

Microcosm, Tillich & Tao: a Critique of Tillich's Ontology

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

This thesis is a critique of Paul Tillich's ontology. It demonstrates inconsistency in Tillich's theological system, exposed by the microcosmic/macrocosmic theme, implicit in his theology.

The thesis suggests that Tillich intuited the relationship between God and humanity in microcosmic/macrocosmic terms, but his tightly reasoned arguments stifled the intuition, causing the microcosmic theme to remain hidden under the more explicit concerns of his system.

The thesis establishes the powerful microcosmic theme underlying Tillich's system, in which creaturely life is imbued with the Principles of divine life. This intimacy, coupled with inconsistency in Tillich's theology with regard to human freedom and estrangement, generates doubt about Tillich's assertion that creaturely estrangement from its divine ground is ontological in nature.

In view of the fact that separation and estrangement are not merely idiosyncratic of Tillichian thought, but are entrenched in the western Christian tradition, the thesis looks outside that tradition to assess the validity of Tillich's claim with respect to the ontological nature of estrangement. To this end, the Chinese tradition is engaged, in order to ascertain the extent to which estrangement features in the ontology pertaining to a principal theme in that tradition, the *Tao*.

In its exploration of the *Tao* through the two texts of the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*, the thesis notes the absence of the theme of estrangement. In light of this, Tillich's insistence upon the ontological nature of estrangement is challenged on the grounds that if estrangement is truly ontological, it will be so for the whole of humankind, not solely for one particular tradition.

Having shown Tillich's ontological assumption to be questionable, the thesis proceeds to consider the impact of the removal of the theme of estrangement from his system. It demonstrates that its removal not only permits the implicit microcosmic theme to be brought to the fore, but also transforms his theology from one based upon dualistic consciousness, with the inherent tensions and ambiguities that such awareness inevitably creates, to one based upon integration and holism.

The thesis does *not* seek to offer a comparative study of the ontologies pertaining to Tillich and the *Tao*. Rather, it utilises the *Tao* as the means by which the researcher looks beyond Tillichian theology and the western tradition in which it was entrenched, in order to return to that theology with fresh insight. This is in accord with Tillich's own method of correlation, where he engages with that which lies beyond the finite creature, in order to gain fuller understanding of the nature of that creature.

List of Abbreviations

JCP - Journal of Chinese Philosophy
PEW - Philosophy East and West

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Introduction

This thesis is a critique of Paul Tillich's ontology. It demonstrates inconsistency in Tillich's theological system, caused by his failure to go deeply enough into the nature of the relationship between divine life and human life.

The thesis argues that Tillich's theology is based upon an intuition of the microcosmic-macrocosmic relationship between God and humanity. However, Tillich's insistence upon tightly reasoned argument stifles the intuition fuelling his thought in the depths of his unconscious, and leads to his failure to integrate intuition with reason. This, in turn, prevents his system from expressing a higher level of consciousness, which would have resulted if he had been able consciously to acknowledge the microcosmic theme he intuited. The consequence of this failure is the production of a system based upon tension and ambiguity. The thesis contends that if he had been able to integrate intuition with reason, the resulting theology would have been characterised by clarity and flow, rather than ambiguity and tension.

Crucial to the argument of the thesis is the establishment of the microcosmic theme underlying Tillich's system, for without it, the inconsistency in his ontology would go unnoticed. Thus, the purpose of Part One is to establish the microcosmic theme, which it does in three stages.

First, Chapter One demonstrates Tillich's intuitive understanding of the intimate relationship between divine life and creaturely life, to the extent that the rhythm of the divine life provides the pulse that imbues the creature with life. The pulse is triadic and is derived from the trinitarian nature of the divine life itself. The three Principles of the divine life – Godhead, Logos and Spirit – provide the structure upon which creaturely life is based. Tillich's method of correlation is shown to be the instrument through which he establishes the dynamic relationship between the rhythm of the divine life and finite life.

Next, Chapter Two establishes the presence of the microcosmic theme in the classical heritage, to which Tillich makes repeated direct reference in his three volumes of *Systematic Theology*.¹

Finally, Chapter Three demonstrates the way in which the microcosmic theme is present in Tillich's system, and shows his dialectical methodology to concur with the dialectical approach of microcosmic thinkers of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. It is argued that Tillich's extensive use of triadic formulation in both the content and the structure of his system expresses his intuition of the divine living in and through the human being.

Triadic formulation evokes spiralling imagery, which, it is argued, is characteristic of the microcosmic themes of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Thus, triadic formulation supports the argument for a microcosmic theme underlying his entire theological system.

In Part Two, the microcosmic theme is shown to expose inconsistency in Tillich's system with regard to ontological estrangement and the creature's ground of being. The connection in Tillich's system between the ground of being and the creature's unconscious depths is established and shown to demonstrate the close association of his ontology with psychology. Through this connection, the thesis establishes that for Tillich, creaturely Fall is symbolic not only of the ontological separation between the Creator and the creature, but also of the psychological separation between human consciousness and unconsciousness.

In Chapter Four, the focus upon the psychological aspect of the Fall symbol exposes ambiguity in his understanding of *eros* as "the urge toward the reunion of the separated."² It is proposed that to overcome the ambiguity, 'reunion' must be replaced with 'union.' However, to do so requires the abandonment of Tillich's notion of

¹ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, (Chicago, the University of Chicago Press, 1951); Paul Tillich *Systematic Theology* 2, (Chicago, the University of Chicago Press, 1957); Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, (Chicago, the University of Chicago Press, 1963).

² Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol.3, p.137.

ontological estrangement. In light of these ambiguities and inconsistencies, serious doubts about the value of Tillich's insistence upon ontological estrangement begin to be raised.

The thesis acknowledges that Tillich's insistence upon ontological estrangement is the product of his entrenchment in the western Christian theological tradition, with its assumption of the state of separation between humanity and the divine. Therefore, to have doubts about Tillich's insistence upon ontological estrangement is also to have doubts about the broader Christian assumption of creaturely separation from God. The microcosmic theme underlying Tillich's system reveals his theology to have an overwhelming sense of connection between the lives of the divine and the creature. Therefore, it is necessary to consider whether ontological estrangement is a necessary element in his theology, or whether it impedes the sense of connection that the microcosmic theme highlights.

In view of the fact that separation is intrinsic to Tillich's Christian heritage, it is necessary to step out of the Christian tradition, in order to assess the value of the ontological nature of estrangement for his system as a whole. To this end, the thesis engages with the *Tao* of the Chinese tradition.

The reasons for the selection of this particular tradition are both academic and personal. In academic terms, the *Tao* offers a perspective based upon a microcosmic/macrocosmic appreciation of life. Moreover, it is an appreciation that has no sense of separation or estrangement. As the microcosmic theme found to be underlying Tillich's system unearths inconsistency in his theology with regard to estrangement, the *Tao*, in this respect, becomes an interesting conversation partner.

Fundamental to the microcosmic theme pertaining to the *Tao* is the close connection between the phenomenal and noumenal aspects of life.³ Interestingly, the microcosmic theme underlying Tillich's theology shows Tillich to have a similar sense of particularity in relation to unity. However, whereas the noumenal aspect of the *Tao* is

³ Thomas In-Sing Leung, 'Tao and Logos', *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 25.1, (1998), p.139.

present in the heart of life, Tillich's noumenal appreciation of the unity of the divine life has to be expressed in terms of transcendence and separation from life.⁴

Thus, there is both resonance and dissonance between the philosophy pertaining to the *Tao* and Tillichian theology. As with any good conversation partner, differences as well as similarities are essential for a dynamic conversation to take place, and for these reasons, on the academic level, the *Tao* of the Chinese tradition may be seen to be a suitable one into which to step.

There are also personal reasons for selecting the Chinese tradition. Having been married to a Chinese man for twenty years and having two children who are therefore, both Chinese and European, it was natural for the researcher to opt for the Chinese tradition, when stepping out of the western Christian tradition. Through her marriage, the researcher has been able to recognise the importance of preserving the cultural integrity of both marriage partners. As a European, I cannot become Chinese, any more than my husband, as a Chinese, can become European. At the same time, over the years, there has been a gradual and profound assimilation of each other's cultural values, which, far from diluting our individual senses of identity, has enhanced and enriched them.

In view of this understanding and experience in marriage, the researcher considered a conversation between Tillich and Chinese philosophy pertaining to the *Tao* to be one that would be fruitful and dynamic.

The *Tao* is explored in Chapter Five by examining the way it is expounded in two classical Chinese texts: the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*. These particular texts have been selected for this purpose on the basis of their well-established status as two of the most authoritative and formative texts on the *Tao*.⁵ It should be noted from the outset that in this thesis, examination of the texts pertains strictly to their presentation of the

⁴ For fuller discussion of this point, see pp. 192-194 below.

⁵ *Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching*, transl. D.C.Lau (Hong kong, The Chinese University Press, 1963), p.ix; Fung Yu-Lan, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, (London, New York, the Free Press, 1948), p. 104.

Tao, rather than to their illumination of Taoist philosophy. In view of the purpose of our exploration of Chinese philosophy, namely, to assess the validity of Tillich's assertion that creaturely estrangement is ontological in nature, an attempt to examine the vastness of the Taoist philosophical tradition would far exceed the scope of this thesis.

