucianism is even worse. Confucianism has usually been regarded as a secular moral philosophy with no religious import at all.” Tillich’s ultimate concern seemingly provides a more inclusive understanding of religion. With this new understanding of religion based upon Tillich’s concept of ultimate concern, Liu argues for the religious dimension of Confucianism.⁵⁵

Similarly, LAI Pan-chiu and NG Yun-Kun, among others, also employ Tillich’s concept in their interpretation of Buddhism and Daoism. However, Tillich’s concept has two inter-related dimensions: the anthropological and the theological. It is not as flexible and inclusive as comparative scholars take it to be. The

54 See Nishijima Sadao, *Chūgoku kodai kokka to Higashi Ajia sekai*. [中国古代国家と東アジア世界] Tōkyō: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1983.

55 Shu-hsien Liu, “The religious import of Confucian philosophy: Its traditional outlook and contemporary significance.” In *Philosophy East and West* 21 (1971), 157–175, esp. 157.

term consists of two words. The word “concern” refers to matter that engages a person’s attention, interest, or care. Therefore, “ultimate concern”, if we focus only on the concept of concern, is broad enough to serve as the platform for communicating different religions. Yet Tillich also tried to distinguish ultimate concern from other types of concern which he termed “proximate concern”, such as concern for wealth. While Tillich aimed to use the term for religious commitment and reality, ultimate concern does not really meet the need of any religions and its limitations become apparent when it is applied to Asian religions. Let us now to discuss how Tillich’s concept of ultimate concern has been adapted for use in this religious context, as well as examining reservations about its usefulness.

2.1 Buddhism and Ultimate Concern

Liu Shu-hsien thinks that the idea of ultimate concern can help solve the problem of accepting Buddhism into the category of religion. Religion, according to a common understanding, refers to a belief in God and thus is necessarily theistic. This kind of definition of religion obviously cannot cover Buddhism which ultimately is atheistic. Therefore, Liu thinks that Tillich’s idea of ultimate concern is better in the sense that it makes room for the accommodation of different faiths.

However, the very idea of ultimate, if understood as the beginning, foundation or the end, does not seem to fit well with the Buddhist orientation which usually emphasizes the process. In fact, Gautama the Buddha refused to answer the question of the beginning and end of the world. Rather, Buddha emphasized the ever-changing nature of the world governed by a set of conditions. Such an account of causal relations that produce our experience of both ourselves and the world is termed as *pratitya samudpada* or “dependent origination”. Moreover, people also have problems with Tillich’s own understanding of Buddhism. Tillich writes that “In the dialogue between Christianity and Buddhism two telos [the intrinsic aim of existence] formulas can be used: in Christianity the telos of everyone and everything united in the Kingdom of God; in Buddhism the telos of everything and everyone fulfilled in the Nirvana.”⁵⁶ Christians would probably have little problem accepting the unification of everyone and everything in the Kingdom of God as an/the ultimate goal. However, not all Buddhists are ready to take Nirvana as the telos.

56 Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter with the World Religions*, 64.

The fundamental idea of emptiness in Buddhism takes existence as conditioned and impermanent. When contemplating the life of different beings, Buddhism offers a special kind of cosmology of karma. In that cosmology, it teaches that beings are all trapped in a cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth. Each successive life after rebirth may be better or worse, or remain more or less the same depending upon the karma – a force that results from merits or wrongdoings accumulated through previous lives. Only enlightenment can help these beings liberate from this karmic chain. In such a cosmology, rather than the ultimate, the on-going force of karma and the liberation from it is emphasized. In fact, if “ultimate” suggests something extreme, then it is quite alien to the Buddhist tradition. It is common for Buddhists to take a “Middle Way” instead of paying attention to the extreme.

If ultimate concern is taken to refer to ultimate reality, which in turn is understood as the foundation of the existence, then a crucial question for the Buddhist is whether taking emptiness as reality means accepting emptiness as the foundation of existence at the same time. Emptiness refers to the reality of non-permanence as all existence is a result of the combination of conditions which are not permanent. Emptiness is not the grounds of existence providing support for beings to exist. Rather, it is a fact we discover after careful analysis. Emptiness is not complete nothingness. Otherwise, this would be a nihilistic view contradictory to our common sense. It means that things do not exist in a manner we usually suppose they do. Nothing stands alone; everything is a tentative combination of different conditions and thus is ever-changing and non-permanent. In this sense, emptiness is not even a solid, let alone permanent foundation for existence. Rather, it is only the reality of existence. Therefore, if emptiness is taken as the ideal of Buddhism, it is probably not the ultimate concern of the Buddhist. Let us here conclude our discussion of Buddhism. It is Confucianism, another mainstream of thought in East Asia, to which we must now turn.

