

**CLASHES OF JUSTICE IN FINDING LIFE:  
JUSTICE IN GENERAL AND THE  
EXPRESSIVE CREATIVE JUSTICE IN  
MODERN CINEMA**

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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, among which the culture of honor is one. *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, 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.<sup>1</sup> Heinrich Himmler, while initiating the final solution, said to the SS-leaders that they should not listen to their souls while realizing the coming project.<sup>2</sup> 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."<sup>3</sup> 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 de 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 presents the port of entry: justice is present only if the demands of the situation are seen and admitted; justice is from below. "Every decision," Tillich wrote, "which is based on the abstract formulation of justice alone is essentially and inescapably unjust."<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

During the last two decades of his life that Tillich moved into a multidimensional monistic ontology, Tillich's was the model of differential monism.<sup>8</sup> 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, and it might also be called the expressive creative justice, so that we can point out 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 approach," Tillich wrote, "to a decision you have to make, does injustice to the concrete situation."<sup>9</sup> Further: "No moral law fits any concrete situation completely."<sup>10</sup> 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."<sup>11</sup> 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, or of the prevailing democratic society, do not have "unconditional validity."<sup>12</sup> 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 approach.

Even if justice is one, it comes to expression in different ways in differing life-dimensions. I discuss Tillich's understanding of justice on three levels or dimensions: 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 but it is the same drive behind them all. Ultimately the drive to justice is to be understood in the light of future-orientation.

I will 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 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."<sup>13</sup> 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 for there is no other option, this being his conscious orientation. 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.<sup>14</sup> 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 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"—this is the thing as such of *Birdman*. It is as if Birdman said that one couldn't say what the thing as such is but one can *sense* it; love comes from below. The event of love is expressed in the film. I for my part think that the bringing together of the conscious intentionality and the unconscious intentionality is a central project for us as human being: *Birdman* reflects our drive for wholeness.

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."<sup>15</sup> Justice in the individual is within the frames or forms of total personality with the total personality as 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."<sup>16</sup> 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."<sup>17</sup>

Tillich thought that there are different kinds of truths: truths of science, truths in human encounters, and ontological truths or truths of being itself.<sup>18</sup> Truths of 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 or essence in and through the moral imperative. The moral imperative is constitutive of an I and Thou encounter. Truths of being itself have relational, symbolic, holistic, and expressive character. Justice from below 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.<sup>19</sup> 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."<sup>20</sup> 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 that 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: the choices we make have implications for ourselves,

others and for the whole universe. In Tillich's view, individual, society, and culture are in interaction with each other: "For healing the personality without healing the society is ultimately impossible."<sup>21</sup> 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 an 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, as Tillich wrote, and "individual's essential nature, put against him or her as law."<sup>22</sup> The law expresses our alienation from our true being. The law, so to say, shows 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.<sup>23</sup> 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]."<sup>24</sup> What do we really want, what is Tillich's answer to that question? We like to become united with ourselves. "Just as 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."<sup>25</sup> 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 also there, at the same time as the self is related to that what is beyond the self. The self is relational. In Tillich's view, "the Spiritual power gives a centre to the whole personality, a centre which transcends the whole personality and, consequently, is independent of any of its elements."<sup>26</sup> 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."<sup>27</sup> Kierkegaard had a very similar relational

view of the self and the ground of self or God.<sup>28</sup> 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 religious significance of the inorganic is immense," he wrote.<sup>29</sup>

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.<sup>30</sup> 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."<sup>31</sup> 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, as is so common in Western/global culture today, 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. 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 grounded in that what is beyond the self. That very relation makes freedom possible, the very freedom Protestantism stands for.