However, to seek to examine the wisdom pertaining specifically to the *Tao* contained in these texts is more appropriate to the purpose of the research project, for in that examination, themes common to both the *Tao* as communicated through the two texts and to Tillichian theology are established. For example, in both the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*, the *Tao* is presented in microcosmic/macrocosmic terms – a point of obvious contact with the microcosmic theme of Tillichian theology established in this thesis.

Furthermore, the Chinese texts' use of paradoxical and symbolic language with regard to the *Tao* provides interesting material for comparison with Tillich's understanding of paradox and symbolism. Using Nicholas Cusanus' *De Docta Ignorantia* as a mediating agent,⁶ the thesis establishes that the similarity between the Chinese texts and Tillichian theology in these respects is superficial, and that both are quite distinct at a fundamental level.

Other interesting points of contact are explored, including the theme of spontaneity (*ziran*, in the Chinese texts) present in both Tillichian theology and the two Chinese texts; the noumenal and phenomenal aspects of the *Tao* in relation to the transcendent and immanent aspects of the Creator in Tillichian theology, and the theme of integration present in both the Chinese texts and Tillich's system.

In Chapter Six, the ontological implications of the Chinese texts' presentation of the *Tao* are explored. Discovered is a microcosmic/macrocosmic understanding of reality

⁶ In Chapter Two, Tillich's acknowledgement in *Systematic Theology* 1, pp.260-261 of the microcosmic theme present in the work of Nicholas Cusanus is noted. The establishment of Cusanus as part of the classical tradition in which Tillich was rooted provides the authority for employing Cusanus as a mediating agent here between the Chinese texts and Tillich.

in which the theme of estrangement plays no role whatsoever. Moreover, allusions to ontology in those texts are more precisely onto-cosmology / cosmo-ontology, for the absence of estrangement is so profound that ontology cannot be separated from cosmology.⁷

The exploration also reveals the Chinese texts to use symbolism not only to point beyond the limitations of language, but also to point beyond the limitations of conceptual thought.⁸ In short, the symbolism of the Chinese texts is shown to shock the reader into a non-dualistic state of awareness, in which all conscious distinctions fall away, so that the human being, as the microcosm of the universe, integrates with the macrocosmic process of that universe – the process in both the microcosm and the macrocosm being the *Tao*.

Thus, the exploration into the Chinese texts in Part Two establishes the powerful sense of interrelationship between the microcosm of the human being and the macrocosm of the universe, an interrelationship based upon the dynamic flow of the *Tao* in its macrocosmic and microcosmic aspects. In this relationship, not only is there no sense of estrangement between the human being and the *Tao* in its noumenal aspect, but there is also a strong sense in which the human being is empowered by it.

In this way, the thesis is able to assert that Tillich's assumption that human estrangement is ontological in nature is not validated by the Chinese texts under consideration. For this reason, it is possible to challenge Tillich's claim in this respect, a challenge that is necessary, in order to alleviate his system of its ambiguity and tension.

However, also discovered is a profound distinction between the understanding of reality presented in the Chinese texts and that presented in Tillich's system. The

⁷ The terms *onto-cosmology* and *cosmo-ontology* are taken from Cheng, Chung-Ying, 'Chinese Metaphysics as Non-metaphysics: Confucian and Taoist Insights into the Nature of Reality', *Understanding the Chinese Mind: The Philosophical Roots*, ed. R.E.Allinson, (Hong Kong, Oxford University Press, 1989), p.175 of pp.167 -208.

⁸ See p.199 below.

examination of the Chinese texts reveals their dismissal of the value of human consciousness in the forming and shaping of reality. Reality is the enigma of the *Tao*; recognition of this reality is attained only when human clinging to conceptual awareness is relinquished.

This is shown to contrast starkly with Tillich's perception of the unique role of human consciousness in the grasping and shaping of reality, a role given to humanity through the logos structure of its internal and external being.

Thus, although exploration of the Chinese texts provides us with the evidence necessary to challenge Tillich's assertion about the ontological nature of human estrangement, it does not offer any solutions with regard to overcoming the ambiguity and tension within Tillich's theological system.

Having provided evidence in Part Two of a tradition in which estrangement plays no role whatsoever, in Part Three, the thesis is able to challenge Tillich's claim that human estrangement from the ground of being is ontological in nature. To attribute ontological status to estrangement is to make a claim applicable to humanity as a species, not simply to those within the Christian fold. That there exists a tradition in which estrangement is absent provides the basis upon which Tillich's assumption may be challenged.

On this basis, the thesis goes on to consider why Tillich insisted upon the ontological nature of estrangement, when the microcosmic theme implicit in his system accentuated the holistic and dynamically integrative relationship between humanity and the ground of being.

Reflecting upon the limitations of conceptual thought as presented in the Chinese texts, Chapter Seven presents the contention that Tillich highlighted the theme of separation because his system was the product of dualistic consciousness, a state of awareness in which conceptual thought predominates at the expense of the more sensory and intuitive aspects of human functioning.

Moving away from the Chinese texts, the chapter goes on to consider the effect of removing the theme of estrangement from Tillich's system on his understanding of the creature/Creator relationship. It is suggested that by so doing, the themes of holism and integration, accentuated by the implicit allusions to the microcosm-macrocosmic relationship between human life and Divine life, are brought to the fore, and the ambiguities and tension of his system diminish.

The thesis concludes by reflecting upon the power of the microcosmic theme to bring Tillichian theology to a different level of consciousness, one in which the themes of holism and integration predominate.

Methodology

This thesis is *not* a comparative study of Tillichian theology and Chinese philosophy pertaining to the *Tao*. Rather, it is a critique of Tillichian ontology, which uses a very specific aspect of the Chinese tradition as the means by which distance can be created from Tillichian ontology, in order for that ontology to be reflected upon.

This then, is a methodology that is consistent with Tillich's own *method of correlation*. Just as Tillich raises questions about existence that are addressed by reference to that which stands beyond existence, so this thesis raises questions about Tillichian ontology by going beyond the Christian fold in which his ontology is situated. Moreover, just as Tillich uses the *beyond* to return to the fold of human existence with fresh understanding, so this thesis uses the *beyond* represented by the Chinese tradition as the means by which fresh insight can be brought back to Tillichian theology.⁹

As Tillichian ontology is criticised in this thesis on the basis of its lack of integration, the methodology employed must be one based upon integration. Just as in Tillich's *method of correlation*, the limitation of finitude can only be made fully clear from the perspective of the infinite, so too, the lack of integration in Tillich's work can only be

⁹ See pp.17-20 below for an in-depth discussion of Tillich's *method of correlation*.

recognised from the standpoint of integration. For this reason, an original methodological approach has been utilised to examine Tillich's theological system.

In view of the fact that Tillich's lack of integration is argued to be derived from his excessive use of rational system at the expense of the more intuitive aspects of his being, the methodological approach employed in this thesis has required that the researcher utilise her intuitive and rational faculties to equal degrees, in order to examine and criticise Tillich's theological system. To achieve this, an intrinsic part of the methodology has been the researcher's practice of meditation as the means of accessing intuitive insights into Tillichian theology.

Through meditation in the early stages of the project, a mandala was drawn by the researcher, which established intuitively and diagrammatically the presence of the microcosmic theme underlying Tillich's system.¹⁰ This mandala, then, provided the direction for the entire project, as the researcher sought to make conceptual sense of what she could see intuitively.

A mandala is both a psychological and a religious symbol, in which an individual is drawn progressively to its centre.¹¹ Carl Jung describes it as a symbol of wholeness representing the union of opposites in both psychological and religious terms. It is a symbol that springs spontaneously from the unconscious, and often takes the shape of a circular diagram with a central point that has an integrative function within the circle.

Mandalas are found in the Far East and are also found in the Christian art of the Middle Ages, in which Christ is depicted at the centre, often with the four evangelists making a square around the centre.¹²

The diagram resulting from the analysis of Tillich's theological system would appear to

¹⁰ See Appendix 1.

¹¹ In my attempt to understand the nature of the diagram I had drawn, I contacted theologian and Jungian Analyst, John Dourley. He advised me to maintain my critical consciousness, but to allow the mandala to lead me to its centre.

¹² C.G. Jung, *Jung on the East*, (Routledge, London, 1995), p.93.

accord with the Christian mandalas of the Middle ages, in that Christ is depicted as the central symbol. However, unlike those of the Middle Ages, it is not the four evangelists that surround Christ, but rather the remaining four central symbols of his system, namely, Logos, God, Spirit, and Kingdom of God.

The mandala has been the means by which the researcher has progressed, through immersion in primary texts, from the externals of Tillich's system to its heart, in which the figure of Jesus as the Christ functions as pivotal. It has also been the vehicle through which the researcher has sought uncommon conversation partners for Tillichian theology. Such partners include not only the Chinese texts of the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*, but also the ideas of Carl Jung and Jacob Boehme.

The progression of the study has been spiralling in nature, due to the obscurity of the less conscious methods employed in the study, and due also to the demands of a microcosmic theme. Such a theme requires the connection with the macrocosm to be ever present and this therefore, demands the dimension of depth, which Tillich would regard as the vertical dimension, to be actively involved in the progression from the externals of Tillich's system to the centre.¹³ The resulting thesis may be seen both as critical reflection upon, and as an expression of, the mandala produced in the early stages of research. In this respect, the methodological approach of the thesis is original.

