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Clashes of justice in finding life; justice in general and the expressive creative justice in modern cinema

In Timbuktu by Abderrahmane Sissalo, the recent political events of northern Mali are described. The movie starts with a hunting scene: a gazelle is chased by Jihadist warriors on the dunes of southern Sahara. The movie ends with a scene of two children, a girl and a boy running on the dunes, now trying to get away from the warriors and the justice the warriors applied on the girl’s parents: both parents are dead by now. The father of the girl was condemned to death for the killing of the local fisherman. The Jihadist judge condemned the father without listening to him, the justice in general or abstract justice was applied without analyzing the conditions and motives that created the deed. Timbuktu is about justice: Whose justice, does not justice demand something more than the application of law, the abstract justice in general? The local Imam, on the other hand, represents another interpretation of Islam: his is the tolerant Islam of interpretation and dialogue where people together come to an understanding of the Koran and the Islamic law. The tolerant religion is expressed in the movie. The voice of the Imam is not heard in the heat of the local/global situation. We meet in Timbuktu the clash between the abstract justice or the justice in general, now in the form of the Islamic law, and the right to live the traditional local way of living, which is a Muslim way with its ethical codes of affection and honor (which are not without problems here). The movie shows the central role of women in the local society, it shows that people are capable of love on their own, a love that is sensual, soul-full and cultivated, cultured. One of the women has been to Europe: she now lives in the clash between the traditional way of living and the modern “free” way of living. Local people, at least some of them, listen to their souls with a listening love.

One sign of the creative justice according to Paul Tillich is the listening love.¹ Heinrich Himmler, while initiating the final solution, said to the SS-leaders that they should not

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listen to their souls while realizing the coming project.² It seems to be the case that both the Jihadists and the Nazis have a normative approach to justice: they know in advance what right and wrong is and they apply that understanding in different life-situations. A normative pattern seems to set their mind-maps. We might say that the perspective “from above” is effective in the normative pattern: an abstract understanding, a formulation of justice is brought into the particular situation and it is applied there without paying attention to the requirements and conditions of the situation. Already Hegel had written that “abstract justice is ultimate injustice”.³ In the perspective from above a formulation or an idea, in this case of justice is construed in advance, prior to the situation, after that the formulation or the law is applied in the concrete particular situation without listening to the demands of the situation: there is the clash between the abstract law and the particular situation. In Timbuktu we meet the clash between the two justices: the justice of the law and the justice inherent in the local traditional Islamic way of living; the perspectives “from above” and “from below” clash with each other in the film.

During the last two decades of his life Tillich was moving closer and closer to a monistic ontology. Inspirations to that direction were coming from Henri Bergson, Teilhard dé Chardin and Michael Polanyi, not to speak about the influence of Friedrich Nietzsche that was central to Tillich throughout his academic life. Tillich grounded his mature view of justice in the monistic ontology, in the differential monism, and it is this view that I like to discuss here in relation to some recent ways of understanding justice both in cinema and in philosophy.

**Tillich’s understanding of justice is from below**

In Tillich’s understanding of justice, the clash between the abstract justice and the particular situation gives the port of entry: justice is there only if the demands of the situation are seen and admitted; justice is from below. “Every decision”, Tillich wrote,

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“which is based on the abstract formulation of justice alone is essentially and inescapably unjust”.  

Tillich’s understanding of justice is from below, from life or the life-experience; the coordinate from the bottom up sets his understanding of justice. “The basis of justice is the intrinsic claim for justice of every thing that has being”, he wrote. In Tillich’s view, it is not only humans but all things have their own intrinsic and inherent drive and claim to justice. “The intrinsic claim of a tree is different from the intrinsic claim of a person”, Tillich wrote, but there is still an intrinsic claim of justice in that particular tree. Plants, animals, and humans, all things, organic and inorganic, have their intrinsic drive and claim to justice, which they realize in interaction and interdependence with each other. Tillich’s is not the anthropocentric view of justice. Recently this insight that justice has to do with all life, not only human life, has come to political philosophy thanks to Martha Nussbaum.