2.2 Confucianism and Ultimate Concern

If one takes religious faith as ultimate concern, it is in a way helpful to highlight the religious imports of Confucianism. Liu Shu-hsien has for decades accepted

and promoted the ideas of ultimate concern in his interpretation of Confucianism.⁵⁷

More importantly, Ivan Hon rightly notes that “the New Confucians perceive the serious spiritual crisis of modern people and stress the importance of *anshen liming* (attaining spiritual stability, establishing the basis, meaning and value of life) in the modern era. Liu Shu-hsian was inspired by Tillich’s attempt to redefine “religion” as “ultimate concern” (the concern about the ultimate and unconditional) and thought *anshen liming* must be linked with “ultimate concern” since the meaning of life and spiritual stability can only be established by finding one’s ultimate concern. Since Liu perceives transcendence to be a key element of religion, he perceives the links between spiritual crisis, *anshen liming*, ultimate concern, transcendence and religion. Since the New Confucians consider Heaven (*tian*) and the ways of Heaven (*tiandao*) to be the transcendent in Confucianism, they suggest that Heaven and the ways of Heaven can be the ultimate concern and means of solving the spiritual crisis of modern people by answering humans’ “quest for the ultimate reality and ultimate meaning of life.”⁵⁸

However, the New Confucian scholars seem to take the case too far in stating the distinction between God (Ultimate) and human beings and, thus, criticize the separation between God (Transcendence) and human beings. In contrast, they advocate the ideal of “Transcendence and immanent” or “immanent transcendence.” The belief in the goodness of human nature is explained as a heavenly endowment in the human. In this sense, the relationship between human and Transcendence never breaks down. Rather, they are close and intimate. Once a person fully actualizes the immanent nature of goodness within him/herself, s/he is capable of transforming from secular to sage, and thus, according to Confucian belief, participates in the creation of value with both Heaven and Earth.

We do not intend to discuss this Confucian worldview as it is too complicated to do so in a short essay. Yet, it is necessary to address such a prevailing challenge from the Confucian side. God is drastically different but not separated from the human being. Otherwise, redemption, salvation and the like make no sense at all. God is love and He cares and loves human beings. Therefore, He is involved in history and never separate from and indifferent to the human world. Moreover, according to Genesis, God makes man in His image and gives him life. In comparative context, the soul in Christianity and the *liangzhi* (conscience)

57 Shu-hsien Liu, “The religious import of Confucian philosophy: Its traditional outlook and contemporary significance.” In *Philosophy East and West* 21 (1971), 157–175.

58 Ivan Hon, “Paul Tillich’s Thoughts and the Religiousness of Confucianism,” Available at: https://www.academia.edu/9180612/Immanent_Transcendence_and_the_New_Confucians_Discourse_on_the_Religiousness_of_Confucianism?auto=download

in Confucianism play a similar role at least in the sense that it is a crucial gift from and internal connection with the transcendence. Viewed from such a perspective, the New Confucian's critique does not stand up at all.

3 The Volume

Paul Tillich and Asian Religions brings together nine essays by Western and Chinese scholars who have diverse intellectual backgrounds and share an interest in the role that the thought of Paul Tillich has played in inter-religious dialogue in the 21st century. The essays in this volume do not focus on what Tillich had already considered in religious dialogue, but instead move forwards to examine the intellectual potentiality or further contribution of Paul Tillich's ideas in different areas of inter-religious dialogue. Based on Tillich's spirit of dialectical "acceptance and rejection", the authors in this volume bring Tillich's world and the Asian religious world together, and try to communicate intra- and inter-textually through the comparison and contrasting of different religious traditions. It is common for any in-depth comparison to bring out similarities and differences. There is no simple identity. This book provides thought-provoking essays that cover different aspects of Tillich's philosophy and theology and the comparison and dialogue with East Asian religions and philosophies.