Thesis Structure

The methodological approach outlined above has an inevitable impact upon the structure of the thesis. As mentioned above, the researcher discovered whilst conducting her study that the more unconscious methods employed led her to think in a spiralling, circumambulatory way. That is to say, the following of intuitions demanded an exploration of the issues of the project that were initially very obscure, but would be clarified by thinking 'around' and meditating upon the subject. The diagram of the

¹³ The significance of the dimension of depth for a spiralling way of thinking is discussed in depth in Chapter Three.

mandala produced by the researcher when studying in-depth Tillich's *Systematic Theology* illustrates the importance of spiralling circumambulation in the conducting of the study.¹⁴

Spiralling circumambulation is therefore, integral to the structure of the thesis itself. The reasons for this are twofold: firstly, it is the consequence of the researcher's determination to allow the unconscious depths to influence the final writing of the study as much as they influenced the earlier stages of research. Secondly, it is the structure that is necessary for an analysis of a theology rooted in a microcosmic theme. Such a theme is one that expresses integration. If a theology is based upon integration, it is necessary to show the way in which the key motifs of the theology interrelate. It follows that the understanding of one motif demands a thorough understanding of all others. To adopt a more conventional analytical approach, in which one key motif is discussed in-depth in isolation from its relation to others, would be to lose the integration essential to a microcosmic theme.

The only way to proceed, then, is to begin by highlighting the interrelation of the key motifs without defining them all at the outset. Thus, for example, the significance of the symbol theme in Tillich's theology is acknowledged in Chapter One in relation to his *method of correlation*, but is not discussed in detail until Chapter Three, as a full understanding of symbol requires some initial background into the *method of correlation* and other key themes. Equally, the dimension of spirit, although acknowledged as being critical in its transcending function within the ontological structure of being, is not discussed in depth until the end of the detailed analysis of that structure.

The way in which this thesis has been structured therefore, requires patience of the reader, but it is hoped that the patience will be rewarded by the gaining of a very new insight into Tillichian theology. It is also anticipated that the new insight, derived from an immersion in the primary texts, and gained through the researcher's independent critical reflection upon those texts, sheds new light upon the arguments of some of the

¹⁴ See Appendix 1.

secondary literature in this area. For example, in Chapter Three, the thesis demonstrates that Kelsey's observations about the structure of Tillich's *Systematic Theology* are also relevant to the content of the system. This is a point not made by Kelsey himself, but one that is brought into relief through the recognition of the microcosmic theme underlying Tillich's thinking. Furthermore, in the same chapter, the microcosmic theme exposes the superficiality of Hamilton's critique of Tillich's ontology.

Moreover, the thesis offers fresh insight into some of the arguments contained in the secondary literature pertaining to the Chinese material. For example, in Chapter Five, Doeringer's highlighting of the similarity between Tillichian symbolism and the symbolism in the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* is questioned. By establishing Tillich's connection with the thinking of Nicholas Cusanus in Chapter Two, and by drawing parallels between Tillichian and Cusanan symbolism in Chapter Five, the thesis shows Doeringer's observations to be somewhat superficial.

Finally, the establishing of the microcosmic theme underlying Tillichian theology provides a very useful instrument for engaging in Tillichian-Taoist dialogue. In view of the powerfully microcosmic nature of the *Tao* acknowledged in this thesis, the discovery of the presence of a similar theme implicit in Tillich's theology makes possible a point of contact between the two that has hitherto been difficult to establish.¹⁵

¹⁵ In the early stages of this research project, Prof. Lai, at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, made it clear to me the difficulty I would find in establishing a point of contact between Tillichian theology and Taoist philosophy. His advice to me to consider Confucianism rather than Taoism was sound advice indeed, for this thesis confirms his view of the very profound points of departure between Tillichian theology and Taoist philosophy. Only the establishing of a microcosmic theme implicit in Tillich's system has permitted the researcher to engage with the Chinese texts. In view of the extent of popularity of Tillichian theology among Chinese Christian theological scholars, it is my hope that the originality of this thesis in unearthing the microcosmic theme will present scholars of Chinese philosophy as well as Chinese Christian scholars with a new way of engaging with Tillichian theology.

The spiralling structure of the thesis is reflected in the weighting of the three parts. Part One is by far the largest, followed by Part Two, with Part Three representing an extremely small proportion of the whole. This should not be regarded as a structural imbalance, but rather as the inevitable shape of work that circumambulates to the centre of Tillichian theology. The structure depicts the process of filtration that a spiralling methodology demands. It also requires that the reader retains all that has gone before, for the progression is one of clarification. Thus, Part Three should be read as the final clarification of Parts One and Two. Equally, Part One should be read with the expectation of clarification in the parts that follow. The structure leads the reader to the heart of Tillichian theology, just as one might be led to the centre of a spiral, and just as meditation upon a mandala draws one to the centre of the image, where integration finds full expression.

Part One

Establishing the Microcosmic Theme in
Tillich's Theological System and
Heritage

Chapter One

Divine Life & Finite Life

This chapter establishes Tillich's intuitive understanding of the intimate relationship between divine life and creaturely life. This will be used in Chapter Three as the basis of the microcosmic theme argued to underlie Tillich's theological system.

The present chapter offers a detailed analysis of the nature of the dynamics perceived by Tillich to be present in the depths of human existence. It explores his *method of correlation* in light of the dynamics and shows it to be the means by which he expresses the resonance between the life of the divine and that of the human being. It argues that finitude is rooted in the dynamic rhythm of the divine life. It is a rhythm that pulsates through the creature, despite the creature's qualitative separation from the divine, providing the creature with the power and structure to live creatively.

The chapter is divided into three sections. Section One examines Tillich's understanding of the dynamics of the divine life. In Section Two, the concept of dynamism in relation to the ontological structure of being is discussed in light of Tillich's appreciation of the divine life. Section Three discusses how the dynamics of finite life are conditioned by the categories of time, space, causality and substance and the way in which finite life is connected to that of the divine, despite the confines imposed upon finitude by the categories.

Reference is made at various points in the chapter to Tillich's use of symbolism in his theology. However, despite the references, a detailed analysis of his notion of symbolic language is delayed until Chapter Three. There are two reasons for this: firstly, symbol pertains more to the theme of *depth* in his theology than to the theme of *dynamics*. Indeed, we will see later that symbol functions to connect the

dimension of depth with the here and now of everyday living. As Chapter Three provides detailed analysis of his understanding of the notion of depth, it is more appropriate to discuss symbol there than in the present chapter, although detailed analysis here would, admittedly, enhance our understanding of the relation between the divine and the finite.

It seems to be a characteristic of Tillichian theology that a thorough understanding of one key theme is impossible without an equally thorough understanding of the others. As discussed in the Thesis Introduction, this is characteristic of a microcosmic theme, and Tillich's style in this respect would lend weight to the view that such a theme is present, albeit implicitly, in his theological system. For this, the second reason, it is important not to attempt to analyse themes as they arise, in isolation of their function within his system as a whole, for by so doing, the integrated hue of his theology begins to fade. With this in mind, it is hoped that the reader approaches each chapter as part of an integrated whole rather than as a self-sufficient unit.

Section One: The Divine Life

Paul Tillich was a theologian dedicated to making the Christian message meaningful to modern humanity. He realised the importance of entrenching that message in the very fabric of existence, not allowing it to be removed from the events and circumstance of everyday life. At the same time, it had to be understood as delivering more than merely the sum total of existential circumstances. The message had to communicate a dimension that lay beyond existence at the same time as being rooted in it.

This is the paradox that Tillich's theology works around. The principal question that Tillich asks in his theology is: what is the connection between the Christian message and modern life?

The Method of Correlation

He applies a particular method in his three volumes of *Systematic Theology* to address that question.¹⁶ He raises questions about existence that are answered in terms of the divine, and in this way, demonstrates the relation between the divine and the finite creature. This, he calls the *method of correlation*, which is present in both the content and structure of his system.

Kelsey argues that an examination of Tillich's three volumes of *Systematic Theology* reveals a five-part division.¹⁷ Each part raises a question or a set of questions concerned with existence. Answers are provided in the form of symbols that act as the channel between humanity and the divine: *Logos, God, Spirit, Jesus as the Christ, and the Kingdom of God*. For example, in Part One, the question raised is about the possibility of there being indubitable truth.¹⁸ Tillich answers it in terms of the symbol, *Logos*. Through humanity's reasoning faculty, The Logos principle of the divine life is present in its existential form, expressed by Tillich as *logos*. For that reason, he concludes that indubitable truth can be grasped by humanity through logos, which he describes as a symbol correlating Creator and creature.

The five-part division of the structure of his system correlates with the five symbols identified by Tillich as communicating the Creator/creature relationship. Hence, the method of correlation is applied both to the content and the structure of his theological system.

By correlation, Tillich means three things: Firstly, he refers to the correspondence between "religious symbols and that which is symbolised by them".¹⁹ In this respect, correlation deals with the issue of religious knowledge, i.e. how can humanity in existence have knowledge of the divine?

¹⁶ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1, pp.59-66.

¹⁷ Kelsey, *The Fabric of Paul Tillich's Theology*, p.13.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.14.

¹⁹ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, p.60.

Secondly, correlation refers to the logical connection between human concepts and those of the divine.²⁰ This is concerned with what humanity can say about God, i.e. how can humanity use the same language to talk meaningfully about the world and about God?