During the last two decades of his life Tillich moved into a multidimensional monistic ontology, Tillich’s was the model of differential monism. This model frames his “later” understanding of justice. Tillich claimed that his monistic multidimensional model is grounded in life-experience and it is from that perspective I try to read it, including his understanding of justice. The justice from the below Tillich called the creative, transforming justice, it might also be called the expressive creative justice, so that we can point outs its contrast to the justice in general. The justice in general is from above and the expressive creative justice is from below, it actualizes itself in life-situations. “Every legalistic”, Tillich wrote, “approach to a decision you have to make,

4 Paul Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, p.15
5 Ibid., p. 63.
6 Ibid., p. 63.
8 Monism in Mark C. Taylor’s view disregards difference and he rejects the monistic view: “The true Infinite is neither dualistic nor monistic but is the creative interplay in which identity and difference are codependent and coevolve”. Mark C. Taylor. *After God*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 346. In differential monism difference and individuality are maintained.
does injustice to the concrete situation”. Further: “No moral law fits any concrete situation completely”. Tillich did not see an either/or between the two approaches. In justice in general or in abstract formulations of justice, the prevailing views of justice and the wisdom of historical periods have been formulated. “In the realm of law and law-enforcement the tributive form of justice (propositional justice) is the norm”. Law in a society, Tillich thought, is based on the proportional justice. Still the historical laws, they might be those of the Old or the New Testament, the church or the society, of the prevailing democratic society, do not have “unconditional validity”. The normative legalistic approach from above is not the right way in the realization of justice. To claim that justice is to be seen in the light of the inherent drive to justice, does not mean that law, authority, tradition, and wisdom is not to be respected; there is no lawless society. It is to say that these formulations, abstractions in general, are not the last words considering right or wrong, they are necessary for the society to function properly but they must be combined with a situational empowerment.

Even if justice is one, it comes to expression in different ways in life-dimensions. I discuss Tillich’s understanding of justice on three levels: that how justice comes to expression in the individual as the justice of self-affirmation; in the society as the proportional justice; in culture and religion as the drive to fulfillment. If justice belongs to the driving processes of life itself, then it is not different justices we meet at the three levels, it is the same drive behind them all; ultimately the drive to justice is to be understood in the light of the future-orientation. I also discuss Tillich’s understanding of justice in relation to some recent political philosophers and their understanding of justice. I think we are able to find signs both of the justice in general and of the

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10 Ibid., pp. 13f.

11 Tillich, Love, Power of Justice, p. 64

12 “The laws created by wisdom (for example Ten commandments) are guides to decisions, but they have no unconditional validity. They are valid on the basis of what lies behind them in revelatory and ordinary experiences, but you can never apply them to any concrete situations unambiguously.” Paul Tillich, “Question and answer sessions with Peter John”, bMS 649/39 (2), February-March, 1960, p. 9.
expressive creative justice in the modern world and in the modern cinema. I try to show how this struggle between the justice from above and the justice from below is to be found in three recent movies: Timbuktu, Birdman, and Ida. I think the movies are expressions of what goes on in our local/global world today. “All artistic forms”, Tillich wrote”, “have one element in common - expressiveness. Art creates realities in which something is expressed”.13 Different conceptions of justice are expressed in cinema today.