This volume begins with an essay on Tillich's "Methodological Consideration." Tillich's well-known correlational "question-answer" matrix was commonly regarded as the main theological operation in his *Systematic Theology*. Duane Olson's essay, "Tillich's Two Methods in Context," reminds us that there is another important but "hidden" method called the "metalogical method" which had been clearly adapted by Tillich in his early career, and, subtly, was presented in conjunction with his method of correlation in his later works. According to Tillich, the metalogical method consists of three elements: the abstraction of philosophy seeks to grasp the ontological structure and basic categories of reality; the "systematics" functions as a normative construction to provide a concrete norm to spiritual life situated in history; and the "history of spirit or culture" tries to construct a typology based on the dynamic elements of the basic polarity and the categories analyzed by philosophy. Olson emphasizes that this threefold structure does not only operate in Tillich's *Systematic Theology*, but is also present in all his works. For the significance of the inter-religious dialogue, Olson's essay directs our attention to Tillich's dynamic typology method, which was closely related with his metalogical approach and constituted Tillich's later position on the history of religions.

We have four contributions in the area of Tillich and Buddhism. Although Tillich himself started a fruitful and insightful dialogue with Buddhism in the 1960's, the content remains introductory and open to further investigation in numerous directions. Pan-chiu LAI's essay, "Tillich's Concept of Ultimate Concern and Buddhist-Christian Dialogue," begins by stating that, in the comparison or dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity, one of the thorniest issues is that since Buddhism is not a theistic religion and does not have a doctrine of God comparable to that of Christianity, any dialogue between the two concerning their concepts of God or gods seems to be too difficult or meaningless, if not impossible. Making a direct comparison between the Christian doctrine of God and an apparently comparable concept in Buddhism, such as Buddha or deva, may risk the danger of being too superficial or even misleading. His essay explores the significance of Tillich's concept of ultimate concern for the comparison or dialogue between Christianity and Buddhism. Based on an analysis of Tillich's concept of ultimate concern, including its reception and interpretation in the Chinese speaking world, this essay investigates if and how the concept is applicable to Buddhism through making reference to the concepts of Nirvana and Dharma in early Buddhism. Also, it further argues that if one takes Tillich's concept of ultimate concern as a mediating concept, one may find it not only possible to explore the ultimate concern of Buddhism, but also meaningful (as well as fruitful) to make a comparison with Christianity. Based on this approach to Buddhist-Christian dialogue, this essay offers theological reflections on the Christian doctrine of God through dialogue with various schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism, including the Middle-Path (Mādhyamika), the Hua-yen and the Pure Land, representing three different approaches to the Buddhist ultimate concern.

A common (mis)understanding of the Christian idea of God as the ultimate Being and Buddhist concept of the Ultimate as Nothingness is seriously challenged by Kin-ming AU's comparative study on Tillich's philosophical theology and the Buddhist philosophy of Kitaro Nishida (1870–1945), the founder of the Kyoto school. His essay, "Ultimate Reality: A Comparative Study of Kitaro Nishida's concept of Nothingness and Paul Tillich's concept of God,"⁵⁹ points out that both concept of the Ultimate are profoundly transcendental insofar as the subject-object scheme is overcome. God's being and Ultimate Nothingness are beyond human conceptualization. However, it seems that the negative relationship between the absolute and relative nothingness does not correspond with Tillich's immanence apparatus of God and the world. This interests in the

⁵⁹ The revised version published in this volume was originally published in *Ching Feng*, n.s. 4 (2003), 113–130.

comparative study of the Buddhist idea of emptiness and Tillich's concept of God as being-itself is shared by Ellen Y. ZHANG's essay, "When the Ground of Being Encounters Emptiness: Tillich and Buddhism," in which she explores the apophatic dimension of Tillich's concept of God and its connection to his existentialist philosophy. The paper also examines Tillich's theology of God as "not a being" in light of the Buddhist view of ontological emptiness, showing that Tillich's apophatic way of speaking about God is more "postmodern" or "post-onto-theological" than some of Tillich's critics have recognized. Finally, it also shows that Tillich's quest for religiosity makes one to come to terms with the theological condition of thought in a contemporary context, therefore inspiring one to go beyond theism (or atheism), especially after the "death of God" talk, to ask how the finite opens itself up to the infinite.