When all is representation, people lose the sense of life; 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, we live in Pulp fiction, we are threatened by Aliens, we shake in our Winter bones. In *Birdman*, the whole being of Riggan revolts against the shape he is in: there is the collision between the conscious and the subconscious I: 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. Riggan lives in the crossfire of inner and outer demons. His desires deteriorate, but in and through the event of love his desires start to take 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, they look for the sense of life in *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 weights 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 how people actually live their lives.<sup>32</sup> His criticism is directed not only to the arguments these philosophies put forth but also 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 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, the cultural pattern, one is tempted to say. 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 mindset. 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 that, finally, are to be applied in the empirical realm or in the actual society.<sup>33</sup> He stands in the contractarian tradition to Locke, Rousseau, Hume, and Kant. Here the realm of reflection, thought, and reason comes first and the application second; the approach is from the

top down. Reason is above the empirical, the rational is above the empirical, as Kant says. 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."<sup>34</sup> If the theoretical is contained in the practical, there were no over-emphases of the rational in Hegel. In Martha Nussbaum's view, John Rawls over-emphasized the power of rationality; still she does not, I think, go far enough into the empowerment point of view—seeing justice from the below—but she stays half-way between them. She does not let the normative pattern to go; still she is open to 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 in trying to realize justice.

We find the coordinate from the top down in Rawls as 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.<sup>35</sup> The direction is even 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 a normative pattern as the basic structure of thought, then the approach is dualistic and hierarchical, not holistic. When Tillich claims that justice is realized in human to human encounters and in 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 a holistic vision of justice. For Tillich, "life is the dynamic actualization of being. It is not a system of solutions that 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."<sup>36</sup> Tillich's ontology is about those structures and processes that make the dynamics of life possible, including justice. It

is in this perspective we are to discuss his ontological view of justice. Justice and love Tillich finds in life, in life-experience and in life-encounters, as deduced systems of solutions: people telling other people what to do and how to live their lives does 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 also 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."<sup>37</sup> Following the dialogue between Arjuna, the warrior king, and Krishna, Arjuna's friend, in the *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."<sup>38</sup> In Sen, one minimum condition for justice is the reasoning from the bottom up, expressing a pluralistic and independent view of ideas, positions, and ways of living. In this plural, interdependent world, Sen wrote, that Martin Luther King's words are accurate: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere; our 'neighborhood' now effectively extend across the world."<sup>39</sup> 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, and his approach is a modified realism and Aristotelianism. Nussbaum's is not an anthropocentric approach, as if justice only concerns human beings, but it also concerns animals and all living things. This 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.<sup>40</sup> His mature position was that of the differentiated monism. It is in this perspective that 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 the "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

The movie *Ida* opens with a scene of Ida restoring a statue of Christ, perhaps wiping the tears of Christ. The movie is about inwardness, and the most important things are expressed without words. The statue is carried by four nuns out of the house into the front-yard; the next scene depicts 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. Jung even thought that the circle and the number four are symbols of the divine: the Godhead with the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost will need the feminine element to be a whole.<sup>41</sup> For Jung, the symbols express the psychological self or the archetypal structures in the human psyche. For Paul Tillich, symbols go beyond psychology (or rather, before 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, as 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 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 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 relationship, differs from Tillich's view.

*Ida* is about which language we should listen to 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, autonomous human culture has 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 religious significance of the inorganic is immense." The Aunt Wanda, whom *Ida* meets after *Ida* has left the cloister to seek information about her parents, regrets that she loses sexual experience by becoming a nun. Before *Ida* takes vows, she has to find out what happened to her family during the Second World War, and she leaves the cloister. The aunt works now as a judge in the communist Poland, where 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 emphasizes 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 Moscow's understanding of justice in socialist countries. I think that there are strong reasons to believe that justice in Poland during the 1950s and 60s 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 may be read as an expression for the return of religion, but I do not know if religion has to return in Poland, because perhaps it has always been there. 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 Aunt Wanda and her one night stands. *Ida* has a love affair with a young man; he wants them to marry, build a family, have children, but *Ida*'s question is:

"What then?" Her drive to self-transcendence pushes her beyond and away from the societal life, which 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 religious concerns in the film. At 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 the personal and the societal level is there on its own. Tillich did not religion and culture separate from each other, but 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."<sup>42</sup> The Western interpretation of justice has separated law and love from each other, but they are not strange to each other in Tillich's interpretation.