**Transforming justice in the individual**

In Birdman or the Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance by Alejandro González Iñárritu, Riggan Thomson, played by Michael Keaton, has arrived at a turning-point in his life, mentally and spiritually. He is about to set up a play on Broadway, this being the ultimate peak of his career. He is about to set up Carver’s short story: “What We Talk About When We Talk About Love”. For Riggan’s part, he must succeed there is no other option, this being his conscious orientation, and indeed, he succeeds beyond his wildest dreams, even when he dies. The end of the film is open to interpretation: Riggan either dies or he does not die, the film draws us into the mirror-hall of representations. In the movie, Riggan does not only succeed with the play, he becomes reconciled with his life and with the people around him as well. His conscious orientation, his I-orientation and conscious intentionality says one thing, but his total personality is in the hands of another orientation: the love event. His I-orientation or conscious intentionality is directed one way; in his total personality another intentionality is working: love comes through.14 The love event is possible because of the unexpected virtue of ignorance. The mirror in Riggan’s dressing room has one note: “A thing is a thing, not what is said of that thing”. The note introduces us into the central theme of Birdman. The note says that that whatever we say about important things, like love, cannot catch the whole meaning

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of the represented. The movie starts with letters turning into the construction of words, crystallizing into a message, the essence of which is the important thing: “To feel myself beloved on the Earth”, that is the only thing that matters; this is the thing as such of Birdman. It is as if Birdman said that you cannot say what the thing as such is but you can sense it; love comes from below. The event of love is expressed in the film.

Films are representations. Birdman puts representation upon representation: we spectators do not know when the actors are in the play or in their “real” lives. The movie deals with the cultural philosophical theme of representation or simulation. The note in the mirror says that it is impossible to say WHAT a thing is, what love is, but this film is still about love. Love is not talked about in Birdman, as is the case in some of other films, here love is expressed and shown: the work of love is expressed in Birdman, in the change Riggan goes through. In Tillich, the love event creates the centered self, gives it form and at the same time relates the self to a center that is bigger than the self. Creative justice realizes itself in and through an individual’s total personality. "Justice", Tillich wrote, "is first of all a claim raised silently or vocally by a being on the basis of its power of being. It is an intrinsic claim expressing the form in which a thing or a person is actualized". Justice in the individual is within the frames or forms of total personality; the total personality being a unity of the rational and the vital. Tillich could write that “repression is injustice to oneself”, that is, it is “self-destructive because of the resistance of the elements which are excluded” within the form of total personality. The justice as self-affirmation, then, is the acceptance and integration of vital and rational element within the frame or the form of the total personality. In “justice towards oneself, (...) the deciding center is just towards the elements of which it is the center”.

Tillich thought that there are different kinds of truths: truths of science, truths in human encounters, and ontological truths or truths of being itself. Truths of

16 Tillich, Love, Power, and Justice, p. 70.
17 Ibid.
science are informative claims considering things out there: they are representations built on the objectifying relation. When we talk about a thing, we know what we are saying... Truths in human encounters are our insights into human nature and into the moral imperative. The moral imperative is constitutive of the I and Thou encounter. Truths of being itself have relational, symbolic, holistic, and expressive character. Justice belongs to the second and the third group. As an answer to the challenge of representation, Tillich would say that the things we say about being itself, God, love, and justice in the informative sense do not hit the point, their sense and meaning does not fall within the frames of the informative language in which we can say what a thing is. Being itself is no object; God cannot become an object; love is not an object of controlling knowledge; justice, like love, is an element of life itself, expressing itself in several dimensions. When we talk about God, justice, and love, we talk a language that has expressive character: we talk the language of inwardness, the soul-language. In a world where the body disappears, even the soul and the soul-language are gone. Tillich wrote: “All things and all human beings, so to speak, call on us with small and loud voices. They want us to listen, they want us to understand their intrinsic claims, their justice of being. They want justice from us”.