William Yau-nang NG's essay, "Tillich, Lotus-birth and Asian Religions: A Comparative Study of Lotus-birth as a Religious Symbol," utilizes the concepts employed by Tillich in his understanding of religious symbolism (as discussed in his influential work *Dynamics of Faith*) to shed light upon our understanding of the symbol of the lotus in Asian religious traditions. This paper attempts to use a comparative religious approach to study the meaning of "lotus-birth" (i.e. a birth related to the lotus flower) as a religious symbol. The idea is that the lotus is an important religious symbol shared across different Asian cultures, as witnessed in the case of ancient Egypt, Chinese Buddhism and Daoism. The paper also shows that some special characteristics of the plant, such as its being open in the morning and closed at night, have made the plant an easy metaphor for the cycle of life and death, a symbol of the cycle's duality of life and death. In addition, since the lotus is not contaminated even though it grows in a mud pond and its flowers have a unique fragrance, this dualistic structure can easily be used to express an idea of moving from the profane world to the sacred world, or leaving the world of the dead and gaining resurrection. This type of duality can easily acquire symbolic correlation from the characteristics of the lotus. On account of this correlation, the lotus symbol is used across different religions. Tillich believes that ultimate concern must be expressed symbolically and that symbolic language alone is capable of expressing the ultimate. This paper, however, demonstrates that on top of expressing the ultimate, the lotus in Chinese Buddhist and Daoist narratives can also be used as a means of approaching the ultimate concern. These two Chinese traditions use the symbol of the lotus as an important means of enhancing the transformation towards the ultimate concern. Therefore, the symbol is not merely a means of expression but also a means of transformation. It deals not so much with pointing beyond oneself to the ultimate but as a vehicle to the ultimate. As such, the lotus symbol, according to these religious narratives, not only discloses the new dimension of

an external ultimate but also at the same time unlocks the new internal potentiality which when actualized can provide a new life, either in the form of a new deity or in a new spiritual life in the Pure Land.

A further group of four essays concentrate on the relationship between Tillich and Confucianism. In contrast to comparable work on Buddhism, scholarship has seldom devoted time to the study of this area.⁶⁰ The agape-eros tension proposed by Swedish Protestant theologian Anders Nygren is a key paradigm of the contemporary understanding of love in the context of Christian faith. As the implement of the God-man relationship in human affairs, eros mainly presents itself as the self-fulfilling or self-centered love proper to human nature, while agape mostly reveals itself as the self-giving or other-directed love at the supernatural level of godhead. In the traditional Catholic *philosophia perennis* of Thomistic theology and philosophy, St. Thomas Aquinas presents the distinction between the love of concupiscence (*amor concupiscentiae*) and the love of friendship (*amor amicitiae*), and the overarching power of agape as one of the theological virtues *caritas* or charity in his doctrine of love. WANG Tao's paper, "A Comparative Study of St. Thomas Aquinas's and Paul Tillich's Ideas of Love: Integration with the Chinese Confucian Idea of Love," aims at understanding St. Thomas's doctrine of love by the agape-eros paradigm, and compares it with Tillich's thesis of love that unifies agape and eros. Tillich, who is generally accepted as one of the contemporary Protestant theologians who has the closest affinity with Catholicism, has an understanding of love, in its many aspects, which is consonant with St. Thomas. Furthermore, the Christian idea of love illuminates the path towards the integration with the Chinese traditional idea of love in Confucianism.

Tillichian scholarship seldom concerns Tillich's ethical theory, but we find that his ontological approach to morality comes closer to the Confucian understanding of ethics. Andrew, Tsz-wan HUNG's essay, "Paul Tillich and Classical Confucianism on Religious Ethics," attempts to compare three aspects of Tillichian and Confucian religious ethics: religious nature, substantive content and the moral motivation of ethics. Through this comparison, the paper shows that although there exist differences in their understanding of God/Heaven and concept of love (agape/ren), the religious nature and the basic structure of the substantive content of their ethics are very similar. Both stress that the relationship between religion and morality is internal rather than external. Moral imperatives are derived from introspection of human nature which is related to the transcen-

⁶⁰ Exception is Kin-ming, Au, *Paul Tillich and Chu Hsi: A Comparison of their views of Human Condition* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002).

dent. Both are a kind of virtue ethics with the centrality of love, rather than utilitarianism, deontological ethics or situation ethics. Both conceive moral judgment as based on love and justice with the consideration of a particular situation using practical reason under the guidance of moral laws or rituals. However, they are very different from the perspective of moral motivation. While Confucianism stresses the significance of self-cultivation through the observance of rituals, Tillich considers that the real moral motivation arises from eros that is given as grace rather than derived from practices of moral laws or rituals. Through further investigation of their underlying concern, it argues that the Confucian perception of human nature may be too optimistic and has neglected the seriousness of human murkiness. If sinfulness is the reality of existential human beings, Tillich's idea of grace could provide a better answer to the human predicament and a greater moral force.