Finally, it refers to the factual sense in which the divine reveals itself to humanity and the way that humanity receives that manifestation,²¹ i.e. where is the meeting point between the two? Tillich addresses these issues and questions and finds their answers in *the divine life*.²²

The Divine Life

For Tillich, the divine life is the unity of three principles: *Godhead*, *Logos* and *Spirit*. *Godhead* refers to the raw power and abysmal majesty of the divine, to the God that is beyond good and evil. *Logos* refers to the ordering principle of God, which gives meaning and structure to the creative power of Godhead. Without Logos, Tillich argues, Godhead would be chaotic and demonic. *Spirit*, the third principle, is not simply one principle among three, but the uniting principle that makes God what God is. It is the principle in God that unites the other two principles of power and meaning and makes them creative.²³

Although Tillich depicts the divine life as consisting of three principles, he does not intend to portray a divided God. God's power and structure are not isolated from each other, but are expressions of "moments" of structured and ordered dynamism of the divine life.²⁴ Divine life is power that is meaningful. Thus Tillich speaks of God as the "unity of power and meaning".²⁵ There is no tension in God because the three principles are non-differentiated within the divine life. Power and structure do

²⁰ Ibid., pp.243-245.

²¹ Ibid., p.61.

²² Ibid., p.211.

²³ Ibid., p.250.

²⁴ Ibid., p.250.

²⁵ Ibid., p.250.

not stand apart in the divine life, but are blended by means of Spirit. That is not to say that there is a dilution of either principle: in the blend, both remain pure and utter to provide a blend that is purely and utterly creative.

When speaking of the power of God we speak symbolically of a moment in the divine life, and when speaking of the structure of God we again speak symbolically of another moment. When speaking of divine moments we must remind ourselves that we speak, once again, symbolically. Through his symbolism, Tillich depicts the particular aspects of the unity that is divine life.

Tillich goes further and claims that in addition to *having* Spirit, God *is* Spirit.²⁶ Here, he attempts to depict the sheer non-differentiated quality of God. Spirit is the unifying principle of power and meaning. The particular aspects of the divine, expressed through the three principles, find union in Spirit.

In so far as three principles can be discerned in the divine life, then God *has* Spirit. Here, Tillich communicates the particular aspects of the divine unity, thus portraying God's dynamism: God is three principles that pulsate in unity. In contrast, when stating that God *is* Spirit, he highlights the unitary aspect of the divine. Thus, by claiming that God both *has* and *is* Spirit, Tillich points his readers to the dynamism and the unity of God. God is thoroughly dynamic, thoroughly meaningful and thoroughly unified.

Once again, we must remember that he speaks symbolically. For him, our knowledge of divine life is derived entirely from our finite position. We know it in terms of what we know of our own humanity, in terms of the symbolic nature of religious language and in terms of what God chooses to reveal to us. When we speak about God, we speak symbolically.²⁷ That is, we speak of that which lies beyond in a state of awareness of our limitation. As we are tied to existence, we

²⁶ Ibid., p.251: "God has the Spirit as he has the logos" and p.250: "...God is the living God because he is Spirit".

²⁷ Ibid., p.242.

address God through the veil of finitude. We do not know God as God is per se, only as God is in relation to us. We can discern the divine life only through the very same veil of finitude. Thus, humanity must reach out to a misty God with a hazy face. Our view is inevitably distorted and our language ambiguous. This is the finite aspect of the correlation between finite life and divine life.

However, Tillich's method of correlation does not simply intend to show the way in which the existential creature reaches out to God; it also shows the way in which God reaches out to the existential creature. To understand the method of correlation in terms of humanity's reaching out and finding answers alone is to misunderstand the nature of the method. Humanity can reach out to God because God has given the authority for it by providing the ground in which the existential creature is rooted.²⁸ In order to understand the precise way in which the creature is rooted in the divine life and is thus, authorised to reach out to God, it is necessary to consider in detail the nature of the divine life as it relates to the creature.

²⁸ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, p.235.

The Divine Life as the Ground of Being

Tillich describes the being of God as *being itself*.²⁹ God is not subject to the limitations of finitude and existence. As being itself, God is the creative source of all that has being, but exceeds all that has being because God's creativity eternally overcomes the possibility of the negation of being. Participation in the possibility of non-being is a characteristic of all existential beings. Existence means limitation, the ultimate limitation being finitude – death. God, as the source of being, “infinitely transcends every finite being”³⁰ because non-being rests dependent upon being. Without being, there could be no possibility of not being. The dynamic of existence is the power to be over against the power not to be. The dynamic of God, however, is purely the power to be. The power not to be is swallowed up in the total unity of being that is God.

However, this does not mean that non-being stands apart from, or in opposition to the divine life. The notion that God does not participate in non-being because God is being should not be taken as confirmation that creaturely existence is left in a limbo between two polar forces. Rather, Tillich wishes to depict the utterly comprehensive way in which all that is and all that is not is embraced in the divine life. The threat of non-being is an existential threat rooted in the very fabric of being without ever overpowering being. The process of the divine life has integral to it the threat of non-being. The threat is functional within the whole process of the divine life and because of its function, it fulfils rather than defeats being. He wishes to show non-being as a phase in the life of the divine, but one that is temporal in nature.

Tillich achieves this by depicting the divine life as an eternal process of emanation and return within the unity that is God.³¹ The dynamic is oscillatory in nature, in which there is a simultaneous movement out of God and then back into God. It must be described as simultaneous as a reminder that God is not tied to the realm of

²⁹ Ibid., p.235.

³⁰ Ibid., p.237.

³¹ Ibid., p.251.

time and space. Of course, the obvious question must be asked: where does God go when moving away from God-self? We perhaps flinch at the blatantly existential nature of this question, for it presupposes the reality of time and space. Inevitably, language is based upon such presuppositions because it is rooted in existential soil and the categories that tie us to that realm.³²

The movement in the divine life is qualitatively different from that of existence: it is movement beyond time and space. It is therefore, a non-corporeal movement that lies beyond finite comprehension. Tillich does not perceive God as a mass, moving from one place to another, but more as energy, sheer dialectical dynamism, which, in logical terms, moves away from God-self but, in the reality of the divine life itself, remains in eternal unity. Tillich suggests that Spirit proceeds from the divine ground in order to actualise what is potential, and simultaneously returns to the ground. This is the process of the divine life. Divine emanation is the phase of the process that makes actual what is potential in that ground. In this phase, divine fullness is demonstrated by becoming something definite. Here, the threat of non-being is brought into play. The infinite ground of being expresses itself as finite and then simultaneously takes that finite expression back into the divine ground. In such a process Tillich argues:

...the divine fullness is posited in the divine life as something definite.³³

In short, finitude is situated within the unity of God.

Thus, finite life is an integral part of the divine life. It is a vital phase in the process of divine life, in which divine power is given form and expression that posits the fullness of God. Finitude lives within the divine life and functions to bring about the actualisation of the divine life. It participates in the dialectical process of the divine life and, consequently, participates in the principles that constitute divine life.

³² Ibid., p.192.

³³ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, p.251.

Thus, for Tillich, the existential creature is authorised to reach out to God on the grounds that finite life is cradled in the life of the divine. The ground of creaturely existence is the very ground of being itself.

Tillich's authority to define God as the unity of power and meaning also lies in the divine root of existential being. If the ground of existential being is being itself, namely, God, the structure of existential being must also be grounded in God. Tillich's theology describes the ontological structure of being as consisting of the tense dialectical dynamic between power (i.e. potential) and meaning (i.e. structure). He builds up this structure from observations and analysis of the existential situation. He concludes that as existence is rooted in the life of the divine, the very same dialectical dynamic between power and meaning is derived from the dynamic of the divine life itself.

Thus, we begin to see that Tillich's method of correlation is entrenched in the very heart of the relationship between existential being and the ground of that being. The two are so intimately connected that the structure of the finite is the repeated pattern of that of the divine life and, therefore, the understanding of the structure underpinning finitude gives us authority to understand the structure of the divine life. That having been said, Tillich does not suggest that we can know God. All we can know is what the divine life authorises us to know; we can know only that which can be discerned through existence. To speak of the divine life as being the unity of power and meaning, Tillich speaks as an existential being discerning God. He speaks therefore, at a distance, for, as we have seen, although grounded in the divine life, finitude is part of the divine emanation. Humanity grasps only God in God's outward movement, but God holds firmly humanity in the totality of the movement because God takes the finite back to God-self.

Thus, humanity discerns God as the unity of power and meaning. This is the infinite ground of being, but this is not the God beyond the infinite.³⁴ The God

³⁴ Ibid., p.252.

beyond the infinite refers to the reality that is God's and as such is not discernable to the outsider that is humanity. Although finitude is part of the divine life, it is not the totality of that life. In that respect, finitude is an outsider. Thus, Tillich prefers to speak of the ground of being, or humanity's ultimate concern,³⁵ rather than to speak of God, in order to maintain the distinction between discernable God and the internal reality of God. In his theology, he seeks to show the face of God in relation to existence, and the method of correlation is the means by which he portrays it.

By refusing to address the nature of the God beyond the infinite, Tillich points to the ultimate ineffability of God. At the same time, by speaking of God in terms of correlation, Tillich avoids the danger of suggesting that humanity reaches its ultimate concern through human effort alone. The method of correlation shows the way in which finitude owes its being to the source of being, and that the life of that source has finitude as integral to it. In other words, through his method of correlation, Tillich shows the intimate relationship between the finite and the divine, both from the perspective of the finite and from that of the divine.