To live in the just way is for Tillich to help things: plants, animals, and humans in their justice of being, that is, it is to help them to the realization and actualization of their innermost potentialities; we help them to become what they are able to become. We are able to listen to the expressive language of human-to-human encounters and we are able to listen to the expressive language of spirit-to-Spirit encounters. Art gives us those languages and it gives them through its cultural forms. Even if we talk about the self-affirmation in the total personality, in the individual, this affirmation is always interactional and relational. In Tillich's view, individual, society, and culture are in interaction with each other: “For

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18 Virilio points out that we live in a culture that has lost its bodily dimension: “Today we are no longer seers [voyants] of our world, but already merely reviewers [revoyants], the tautological repetition of the same, at work in our mode of production [i.e. industrial production], is equally at work in our mode of perception. (…) If we are really so worried today about our resources, about the exhaustion of natural energies, it is also necessary that we consider the sensorial privation to which we are now subjected”. Paul Virilio, Negative Horizon. An Essay in Dromoscopy. London: Continuum, 2006), p. 37.

19 Ibid., p. 84.
healing the personality without healing the society is ultimately impossible”. The transforming justice on the societal level and the transforming justice in the individual interact: art, cinema is a transforming agent.

The drive to justice comes to expression in the moral imperative in the I and Thou relationship. The moral imperative says that we should treat each other as persons, as ends, and not as means for our own purposes. The moral law is, Tillich wrote: “individual’s essential nature, put against him or her as law”. It is not the law that gives us entry to the essential being. On the contrary, the law, both as a formulation and as a relational feature expresses our alienation from our true being. The law, so to say, show the negative relation: we are not that what we should be and we cannot act the way the moral imperative demands. It is not the law that links us with our essential being, but it is love and justice that does that; ultimately love and justice are one. “Our essential being is related to the being of the other in terms of justice and love”, Tillich wrote. In the event of love between human persons, we are capable of seeing what the other person, Tillich wrote, “really wants namely wants with his or her essential being and not with his or her contingent [self, missing!]”. What do we really want, what is Tillich’s answer to that question? We like to become united with ourselves. “Just is what agrees with the inherent justice of a thing. (...) The inherent claim of a thing is that it is reunited with that to which it belongs. Justice demands that it is preserved in its own power of being if it enters a union of love”. Tillich thought that this reuniting act does not only happen within the frames of the individual self (a thing or an individual is not only preserved in its own power of being), in the love event the center and the form of total personality is affirmed, the self and the individuality is there, at the same time as the self is related to that what is beyond the self. In Tillich’s view, “the Spiritual power

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20 Paul Tillich, “Man’s Spiritual Functions, Their Unity and Their Conflicts”, Religion and Culture, Cole Lectures and Minister’s Convocation, bMS 649/46 (21), 1959, p. 1.

21 Tillich, Love, Power, and Justice, p. 76.

22 Tillich, “Question and answer session with Peter John”, 25/2 1960, p. 3.

23 Ibid., p. 13.

gives a centre to the whole personality, a centre which transcends the whole personality and, consequently, is independent of any of its elements”. Self-transcendence, then, is not self-denial: it is the affirmation of the self as self by that what is bigger than the self. “Justice, power, and love towards oneself”, Tillich wrote, “is rooted in the justice, power and love which we receive from that which transcends us and affirms us”. Kierkegaard had a very similar relational view of the self and the ground of self or God. The self, both Kierkegaard and Tillich thought, has its living territory in relation to other human beings and in relation to the transcendent ground of the self or God as the ground of all being. For Tillich the territory of the self included the physical/material dimensions of being.

The inherent drive to justice is congruent with “the drive of the TOTAL person” and “it CAN drive us ONLY if it drives also from our unconscious”, Tillich wrote. The total personality has passion, libido, desire, and “the desire is not contemptible, is not despicable, is not something low, but is something which belongs to life and is a directing power in ALL life, (...) this is something which belongs to the dynamics of life as a whole”. In real life the unity of form and matter, the unity of rationality and passion deteriorate, fall apart; we are lost in alienation and estrangement. In this light, the over-emphases of cognitive/rational capacities is a rather a sign of alienation that of reasonability! The falling apart has happened and happens for Riggan Thomson, but he is also on his way back from estrangement and alienation. The separated in the event of love, Tillich would say, is driven to reunion in the center of his personality. Riggan is driven to reunion with himself and the people around him and, perhaps, he is also driven to reunion with the universal center beyond his personal center, who knows. Justice and love, in Tillich’s view, is not only about personal reunion or reunion with other people, it is also the act of self-transcendence in which the self is

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25 Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, p. 120.