Lauren F. Pfister, based on a careful reading and re-translation of Zhāng Zài's (1020–1077) *Western Inscription* and selected portions of Paul Tillich's sermon, "The Depth of Existence", proposes several ways to relate these two very different authors and their worldviews. First of all, the paper indicates how they are both interested in prompting the transformation of human consciousness and lifestyle through encounter with their vision of reality. Zhāng Zài offers a vision of reality shaped by a cosmo-familial relational network of things, while Paul Tillich emphasizes the "ground of all being" that is ultimately for him the vision of God. Secondly, both men are concerned about particular kinds of spirituality that will lead persons to pass through needed kinds of suffering in order to embody compassion and joy, and, ultimately, experience peace. A final question relates to how these visions of reality address matters related to existential problems in our internet age and new ways of addressing prevailing concerns related to environmental ethics. By means of Tillich's concern for depth, the paper challenges the tendency toward superficiality induced by growing reliance on internet, and make suggestions about how to overcome this serious and significant problem. By means of reference to two elements of Zhāng Zài's vision, the paper address new ways we can address issues within environmental ethics that may accompany a positive transformation of our attitudes toward the enviroing life-world.

The last paper, contributed by Keith K.F. CHAN, begins by laying out the problematic of the religious bankrupting of the environmental crisis in which the dualistic framework, demarcation between transcendence and immanence, and a hierarchical mode of beings are deeply rooted in western cultural heritage. Chan's essay points out the substantial resources of Tillich's theology, Confucianism and the Orthodox teachings in addressing the environmental crisis. Through focusing on cosmology and anthropology, these three parties are pre-

senting a multi-dimensional and dynamic unity of reality and, in contracting with some current eco-centricisms, the religious role of human being is also highlighted. Under the categories “sacramentality” and “cosmic anthropology” this paper attempts to argue that cosmology and anthropology, as expressed in the Orthodox tradition, Confucianism and Paul Tillich’s work, share a similar ontological and cosmic vision, which is relational, dynamic and universal in nature. Also, these three lenses emphasize the uniqueness of the human being in the universe without committing to anthropocentrism. This paper demonstrates that a human being can be regarded as the “center” but not the “master” of the world. These three lenses find no difficulty in the assertion that a human being can be “being-in-the-world” and “being-above-the-world” at the same time. Re-enchantment of the world seems for them to provide an opportunity for the renewal of human spirituality in which instrumental rationality about the world should be reconsidered in order to perceive the world as a sacrament, a gift, and a living organism instead of a huge mechanical machine. In addition, adherents of these lenses uphold an anthropocosmic vision, which emphasizes the interrelationship between human beings and nature, communication between self and community, and the mutuality between humans and God (Heaven). The essay begins by arguing that Tillich’s notion of sacramentality is ontological-universal in character and that this concept expresses the nature of the multi-dimensionality in the universe, which is based on his pneumatology. Likewise, in the Orthodox tradition, the universe is also regarded as the sacrament in which the essence of all beings is grounded in the Logos. This sacramental thinking, inspired by Christology, conceives the world as a symbol pointing to its divine Creator. In Confucian cosmogony, transcendence and immanence are inter-related within a dynamic and holistic whole in which the underlying principle of the universe is wholly embodied within the structure of the world. Secondly, it will argue that the notion of “cosmic humanity” is the key concept of these three lenses. In both Tillich’s and Orthodox teachings, the human being is regarded as a “microcosm” in which different dimensions of the universe are embraced in the human being who is understood as the highest being in Tillich’s anthropology and the priest of the cosmos in Orthodox teachings. In Confucianism, the essential part of the human being is connected with the transcendent Heaven, and the human being is mandated the duty of the creative transformation of the world by Heaven. Finally, in concluding the paper, the ecological implication of these three lenses will be explored.

Despite of all these very insightful and significant discussions and reflections, there are many issues that remain untouched as Tillich has left us with a huge reservoir of knowledge that will certainly provide us with many meaningful topics to reflect upon for years to come. If this book is not the last word on the

dialogue between East Asian religions and this great philosopher and theologian, it is certainly a collection of useful first words.