Finitude and the divine resonate. However, let us be clear as to the nature of the resonance. Finitude is rooted in the life of the divine and thus, participates in the very structure of that life. Finitude owes its very being to the source that sustains it, "the ground of [its] being", in Tillich's words.³⁶ However, this does not imply that God needs the creature in the way that the creature needs its source. The resonance between God and creature is not based upon mutual need. Whilst beings participate in being in terms of need and dependence, it would be a distortion to suggest that being participates in beings in the same way. However, there would be no distortion in the suggestion that being participates in beings per se. In so far as being enters beings, then it could be said that being participates in beings. The source gives of itself to that which is nourished by it in the same way as the mother gives of herself to the newly born infant. Through her milk she sustains the child. Through the structure and power of meaning, the divine sustains the finite. The

³⁵ Ibid., p.11.

³⁶ Ibid., p.116.

resonance between the finite and divine, then, is not one of mutual need, but one of mutual participation. The creature participates as the sustained, the Creator as the Sustainer.

In so far as God sustains, could it not be argued that God needs that which needs sustenance? If it is the creature that God sustains, then, could it not be deduced that God therefore, needs the creature? On the surface, perhaps this could be concluded. But we should dig deeper than the surface here. If we return to the analogy of the mother and child, it would be inaccurate to suggest that the mother needs the child and therefore, the child is born. The mother is not a mother until the child is born and the need to sustain the child does not present itself prior to its birth. What happens in the creative act of childbirth is the spontaneous and synchronous mutual participation of a transcendent nature: by giving birth to the child, the woman becomes a mother. As a woman, the potential for motherhood is there, but as a pre-maternal woman, motherhood is potential only. With the birth of the child, potential is transcended into actualisation and the potential for motherhood becomes actual. At the same time, the pre-natal infant becomes transformed through the process of birth into an individual in need of that which gave it life. It experiences the transcendence from potential individual being to actual individual being.

Potential life becomes actualised only through the process of birth, as does the potential for motherhood. Therefore, the process of birth is not the result of a mutual need between mother and child. Rather, it represents the mutual participation in transformation and transcendence of woman and foetus.

If we return to the notion of God, can the above analogy help us to understand Tillich's conception of the resonance between God the Creator, and the creature? To suggest that God needs a creature in order to satisfy the divine need to sustain and, indeed, creates the creature in order to satisfy the need to create is far too simplistic. Tillich points toward a third element when speaking of the resonance between the Creator and the creature. There is no causal relationship. Instead,

Tillich speaks of a mutual and synchronous participation in which both the creature and the Creator move from potential to actualisation:

The ultimate can become actual only through the concrete, through that which is preliminary and transitory.³⁷

This transformation is brought about by the presence of Spirit, through which the creature drives beyond itself and reaches out to the Creator, and the Creator responds and sustains the creature. In this way, the creature works to fulfil the purpose of life to make actual what is potential and the Creator is manifest as Sustainer so that the process may be fulfilled. In this way, God may be perceived not as controlling and dominating, but as that which sustains the creature through the creature's participation in the divine life. By establishing the divine life as the ground in which existential life is rooted, he establishes the involvement of the three divine principles in creaturely life. By depicting the Spirit as the third element in the relationship between creature and the Creator, Tillich shows God's participation in the creature and the creature's participation in God. He is able to show the creative nature of that mutual participation in terms of actualisation of potential on both sides. At the same time, by showing that God not only *has* Spirit, but also *is* Spirit, Tillich maintains the creative source of this mutual participation as God and not as something other than God.

In Tillich's theology, then, we are able to move away from a paternalistic view of God, in which the Creator and Sustainer controls the creature through reward and punishment, and, instead, move toward a view which shows the resonance between Creator and created, Sustainer and sustained. We are able to see that the created and the sustained are also dynamically involved in the full expression of the divine. Such a view, as we shall see later,³⁸ reminds humanity that its freedom in life is not just a piece of divine lip service, but is utterly real and essential for both the process of actualisation of humanity and of the divine.

³⁷ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1, p.218.

³⁸ See Ch.3, below.

Established so far is the way in which Tillich's method of correlation expresses the resonance between the life of the divine and that of finitude, which takes place in the depths of existence. The divine life is a rhythmical process of emanation and return, operating within the unity of that life. The divine process of outward movement and return pulsates within finite life, imbuing humanity with creativity and structure. Thus, Tillich's God is energy that fuels the process of life in both its divine and finite expressions.

Tillich's depiction of the divine life provides the backdrop for the whole of his theological system. Without an understanding of the triadic nature of the divine life, consisting of the three principles of Logos, Godhead and Spirit, it is impossible fully to understand the triadic themes that permeate his theology. The triadic nature of the divine life is expressed in terms of the dynamic dialectic of divine power in relation to divine structure that works creatively through their unification in the Spirit of God. Only when we appreciate this triadic relationship, can we understand the importance of the dynamic dialectic that he depicts so vividly in his theology.

Section Two: The Ontological Structure of Being

The previous section focused upon the divine life, establishing its dynamic, triadic nature, in which finitude is grounded, and demonstrating that finite existence has in its depths the same triadic pulse that gives finite being the authority to point toward the divine. Creator and creature resonate with each other not through mutual need, but through mutual participation.

It is now necessary to turn our attention away from the divine life to that of the finite creature, in order to establish the way in which finite life operates in the light of its grounding in that of the divine.

For Tillich, the divine life consists of the unity of the dynamic triadic relationship of the three principles of Godhead, Logos and Spirit. Each principle is an energy,

which functions as an expression of the divine life. The two polar forces of Godhead and Logos are united by the principle of Spirit, which makes the power and structure of the divine creative. The creativity of the divine drives it away from God-self, into the birthing process of actualisation, and this movement within the divine life facilitates the creation of actual life.

Finitude is thus born out of the creative dynamic of Spirit in the divine life. As Spirit, the two other forces of the divine life are present as a unity. However, the birth into finitude marks the separation of the united divine forces. In other words, the ontological structure that lies behind existence consists of the same polar forces and creative force of the divine life, but the polar forces are no longer in alignment. Divine emanation reveals the separated nature of the polar forces of the divine. The consequence of this for Tillich is that the ontological structure of being is triadic in nature, as is the divine life, but is characterised by tension and ambiguity rather than by harmony and unity.³⁹

So, what precisely does Tillich mean by *the ontological structure*?⁴⁰ In his analysis of the term, he focuses upon life from the perspective of existence. Tillich reflects upon the meaning of the term, *life*⁴¹ and he argues that the notion of life has that of *death* incorporated into it. Life is understood in the light of that which restricts it, death. Without death, the meaning of life would not be asked. Life, therefore, is coloured by the polarity of life and death.⁴²

Life embraces the polar forces of life and death and the dialectical dynamic between both poles represents the process of the actualisation of being.⁴³ To understand this, and to see the way in which creaturely life is grounded in that of the divine, we must analyse Tillich's understanding of *being*.

³⁹ The triadic structure consists of the dialectical forces of *self* and *world*, which work dialectically to form *reality*.

⁴⁰ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, p.168.

⁴¹ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, p.11.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.11.

⁴³ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, p.241.

Being

Tillich speaks of two aspects of *being* in his system, *essential* and *existential*.⁴⁴ Essential being refers to the potential that lies within being.⁴⁵ It refers to the dynamic aspect of everything that has life. This leads on to the existential aspect, which refers to actuality. Actualisation of potential takes place in existence. For the potential tree to become actual, it must exist. Thus, actualisation means the coming into existence of potential. If we meet talented children we say they have much potential. We can observe something within them that could grow and become their outward expression. But for this to happen, the children need to live and work in a particular way for the potential to find expression. Thus, for Tillich, potential depends upon existence for its manifestation. Equally, existence could not be without the power to be, namely, potential. Without potential, nothing could become actual. Hence, there is a resonance between essential (i.e. potential) being and existential (i.e. actual) being.

This reiterates the same polar relationship that pertains to the polar forces in the divine life. Just as there is resonance between the polar forces of divine power and structure, so too, there is resonance between the power and structure of being. Essential being represents the power of being and existential being represents the structure of being. Thus, by speaking of the two aspects of being, Tillich establishes the correlation between the polar forces of the divine life and existential life.

Life, then, is a mixture of essential and existential being. We have seen that there is mutual dependence of one force upon the other, but their mutual resistance should also be highlighted. The power to be is thrusting and dynamic in nature. It is the *dynamis* of Aristotelian thought.⁴⁶ By definition, it is without structure, like a fire free of constraint. Actuality, on the other hand, represents constraint: it is structured by the constraints of the categories: time, space, causality and substance. It is the

⁴⁴ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, p.12.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.12: Tillich cites as an example the potential of a tree as being 'treehood'.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.12.

energeia of Aristotelian thought.⁴⁷ There is, therefore, an inevitable tension between the two forces: the former insatiable in appetite, the latter restrictive in nature. As life consists of a mixture of these two forces, it is characterised by the tension generated by them.

We saw earlier that life incorporates death in its definition. What, then, is the connection between life and death on the one hand, and essential and existential being on the other?

Death represents the negation of being. Potential is the power of being. Actuality is the reality of being as it resonates with the negation of being. Here, we unearth in Tillich's thinking yet another triadic construction based upon two polar forces and a unifying principle. It reiterates the triadic construction found in the divine life. This requires further explanation.