26 Ibid., p. 122.


29 Ibid., 17/3 1960, p. 10.
grounded in that what is beyond the self. That very relation makes freedom possible, this being the very freedom Protestantism stands for.

When all is representation, people lose the sense of life and Tillich thought that this is what happens in the modern world. One major question today is how to acquire the sense of life, despite all the things that threaten the sense and the meaning of life. We are Lost in translation, live in Pulp fiction, are threaten by Aliens, shake in our Winter bones. In Birdman the whole being of Riggen revolts against the shape he is in: there is the collision between the conscious I and the subconscious: his psychological otherness becomes visible. Coming from the inner world, his other self, the fictive Birdman accuses him; coming from the outer world, the critic Tabitha Dickinson (a new yorker) says to him that she hates ignorant Hollywood celebrities. Riggen lives in the crossfire of inner and outer demons. His desires deteriorate, but in and through the love event his desires start to get form in his total personality. We might say that he tried to justify his life through his conscious I-orientation, but now something else is happening in him.

**Theories of justice**

In today’s world people look for sense and meaning in the lives they live, the look for the sense of life in that HOW they live their lives, and they do so in terms of culture, art, and meaning-creating projects, not only for themselves but for community, refugees, animals, nature, and cosmos. It is in those areas that Amartya Sen finds justice; his idea of justice is from below or at least his idea of justice counts in the way people factually live and like to live their lives. His criticism of recent philosophical theories of justice is that these theories do not take account of that how people actually live their lives. His criticism is directed not only to the arguments these philosophies put forth but it is directed against the whole setting the arguments rest upon.

We have identified a kind of a normative pattern among Jihadists: a formulation of justice is taken from the Koran and this understanding of justice is applied in the particular situation, without having regard to the demands of the

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situation. In relation to the empirical realm, there is the *a priori* formulation and, secondly, the application. This seems to be the underlying normative pattern. In much of the modern political philosophy we find the normative pattern. I am not saying that the recent political philosophers applying the normative approach are fundamental Jihadists, I only point to the similarities in the mind set. The normative pattern is to be found both in John Rawls and in Martha Nussbaum. Rawls construes the original position in reflection, in that position he lays down WHAT justice is, after that he construes the principles which, finally, are to be applied in the empirical realm or in the actual society.\textsuperscript{31} He stands in the contractarian tradition with Locke, Rousseau, Hume, and Kant. Here the realm of reflection, thought and reason comes firstly and the application secondly, the approach is from the top down. Reason is above the empirical, the rational is above the empirical, says Kant. The frame is dualistic. When Hegel said that the abstract justice is the ultimate injustice he had turned away from the normative dualistic pattern, “the theoretical, he wrote in his *Philosophy of Right*, “is essentially contained in the practical”.\textsuperscript{32} If the theoretical is contained in the practical, there was no over-empahses of the rational in Hegel. In Martha Nussbaum’s view John Rawls over-emphased the rational point of view, still she does not go long enough to the empowerment point of view but stays half-way between them. She does not let the normative pattern to go, still she opens up for the empowerment point of view. The empowerment point of view is not a no to rationality, it is a yes to the integration of the rational and the vital. It is a no to rationality as the exclusive point of departure.