Western culture has separated law and love from each other, the proportional justice is applied since the Code of Hammurabi: "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," 4,000 years back in time. The principle of proportionality, in Aristotle as the distributive and retributive principality' has laid the foundation, with Roman law, for 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 the relationship of law and justice. Instead of proportional justice, he speaks about the creative and transforming justice. This justice is on the level of "the structure of the most developed form of reality."<sup>43</sup> 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 Neo-Platonic 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 form 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.”<sup>44</sup> God, justice, and love in Spinoza is from below. Tillich talked about “the multidimensional love which affirms the other one in the act of reunion.”<sup>45</sup> As 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, and this it can only do in the light of the positive.<sup>46</sup> 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; human history has shown its demonic dimensions. 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, divine justice can appear as plain injustice.”<sup>47</sup> Given the event of love, “every act of love implies judgment against that what negates love.”<sup>48</sup> The negative and the demonic (crime, murder, lies that Tillich identified as “negativities,” so also with the demonic: 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 which must be destroyed. Justice “fulfills also the truth in the demand for punishment by destroying what must be destroyed if reuniting love is to reach its aim,” Tillich wrote.<sup>49</sup> The strange work of love, destroying that which is against love, is active in the individual, in the society, and in the drive of the universe to fulfillment. The punishment does not mean that individuals are placed in an eternal hell or in purgatory, but 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.<sup>50</sup> 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.”<sup>51</sup> 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.<sup>52</sup> The self-transcending process of life, driven by love and justice, opens itself for the dimension of essences. I think it is at this 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, the individual identity is somehow preserved. 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.”<sup>53</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Paul Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice. Ontological Analyses and Ethical Applications* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> Agnes Heller, “Himmlers tal förklarar ondskan bakom förintelsen/Himmler’s speech explains the evil behind the Holocaust,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, 17/11 2015, p. 39.

<sup>3</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel’s Dialectic. Five Hermeneutical Studies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 51.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, p.15

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>7</sup> Martha Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice. Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> 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 co-dependent and coevolve.” Mark C. Taylor. *After God* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 346. In differential monism, difference and individuality are maintained.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Tillich, “Question and answer sessions with Peter John,” February-March, 1960, BMS 649/39 (2), 29/3 1960, p. 1. Tillich Archives at Andover-Harvard Theological Library, Harvard Divinity School.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13f.

<sup>11</sup> Tillich, *Love, Power of Justice*, p. 64



<sup>12</sup> “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.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Tillich, “Religious Dimensions of Contemporary Art,” bMS 649/39 (32), p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> “In all likelihood, there is an important reasoning process going on nonconsciously, in the subterranean mind, and the reasoning produces results without the intervening steps ever being known.” Antonio Damasio, *Self comes to Mind. Constructing the Conscious Brain* (London, Vintage Books, 2012), p. 276. See even Antonio Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza. Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain*. (Orlando: Harcourt, 2003), p. 260, where he writes that “Freud’s system requires the self-preservation apparatus Spinoza proposed in his *conatus*, and makes abundant use of the idea that self-preserving actions are engaged nonconsciously.”

<sup>15</sup> Paul Tillich, “Love, Power, and Justice”. Sprunet Lecture, L. IV, “Being and Justice”, 1954, bMS 649/69 (11), pp. 9f.

<sup>16</sup> Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, p. 70.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> See for example Paul Tillich, *My Search for Absolutes*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc), pp. 66ff.

<sup>19</sup> 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.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>21</sup> 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.

<sup>22</sup> Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, p. 76.

<sup>23</sup> Tillich, “Question and answer session with Peter John,” 25/2 1960, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>25</sup> Tillich, “Love, Power, and Justice”, bMS 649/42 (11), 1952, pp. 5f.

<sup>26</sup> Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, p. 120.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1941).

<sup>29</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, p. 18.

<sup>30</sup> Tillich, “Question and answer session with Peter John,” 10/3 1960, p. 9.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 17/3 1960, p. 10.

<sup>32</sup> Amartya Sen, *The Idea of Justice* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 2009).

<sup>33</sup> John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>34</sup> Georg, Wilhelm, Friedrich Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*. (New York: Dover Publications INC, 2005), p. xxx.