Tillich wishes to show that life deals with a paradox: in so far as life can only be understood in relation to death, the meaning of life incorporates both being and the negation of being. Life has contained within itself its own negation (death). The paradox at the heart of life is, how can life affirm itself through its own negation? This paradox, however, is not new to us, for we have encountered it in the divine life. We saw that the divine moves away from itself whilst remaining within itself.⁴⁸ What we have at the creaturely level is simply a reiteration of the same paradox.

Just as in the divine life, Tillich provides a unifying principle, so too, in creaturely life, there is a unifying principle: the reality of being. However, this unifying principle is qualitatively different from that found in the divine life. Spirit is the principle in the divine life that *creatively* unifies the two polar forces by working through them to bring them into alignment within the divine life. The reality of being however, should be regarded as a unifying principle that lacks the creative

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.12.

⁴⁸ See p.21 above.

power to align the polar forces it embraces. It is unifying in so far as it accommodates the dialectical dynamic between the polar forces of being and non-being, but it is unable to convert the tension generated between them into a creative dynamic. In other words, the reality of being allows us to understand the dialectical nature of being but it does not, as it stands in itself, allow us creatively to overcome it. It requires the Spirit principle, the creative principle of God, to imbue it before the reality of being can itself operate in a creative way.⁴⁹

Thus, death represents the restricting principle of life. Without death, life would have no constraint. It would be potential, un-harnessed and undirected. Death symbolises the existential state of every creature. Life as the polarity of death symbolises the essential state of every creature, the power to be. Life, then, as it incorporates death in its own definition, symbolises the dialectical relationship between essential being and existential being. Life, as it incorporates death, is the creaturely experience of the dialectical relationship between the polar forces of essential and existential being.

Let us return to our original question: what is the connection between life and death on the one hand, and essential and existential being on the other? We can say that life and death are the ways in which the creature experiences the dialectical dynamic between the polar forces of essential and existential being. Life, incorporating death in itself, on the one hand, expresses the power of being and, on the other, expresses the constraint of that power. In this regard, life and death are existential manifestations of the dialectical tension that takes place at the ontological level between essential and existential being.

However, life and death are not simply expressions of a force. They are also an integral part of an ongoing process, namely, the process of divine emanation and return. The actualisation of the polarities of power and structure happens in the life and death of the creature. Thus, creaturely existence influences the way in which

⁴⁹ See p.67 below.

the divine life is actualised. The creature is not merely a puppet moving according to divine laws; rather, the way in which the divine returns to itself is determined by the way in which the life of the creature is lived. In this regard, existence provides the vehicle through which the actualisation of being is worked out.

Thus, the relation between life and death on the one hand, and essential and existential being on the other, depicts the resonance between divine and creaturely life that Tillich expresses through his method of correlation. His whole theological system revolves around the appreciation of the relationship between the divine and the creature - a relationship of mutual participation.

Tillich uses the term *ontological structure of being* to explain the dynamic structure underpinning creaturely existence. Through this structure, he connects the divine life with that of the creature and shows how the forces of the divine life are present in every aspect of life, from the inorganic to the human realms. Furthermore, through it, he shows how the divine forces work dialectically through the basic ontological polarity of *self* and *world*, in order to bring about the actualisation of creaturely potential. This, in turn, brings about the actualisation of the potential of being itself. Let us now consider what Tillich means by the polarity of *self* and *world*.

The Self-World Correlation

Tillich suggests that the ontological question, "*what is being itself?*" presupposes the subject that asks the question, and the object about which the question is asked, i.e. the ontological structure of being presupposes the presence of subject and object.⁵⁰ He goes on to suggest that the subject/object structure itself presupposes a structure consisting of the dialectical relation between self and world. Let us consider how he arrives at this.

⁵⁰ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, p.164.

Tillich argues that talk about self requires the capacity to stand apart, in some way, from self. I do not know who I am if I exist in isolation. To use an analogy, if I live in a forest and never venture from it, how do I know that I live in a forest? In a similar vein, Tillich argues that the knowledge of self comes from self-reflection, which requires an object upon which the self can project, in order to gain the reflection. He suggests that the object for the self is the world, i.e. that in which the self participates and, at the same time, retires from in the process of reflection. Only human beings can have a world because only we have the capacity for self-awareness,⁵¹ provided through our ability to reason.⁵² Humanity turns environment into world by means of reason, which imbues the environment with meaning and structure. The structure provided through reason functions both to centre the individual and to make the world a structured whole.⁵³

Tillich goes on to describe the way in which the individual becomes centred and the world becomes a structured whole by means of this basic self-world correlation. To do this, he breaks down the ontological structure further by discussing three sets of ontological elements that operate within the basic structure.

The Ontological Elements of Being

Tillich sees life as a dynamic process in which potential is made actual. Actualisation is achieved in a dynamic rhythm derived from that of the divine life: the rhythm consists of three phases: self-identity, self-alteration and the return to one's self. We have already referred to these phases in the divine life of emanation and return within divine unity. Because being is rooted in that life, being itself is comprised of the same three phases.

⁵¹ Ibid., pp.168-171.

⁵² Ibid., pp.81,82.

⁵³ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, p.171-172.

Tillich goes on to suggest that life has three functions or three purposes: *self-integration*, *self-creation* and *self-transcendence*,⁵⁴ and these Tillich refers to as the ontological elements of being. Life has a three-fold purpose that is achieved through the three-phased rhythm of the dynamic forces that underpin it. The rhythm is the ontological structure of being that drives life toward the fulfilment of its three purposes. This idea evokes a sense of dynamic analogous to the forces of the sea, which drive the ebb and flow of the tide and determine the nature and power of the waves on the shore. The force is hidden within, behind and under that which manifests it. What we see on the shore are the tide and the waves, not the forces that drive them. Equally, the ontological structure of being is, for Tillich, hidden behind, within and under life, and life is driven by it to fulfil the three functions of *self-integration*, *self-creation* and *self-transcendence*. Let us now discuss in detail the nature of the three functions of life.

The Individual and the Centring Dynamic

Self-integration is the first function, or purpose of life, brought about by a dialectical process present in life.

The human being develops through the rhythm of the ontological structure: a person lives in a state of constant movement from self-identity to self-alteration, back to self.⁵⁵ This movement is made possible by the polar forces of life, which, for the individual, are expressed in terms of the polar forces of *individualisation* and *participation*.⁵⁶ Tillich argues that there is a constant struggle between one's desire to be an individual and one's need to be part of a group. This reiterates the self-world correlation that underscores the functions of the ontological elements. He traces the inevitability of this tension back to the instinctive human drive to actualise oneself. He suggests that this instinct drives the human being to draw everything in to itself and to have everything for itself. However, because the

⁵⁴ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, pp.30–32.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.30.

⁵⁶ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, pp.174–178.

human being is a social creature, what restricts this drive is the presence of another human being. If one is to actualise one's humanity fully, it is necessary to recognise the humanity of another because only by so doing can one's own full humanity be acknowledged and therefore, actualised. Only by using the eyes of another may we see who we really are. Tillich claims that this is what makes humanity a moral creature.⁵⁷

Thus, our drive to actualise ourselves is restricted by our need to be with others. Our social structure challenges and harnesses our drive for self-fulfilment. Equally, there would be no social structure without the drive. Here we see, once again, the dialectical dynamic that is characteristic of Tillichian theology. The polar force of individualisation (the expression of dynamis at the individual level) is in dialectical relation to the polar force of participation (the expression of *energeia* at the individual level).

Tillich goes on to suggest that through the tension the individual works through the rhythmical phases of the ontological structure (i.e. self-identity - self-alteration – return-to-self): as a group participant, the needs of the self are surrendered to the values of the greater organism. This would represent the self-alteration phase of the ontological rhythm. However, the process of self-integration requires the experience of being a participant to be integrated with the experience of being a self. When this is achieved, the individual enters the return-to-self phase of the ontological rhythm.

The process of self-integration represents a centring dynamic. That is to say, through this process the individual becomes increasingly centred and integrated.⁵⁸ The rhythm of self-identity, through self-alteration, back to self is expressed in a circular movement. With regard to self-integration, this function of life corresponds

⁵⁷ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*.3, pp.38,40.

⁵⁸ For a deeper appreciation of Tillich's understanding of 'centring', see pp.66,67, below.

to the self-identity phase of the ontological rhythm and it works through the fundamental self-world correlation.⁵⁹

One question remains unanswered at this stage: What is it that turns dialectical tension between polar forces into a creative integration of the self? The key to this lies in the spiritual dimension present in the life process. This dimension is of such pivotal significance for Tillich's theology that it would be inappropriate to discuss its role in the process of self-integration without having provided a detailed analysis of it first. It is necessary, therefore, to refrain from referring to the dimension of the spirit at this stage, even though it leaves this important question unanswered temporarily. Once again, we see the closely interrelated nature of Tillich's key concepts, and it is hoped that the reader appreciates the need to circumambulate them, in order not to destroy their interrelatedness through excessive analytical dissection.

Culture and the Horizontal Dynamic

The second function of life is *self-creation*. This function builds upon the first, self-integration, which was concerned with the centring of the individual. This is achieved by the perpetual integration of the tension generated by the polar forces of individualisation and participation present in the life of the individual. The individual develops a moral sense through this tension and the greater the integration of the individual, the greater the sense of morality.

Tillich then discusses the individual from the perspective of the society in which s/he lives, developing the idea of the social need of the individual. One's individuality is expressed within the context of society. Equally, the more involved in society one becomes, the greater the degree of personal integration. In other words, individuality needs society, in order to find expression.⁶⁰ Once again, the resonance between the basic ontological polar forces of dynamis and energeia is

⁵⁹ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, p.30.