We find the coordinate from the top down in Rawls, this being the basic coordinate in his map of orientation in discussing justice. We find the normative pattern even in Martha Nussbaum: she discusses what justice is, mostly in relation to Rawls, and she arrives at clear intuitions of some central elements and conceptions of justice. Once these conceptions have been laid down and the list of and for justice is created, the list might be applied in the local/global situations.\textsuperscript{33} The direction is here from the top


down. Nussbaum writes that she likes to create a holistic vision of justice and to create conditions for justice in our common world. If there is the normative pattern as the basic structure of thought, then the approach is dualistic and hierarchical, not holistic. Who needs this “from above” approach today? Who is there to tell how and in what way we are to live our lives? When Tillich claims that justice is realized in the human to human encounters and in the interaction and interdependence with the universe, he does not bring a definition of justice into the life-situations from the outside, but he finds justice as one of the driving elements of life-processes themselves. His is the holistic vision of justice. For Tillich, “life is the dynamic actualization of being. It is not a system of solutions which could be deduced from a basic vision of life. Nothing can be deduced in a life process, nothing is determined a priori, nothing is final except those structures which make the dynamics of life possible”. Tillich’s ontology is about those structures and processes that make the dynamics of life possible, it is in that perspective we are to discuss his ontological view of justice. Justice and love Tillich finds in life, in life-experience and in life-encounters, deduced systems of solutions: people telling to others what to do and how to live their lives, do not fulfill the demands of justice and love; the normative systems do not hit the point with justice and love. There are clashes of justice, not only in modern cinema, but even in modern philosophical theory.

In trying to find a right or just way of living, we, in Amartya Sen’s view, are not only interested “in the kind of lives we manage to lead, but also in the freedom that we actually have to choose between different styles and way of living”. Following the dialogue between Arjuna, the warrior king, and Krishna, Arjuna’s friend, in Bhagavadgita, Sen picks up Arjuna’s point that considering justice we should take account of “the relevance of the actual world”, leading Sen to talk about “the significance of human lives” as a ground of justice. In Sen, one minimum condition for justice is the reasoning from the bottom up, expressing a pluralistic and independent view of ideas, position, and ways of living. In this plural, interdependent world, Sen

34 Tillich, Love, Power, and Justice, p. 41.
36 Ibid., p. 213.
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wrote, that what Martin Luther King said is accurate: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere’, our ‘neighborhood’ now effectively extend across the world”.37 Both Nussbaum and Sen have what they call the capability approach, at least Nussbaum, refers directly to Aristotle, Tillich grounds his understanding of justice in capabilities, potentials, and possibilities, he comes with a modified Aristotelianism. Nussbaum’s in not the anthropocentric approach, as if justice only concerns human beings, it also concerns animals and all living things, and that is the zone of justice for Tillich also: it is not only humans who are capable of realizing themselves in coordination with other beings and things, but all things are part of the entelechy of the universe, the world is one and all living and non-living things are part of the same coordinate and interdependent whole.38 His mature position was that of the differentiated monism. It is in this perspective Tillich’s talk about the form or forms through which justice is realized becomes interesting. In Aristotle’s world, perhaps even in the world of “later” Plato, the most interesting things in life happen at the form-level of things. The aim of justice for Tillich is community and communication at the essential level of things.  

**The sacred and the secular**  

Ida opens with a scene of Ida restoring a statue of Christ, perhaps wiping the tears of Christ. The movie is about inwardness, the most important things are expressed without words. The statue is carried by four nuns out of the house unto the front-yard; the next scene is the statue standing in the middle of a circle drawn in snow and the four nuns praying behind the statue. For Carl Gustav Jung the circle is a symbol of perfection, it is a symbol of the self as the goal of the process of individuation and number four is such as well: the Godhead with the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost will need the feminine element to be a whole.39 For Jung, the symbols express the psychological self or the archetypal structures in the human psyche. For Paul Tillich, symbols go beyond

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37 Ibid., pp. 402f.  


psychology and they express depth-dimensions of ontology. Tillich’s multidimensional ontology gives means to integrate the psychological and the ontological symbols with each other, Tillich agreed with Jung’s idea of the symbol-creating collective unconscious. The film Ida is more than psychology, it expresses spiritual inwardness and existential decisions we humans have to make in our lives: it is a political/spiritual film; it is about justice. The film is about what is the right thing to do: to go into that what the autonomous secular culture has to offer or to listen to the call of the spiritual self. There is the clash between the justice of the autonomous and secular culture and the inner voice. In terms of Tillich’s cultural categories, the film expresses a certain way of seeing on the relation between autonomy and theonomy. The view expressed in the film considering their relation differs from Tillich’s view.