<sup>35</sup> Martha Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice. Disability, Nationality, Species Membership*. (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 2007).

<sup>36</sup> Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, p. 41.

<sup>37</sup> Sen, *The Idea of Justice*, p. 117.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 213.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., pp. 402f.

<sup>40</sup> “Human life knows no completely isolated event. Everything that happens in a human being is connected with everything.. Tillich, “The Problem of Evil”, bMS 649/41 (14), n.d., p. 13.

<sup>41</sup> See for example Carl, Gustav Jung, *Answer to Job*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press), pp. 85f and pp. 106f.

<sup>42</sup> Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, p. 29.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 144f.

<sup>44</sup> Baruch Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2001), p. 160.

<sup>45</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, p. 160.

<sup>46</sup> “In accepting the individual into the unity of forgiveness, 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.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>48</sup> Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, p. 179.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 226.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 400

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 405.

<sup>52</sup> Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, p. 66.

<sup>53</sup> “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

**GROUNDS OF BEING BECOMING: THE  
POSSIBILITY OF A TILlichIAN-INSPIRED  
PROCESS THEOLOGY AS  
DISPLAYED BY UNDERGROUND  
RAP**

JON IVAN GILL

**Abstract**

I hope to instigate a detailed conversation between Whiteheadian process thought's idea of "becoming" and Tillichian ideas of "being," asserting that they not only can and should be used to inform each other, but also share a similar synergy that Tillich may have overlooked. In the *Systematic Theology*, vol. I, Tillich dismisses Whitehead's idea of ultimate reality, stating that it offers only a cosmological account of religious experience and trades human historical meaning for processual transience. However, the Whitehead of *Adventures of Ideas* incorporates the metaphysic of *Process and Reality*, a way that mysteriously joins process with historical being attributed to humanity by Heidegger, Tillich, and others. It is my contention that when the religiously symbolic language of Tillichian *being* is compared with the robust metaphysic of Whiteheadian *becoming*, a hybrid theopoetic that is both pluralistic and secularly theological appears. I propose and briefly make the case that that this is evidenced in the sacred texts of United States and global underground rap.

**Introduction**

From Genghis Khan to Vietnam I can smell the  
napalm  
Rape victims, ripped stockings  
Redneck clan members doing church bombings  
Innocent fetus' being aborted with no options  
Human governments ruin 'em  
Worrying what weapons could be used to be  
nukin' 'em  
Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem  
Slaves treated like property, to Pearl Harbor to  
Hiroshima to Nagasaki

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*, I.

Adolf Hitler, to every murderous Nazi  
To the Gambinos, to the Gottis, to every mafia  
atrocities  
Child pornography, babies starving and dying in  
poverty  
Serbians fighting Croats in Yugoslavia  
Muslim women being raped, up to 40,000 in the  
war in Bosnia  
The 50 million killed in the second World War  
The government's poisoning the minds and the  
bodies  
Of the babies that are born poor  
Airplanes blown up by Islamic extremists  
In religion there's always drama  
Whether worshipping the Prophet Mohammed or  
Jesus  
Small pox to Napoleon's troops dying from ty-  
phus  
From the Spanish flu to the black plague, today  
it's AIDS virus  
Bodies in coffins, political extortions  
Racist mobs murdering, Willie Turks, Michael  
Griffith and Yusef Hawkins  
Check the murder rate, is it human nature to  
murder and hate?  
The Catholic church claimed women were  
witches and burned 'em at the stake  
Pedophile predators attacking  
.38 Beretta used by Ghandi's  
assassin  
16 bullets in Malcolm, it happened uptown Man-  
hattan  
And the homicide, Reagan '80s epidemic of crack  
And soldiers in action dying in Iraq and never  
coming back  
And now let's

In this multidirectional multiplicity of words, ideas, emotions, and historical equations that are New York legendary underground rapper R.A. The Rugged Man's verse as just displayed, we see the bottomless pain and despair of the human situation, bleeding through the depths of the presented aesthetic. As Tillich was able to read Picasso's "Guernica" and give voice to the existential pangs of actual entities as their diversity uni-