⁶⁰ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, pp.181-182.

displayed. In the first function of life, the polar forces are expressed in terms of the dialectical dynamic between individualisation and participation; in the second function, Tillich refers to them in terms of *dynamics* and *form*.

The second function focuses upon culture rather than the individual. However, an awareness that culture emerges out of the collective of individuals is very much present here, reiterating, once again, the self-world correlation, underlying the way in which the ontological elements function. In this function, culture accommodates life as it drives horizontally toward the new.⁶¹ Whereas in the first function of life, the emphasis was upon the maintenance of the self (i.e. the self-identity phase of the basic ontological rhythm), in the second phase, emphasis is upon self-alteration (the movement away-from-self phase). As self-alteration predominates, life moves toward the new. Thus, the dynamic in this function is horizontal.⁶² However, Tillich insists that such a movement is only possible if it is based upon the first function of life, the centring function. Self-alteration may only be creative if the dynamics of self-integration perpetuate within it.⁶³

We begin to see how the first and second functions of life interrelate. Tillich insists upon the presence of the centring function within the second function, so that the horizontal movement of life, indicated by the second function, is a centred horizontal movement. At the same time, the centring movement of the first function depends as much upon the second function as does the second upon the first. It is within culture that the individual finds self-expression. The more involved in groups the individual becomes, the more fully integrated s/he becomes. Thus, self-integration is an ongoing process that becomes more refined as culture develops. Equally, culture is able to develop only through this ongoing process. Once again, can we see the idea of resonance and the correlation between self and world in Tillich's theology.

⁶¹ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, p.30, 31.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.31.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.31.

Cultural expression drives toward the new by following the same pattern observed in the first function of life. The dialectical dynamic between dynamics and form provides the tension through which the self grows. Self-growth is what Tillich means by the term *self-creation*. *Dynamics* refers to the power to make actual. *Form* is what makes the power actual. Growth is a dynamic, a power, a potential. But growth, as with any potential, needs form because form is “what makes a thing what it is”.⁶⁴

The drive toward the new means a breaking through old forms and this, in turn, implies a moment of chaos. Tillich speaks of the chaotic aspect of creativity when discussing the second function of life.⁶⁵ For him, the moment of chaos is a critical point, the point at which life may resist creation and fall back into the old, or the point where life may destroy itself in its attempt to reach the new form.⁶⁶ This would be the negation of life in its horizontal movement and, as the negation, it is an integral part of the process of the actualisation of life. Alternatively, through the chaos of the crisis there may be the creative acceptance of the new, which is what Tillich means by self-creation. As with the process of self-integration, the question as to what it is that determines whether or not there is a creative growth can only be answered with reference to the dimension of the spirit and, therefore, must remain unanswered until a detailed discussion of this dimension has been undertaken.

Religion and the Vertical Dynamic

The third function of life is *self-transcendence*. Here, the movement is not of a circular nature, as in the first function of life, nor of a horizontal nature, as in the second, but is of a vertical nature.⁶⁷ It corresponds to the return-to-self phase of the basic ontological rhythm. Self-transcendence is born out of the dialectical tension between the polar forces of *freedom* and *destiny*.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.50.

⁶⁵ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, pp. 50,51: “...there is a moment of ‘chaos’ between the old and the new form, a moment of no-longer-form and not-yet-form.”

⁶⁶ Ibid., p.51.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.31.

Tillich points out that self-transcendence takes place in all the functions of life: in the first function, transcendence of the self takes place in the process of self-integration. Likewise, in the second function, self-creation is transcendence at the horizontal level.⁶⁸ However, the self-transcendence that takes place in the third function of life is qualitatively different from the previous two: the third function of life is concerned with the transcendence of finitude itself.

Just as the first function focuses upon the self-identity phase of the ontological rhythm, and the second upon the self-alteration phase, so the third function necessarily focuses upon the return-to-self phase. This is the self-transcending phase, where being reaches its full actualisation. If we refer to the divine life, it is the phase in which the divine takes the creature back into itself. In creaturely terms, it is the phase in which the creature reaches out for the divine and comes to understand its finitude in terms of the infinite. In divine terms, it is the phase in which the divine life is fulfilled through the creature. This is the point of crescendo in Tillich's theology. It is the point at which the correlation between Creator and creature becomes most powerful. The creature reaches out to God and God takes the creature in to itself. It is the point at which the divine is recognised by the creature as Creator. Tillich describes this crescendo in the following way:

Man is the mirror in which the relation of everything finite to the infinite becomes conscious.⁶⁹

Tillich explains that the self-transcendence of life is the pointing toward the sublime,⁷⁰ the majestic; it is the movement toward greatness, the movement beyond oneself and, therefore, the movement of finite life beyond itself toward the infinite. In the third stage, the movement finds expression in religion. Religious traditions are the creature's attempt to go beyond finitude and to commune with that which

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.31.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.87.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p.31.

lies beyond. The expression of dynamis at this level is *freedom* and that of energeia is *destiny*.

The third function of life does not suggest a movement away from life itself and an escape toward the divine. On the contrary, life transcends itself within life by pointing to that which goes beyond life. This is only paradoxical if it is assumed that what is beyond has no connection with life. We have already learned this not to be the case. For Tillich, there is an intimate connection between divine and finite life. Life transcends itself by recognising that in which it is grounded, namely, the ground of being itself. For that reason, self-transcendence is not to be conceived as a movement up and away from self, but as a movement up and down through the depths of self.⁷¹ That is what Tillich intends when he depicts the third function of life as vertical movement. He wishes us to see that which goes beyond in the sense of that which embraces us rather than in the sense of that which escapes us. The vertical depicts distance, yes, in terms of looking beyond, but it also depicts intimacy, in terms of looking down through our depths. It evokes a sense of the smallness of creaturely life being cocooned in infinity rather than being separated from it. Just as the cocoon is inevitably larger than that which it houses, so too, the infinite goes beyond the finite that dwells within it.

However, let us guard against too much dependence upon spatial analogies when speaking about the relation of the divine or the infinite to the finite. Tillich does not speak in spatial or temporal terms when he refers to vertical movement, but speaks symbolically of the qualitative distance and the qualitative intimacy of the divine relation to the creature. There is no denial of life or attempted escape from it in the transcendence of life. On the contrary, the relation between the divine and the creature is worked out in the very fabric of life. Thus, the third function is the affirmation of life through the affirmation of that which goes beyond it. Religion, then, as the transcendence of life, is the creaturely recognition of the divine involvement in existence.

⁷¹ Paul Tillich, *The Meaning of Health* (Chicago, Exploration Press, 1984), p.200.

So, what is the precise relationship between the two previous functions of life and the third? Tillich explains that, once again, there is a resonating relationship. The first two functions build up to the third: through the process of self-integration and self-creation, there is a movement toward that which lies beyond life. Without self-awareness and self-growth, the creature would not be capable of searching for that which lies beyond finitude. At the same time, however, the first two functions may only be effected as a result of the third. Self-integration and self-creation are possible because of the presence of the divine in life. Before we can fully understand this, let us be reminded of the principles involved in the process of the divine life.

We learned earlier that the divine life consists of three principles: Power, Structure and Spirit. The dialectical character of the relationship between the first two polar forces is unified in and through the third principle. The third, then, is not simply another principle that stands apart from the other two, but that which makes sense of the dialectic of the polar forces. It functions to provide the unification that is God. Thus, it can be said that Spirit works in and through the polar forces of Power and Structure as the unifying principle.

Tillich applies exactly the same formula to his three functions of life. The dialectic between the polar forces of the first function of life is unified, not by self-integration, but by the dimension of spirit channelled through the third function of life.⁷² The unifying function of the spirit results in self-integration. Equally, in the second function of life, the polar forces of dynamics and form are unified by the dimension of spirit, which, again, is channelled through the third function of life.⁷³ The result of the imbuing of spirit is self-creation. Finally, the dialectic between the polar forces of the third function of life, under the dimension of spirit, results in self-transcendence. In other words, for Tillich, the third function of life opens the channel for the divine Spirit to flow through and into all three functions of life.

⁷² Tillich uses *spirit* with a lower case *s* when speaking of the dimension of spirit in existence and *Spirit* with an upper case *S* when speaking of the principle pertaining to the divine life.

⁷³ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, p.96.

Without this, there would be no transcending element in any of the functions, for the transcending elements are expressions of the unifying principle of Spirit that flows from the divine life itself. The Spirit represents the symbolic blood of the divine life flowing into the arteries of creaturely life.

The symbolic flowing of divine blood, however, should not be conceived in terms of active God and passive creature. Just as in the body of any living being, blood alone does not give life, so too, divine blood requires creaturely form for the blood to perform its function. Only through the total function of life, which Tillich breaks down into three types (i.e. self-integration, self-creation and self-transcendence), can the channel for the Spirit be opened. The third function of life depends upon the previous two, and vice versa. The resonance here is reiterated in the relation of Spirit to creaturely life. The third function of life is not to be perceived as the best or final function. Such terminology creates a sense of distinction between the third and the previous two functions. There is no causal relationship here, but one of resonance and synchronicity. It is resonance born out of tension, and through each stage of the resonance there is a magnification, a surge, a swell, a crescendo. The swell reaches its peak and hiatus in the third function, where the channel for Spirit is opened and the tension within the functions of life is transcended through the flow of Spirit.