Ida is about that what language we should listen in our lives: the politically loaded language of the secular culture or the language of expressive inwardness. The film draws a sharp either/or line between the two realms. In this, there is a difference compared with Tillich’s view. In Tillich’s view, the autonomous human culture has the rights of its own, but this culture is to be open to the self-transcending dimensions of life, the depth-dimensions of life, to which religion, among other things, points to. In Tillich, there is a both/and between autonomy and theonomy, in Ida there is an either/or. It is obvious that Ida as a person listens to the language of inwardness, that language is present in her whole being, in her face, in her body; the film is about body as an organ of spirit. The aunt Wanda, whom Ida meets after Ida has left the cloister to seek information about her parents, regrets that she loses the sexual experiences by becoming a nun. Before Ida takes the vows, she has to find out what happened to his family during the Second World War, she leaves the cloister. The aunt works now as a judge in the communist Poland, she has been a state prosecutor, the highest representative of people’s justice. With words mixed with pride and contempt, she says that she has sent people to death, such a high power she has had as the prosecutor. It is at her funeral (the aunt jumps out of the window and takes her life) that a representative of the government and the party says that she has worked for the people’s justice. We might take this as an expression for a normative/ideological understanding of justice: the party, in this case the communist party of Poland, led from
Moscow, had a definition of justice and the bureaucracy of the party had the duty of applying that understanding of justice in the socialist countries. I think that there are strong reasons to believe that justice in Poland during the 1950’s and 60’s was defined in the normative/ideological way, prior to the actual situations in which it became applied. The direction of that justice was from the top down. I believe that people in the former Communist countries are really tired of the people’s justice!

Ida is about the place of religion in Poland’s history, it might be read as an expression for the return of religion, but I do not know if religion has to return in Poland, perhaps it has been there always. The movie shows that it was not only the German Nazis who did the terrible things but some Polish people partook in the killing as well. There is a strong contrast between autonomy and theonomy in the film. The profane way of living is hopeless, filled with self-seeking desire and pulsating passion, symbolized by the aunt Wanda and her one night stands. Ida has a love affair with a young man, he wants them to marry, build a family, get children, Ida’s question is: “What then?” Her drive to self-transcendence pushes her beyond and away from the societal life, this life is not her goal, only religion or the religious way of living satisfies her spiritual yearning. There is a no to purely human concerns and a yes to trans-human concerns in the film. In the end of the film, Ida returns to the cloister, walking back confidently on a narrow road; she has made her choice. Tillich did not see such a sharp line of demarcation between autonomy and theonomy: theonomy is in the depth dimension of autonomy; the secular or autonomous realm with its relative formulations of justice on personal and societal levels is there on its own. Tillich did not separate religion and culture from each other, he claimed that religion is the substance of culture and culture is the form of religion. What he wanted to do was “to overcome as far as it is possible (…) the fateful gap between religion and culture, thus reconciling concerns which are not strange to each other but have been estranged from each other”.40 The Western interpretation of justice has separated law and love from each other, but they are not strange to each other in Tillich’s interpretations.

40 Tillich, Theology of Culture, p. 29.
The Western culture has separated law and love from each other, the proportional justice is applied since the Code of Hammurabi: “An eye of an eye, a tooth for a tooth”, almost 2 000 years before the Christ. The principle of proportionality, in Aristotle as the distributive and retributive principality has laid the ground, with the Roman law, for the Western legislation. What Tillich does in his understanding of justice is that he breaks with this 4 000 years of cultural legislative tradition and introduces a new way of seeing on the relationship of law and justice. Instead of the proportional justice, he speaks about the creative and transforming justice. This justice is actual on the level of “the structure of the most developed form of reality”. The creative and transforming justice, the expressive creative justice, is to be read in the light of love as the driving element of life. The drive to justice has come through in the historical eras in different cultural forms: In antiquity, the Aristotelian Neoplatonic hierarchy determined the understanding of justice, during the Middle Ages the feudal hierarchy did the same, in modern democracy we try to build just institutions based on equality and freedom. Instead of a hierarchical model or form, Tillich offers the integrated multidimensional holistic model of justice. Perhaps he saw in the end of his life that the integrated model gave means to express something of “the most developed from of reality”.

The event of love

Spinoza’s God is from below, so is his understanding of justice. In Spinoza, justice is the virtue of loving one’s neighbor, it is, he wrote “only through love of one’s neighbor that one can perceive or be conscious of God, and thus no one can discover any other attribute of God except this love, insofar as we participate therein”. God, justice, and love is in Spinoza from below. Tillich talked about “the multidimensional love which affirms the other one in the act of reunion”. This being one side of the love event, there is the strange work of love as well. Life is a blend of the positive and the negative and so is each individual as well. Love exposes the negative, shows what it is, this it can only do

41 Ibid., pp. 144f.
in the light of the positive. There are human deeds for which no proportionality is able to count for or to satisfy; the proportional justice comes to naught in the face of the monstrous crimes. For Tillich, “justice means more than proportional justice ... God is not bound to the given proportion between merit and tribute. God can creatively change the proportion, and does it in order to fulfill those who according to proportional justice would be excluded from fulfillment. Therefore the divine justice can appear as plain injustice.”

Given the event of love, “every act of love implies judgment against that what negates love”. The negative and the demoniac (crime, murder, lie Tillich identified as “negativities”, so also with the demoniac: it has no positive being of its own but it lives from the destruction of the positive) are targeted as the object of love’s strange work, as that what must be destroyed. Justice “fulfils also the truth in the demand for punishment by destroying what must be destroyed if reuniting love is to reach its aim”, Tillich wrote. The punishment does not mean that individuals are placed in an eternal hell or in the Purgatory; the punishment is to found oneself in despair. In the face of the eternal the negative, after it has been confronted, is negated, “it is not remembered at all”, Tillich wrote. On the other hand, the created goodness of things and individuals is affirmed. Tillich wrote: “The Divine Life is the eternal conquest of the negative: this is its blessedness. (...) Eternal blessedness is also attributed to those who participate in the Divine Life, not to man only, but to everything that is”. The Eternal Life is not without differentiation: all individuals preserve their identity in relation to the Eternal. The “creative justice is the form of reuniting love”, Tillich wrote.

The self-transcending process of life, driven by love and justice, opens itself for the

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44 “In accepting the individual into the unity of forgivenness, love exposes both the acknowledged break with justice and the claim inherent in him or her to be declared just and to be made just by reunion”. Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, p. 85.

45 Ibid., p. 66.


48 Ibid., p. 400

49 Ibid., p. 405.

dimension of essences. I think it is at that level the saying that the “creative justice is the form of reuniting love” is to be read: love brings us together in our common humanity, at the same time as it keeps us apart in the circle of reuniting love. I think it is here we find “the most developed form of reality”. This is a step further from Hegel’s identification of the state as the place of “the highest absolute truth of the world-spirit”.  

51 “But the state does not arise until we reach the third stage, that stage of ethical observance or spirit, in which both individual independence and universal substantivity are found in gigantic union. The right of the state is, therefore, higher than that of the other stages. It is freedom in its most concrete embodiment, which yields to nothing but the highest absolute truth of the world-spirit”. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, p. l.