Perhaps this can be understood more clearly with an analogy. Sitting by the seashore watching a rough sea, one is struck by the power that drives it. A wave forms as the manifestation of the hidden forces of the sea. As it continues to build up with tremendous power, it reaches a point beyond which it can build no more and so collapses with a great sense of release. This release exhibits a change in the expression of the forces from tension to dynamic forward movement. The energy that was released in the flow is now gathered in the ebb in anticipation of the next great surge of tension that is manifested in the next huge wave.

The analogy of the sea perhaps helps us to feel Tillich's sense of tension with regard to life and sense of magnification that he expresses through his interpretation

of the three functions of life. It helps us to understand the way in which the third function brings life to its hiatus by being the channel for that which turns tension into flow, namely, the Spirit. It also helps us to see that the driving of life beyond itself takes place within itself: the flow of the sea is not a running away of the sea from itself; it is rather part of the process of the dynamics of the sea. So too, the transcendence of life is not a running way from life, but a transformation within it.

However, the analogy fails to demonstrate the resonating relationship between divine and creaturely life, which is such a vital part of Tillich's theology. The hiatus in creaturely life is possible only through the involvement of the divine in its life. Only through the Spirit does the transformation of creaturely life come. Equally though, only through the tension of creaturely life does the desire and drive for transformation appear. When this tension reaches its peak, the imbuing of the Spirit into the life of the creature brings about transformation.

The sea analogy also fails to depict the symbolism of Tillich's language and the need to understand the process of life in both categorical and non-categorical terms. Language is spatial and temporal, substantial and causal in nature. Thus, when it is used, there is the inevitable problem that the ideas or experience for which language is the expression, will be understood in terms of time, space, causality and substance. The problem with the sea as an analogy for Tillich's understanding of creaturely life in relation to the divine is that, while creaturely life is subject to the categories of time, space, causality and substance, the divine life is not. Therefore, Tillich has to find a way of relating the creature, which is under the conditioning influence of the categories, to the Creator, which is not subject to the same conditions. His solution is to use categorical language, the only language that we have at our disposal, in a symbolic way.

Through the ontological structure of being and the elements that reside within the structure, Tillich explains how the creature reaches out to that which lies beyond existence. It is able to do so because the creature is cradled in the divine life itself. For this reason, the dynamic forces that drive God away from God-self are the very

forces that drive the creature beyond itself. Tillich uses the method of correlation to depict this synchrony between the Creator and the creature and to show that through it, the Creator participates in the creature as Sustainer and the creature participates in the Creator as the sustained. This resonance brings about the actualisation of being, a process conducted through life and one that is as vital for the Creator as it is for the creature. The actualisation of being is an eternal requirement, which takes place within the world of time, space, causality and substance.

Section Three: The Categories of Existence

So far, we have discussed the dynamics of the divine life and those of creaturely life. We have learned that Tillich describes creaturely life as the mixture of essential and existential elements of being. As such, life is the process in which being is actualised, a process driven by the tension generated by the polar forces of divine power and structure. In contrast, there is no tension in the divine life between the polar forces because of the unifying function of the third principle, Spirit.

Existence is a process in which the two polar forces of power and structure⁷⁴ resist each other in the absence of their unifying principle of Spirit. Their mutual resistance represents mutual negation. Thus, being in existence is threatened by its negation, non-being. The creature in existence lives in the tension between being and non-being. Its very life is threatened by the negation of life, namely death. In every aspect of life, the expression of being is accompanied by its negation, and the tension of these poles characterises existence. Life is thus, a mixture of being and non-being.

Despite acknowledging the distinction between the lives of the divine and creature in terms of the unity of the three principles in the divine life and their separation in creaturely life, we have not yet fully considered the cause of this. The purpose of

⁷⁴ 'Structure' is also defined as 'meaning' in Tillichian theology.

the current section is to explore this matter and then to consider precisely how creaturely life is connected to that of the divine.

Life is lived under the conditions of time, space, causality and substance. Tillich refers to these as the categories of existence that condition every living thing. According to Tillich, they are the structures that surround and penetrate finite being and finite thinking.⁷⁵ Self-awareness is derived from our existence in a temporal, spatial, causal and substantial form and is based upon movement away from self. Movement from and to presupposes the conditions of time and space. It also presupposes substance; a sense of I as distinct from not-I. Furthermore, it presupposes causality; the movement away from self toward that which is not self triggers an awareness of self.

The categories, then, “are the forms in which the mind grasp[s] and shape[s] reality”.⁷⁶ As reason is the means by which we comprehend and act in reality, it is also bound by the categories. To speak in a reasonable way is to speak through the categories. However, the categories are not only the forms of reason; they are the forms of being itself, present in everything that has being. We have already learned that that which *has* being is finitude. Therefore, to say that the categories are forms of everything that exists is to say that they are forms of finitude. Hence, they embrace the affirmative and negative elements of finitude and are the means by which being is both affirmed and negated.

The basic ontological structure of being presupposes the self-world dialectic. In Tillich’s words, “self and environment determine each other.”⁷⁷ In every experience there is something that ‘has’ and something that is ‘had’.⁷⁸ That is to say, self-relatedness implies participation in that which is not self (i.e. world) and the bringing of the experience of that participation back to the self. Thus, life and

⁷⁵ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, p.165.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.192.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.170.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.169.

the process of actualisation is one of perpetual participation and return. There is, therefore, also perpetual affirmation and negation. On the one hand, participation in the world implies a movement away from self (i.e. a denial of self and an affirmation of world), and on the other hand, individualisation implies a return to one's self and a movement away from world (i.e. a denial of world and an affirmation of self). In other words, there is a positive and a negative expression of being from the "inside", i.e. from the perspective of the self, and from the "outside", i.e. from the perspective of the world, and each expression is shaped by the categories.⁷⁹ Each category expresses at the same time a union with being and with non-being (that is what is expressed through the affirmation and negation of the world), and a union with anxiety and with courage (that is what is expressed through the affirmation and negation of the self). What does Tillich mean here?

The categories have a relation to being and non-being because they are forms of finitude that are integral to every finite thing. They have a relation to being because finitude participates in being, and to non-being because finitude also participates in non-being. Finitude is finite being. Being is made finite by the limitation imposed by non-being. Finitude is also rooted in the basic ontological structure of being, which, as we have seen, is made up of the basic self-world correlation. Thus, the categories are integral to finitude as it is expressed as self and as it is expressed as world. The self-pole of the correlation represents the centring principle of being: only a self in relation to the world can be centred: we have seen the need for the two poles in the centring process in our analysis of the first set of ontological structural elements. Equally, the world-pole of the correlation represents the structured wholeness of being: the world is whole when it consists of centred selves. We have seen that the movement toward wholeness takes place throughout the dynamic dialectic of all three sets of ontological elements. Therefore, what is discerned through the self-world correlation is the actualisation of being from the 'inside' (i.e. from the perspective of the self) and from the 'outside' (i.e. from the perspective of the world). The categories allow us to express the process of actualisation of being

⁷⁹ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, p.193.

from the “inside” and from the “outside”. They express this process in both negative and positive terms with regard to both the self and the world.

For Tillich, with regard to the world, time is the “central category of finitude”⁸⁰ and has both a negative and a positive element. In negative terms, everything that is temporal is transitory. The present is simply a boundary that moves between past and future. In this light, the present can be seen as illusory and so if to be means to be present, then non-being conquers being.⁸¹ In positive terms on the other hand, the movement characteristic of time illustrates its creative aspect.

With regard to self, time, in so far as it is transitory, generates anxiety. We recognise that our own lives are as transitory as everything else experienced in life and so suffer the anxiety of knowing that we must die. However, the correlate to this anxiety is the courage to affirm the ‘now’ of life. It is the present that is real to us and it is through the present that we are able to affirm the creativity of life.

Tillich regards space as being implied in the present. “Time creates the present through its union with space”.⁸² One can be in the present, only if one has a space in which to be. Again, like time, the category of space has both negative and positive elements. The space that a finite being has is never his/her own. There is no permanent home for any finite being, for we are mortal. We live in a house, or a region for a limited period of time. For that reason, what we call ours is not ours permanently: it may be ours for the duration of our lives, but after we have gone, our space will be taken up by others. This sense of not having a final space generates anxiety for the creature. Thus, the desire for security is a characteristic of creaturely existence: just as an animal will fight to protect its domain, so will the human being. Tillich argues that this need for security is present in every life-process.⁸³ Out of this fundamental insecurity comes the positive element. The

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.193.

⁸¹ Ibid., p.193.

⁸² Ibid., p.194.

⁸³ Ibid., p.195.

creature learns to affirm the space it has at present. There is an acceptance of the transitory nature of the space, out of which comes courage to enjoy its presence there. This acceptance is itself a kind of security. Thus time and space are ambiguous because they express both being and non-being in their positive and negative elements.

Causality likewise expresses being and non-being. By looking for that which precedes a thing or event, causality points to the power of being and so affirms being. However, the fact that it is possible to point to that which precedes something or some event is also to show that the power is derived from something other than the event or thing itself. Thus, the powerlessness of the thing or event is illustrated and this is the negative element of the category of causality.

Substance, the fourth category, points to the unchangeable that underlies all that changes. It refers to the stability underpinning the "flux of appearances".⁸⁴ As with the other three categories, substance has positive and negative elements. Every change that is experienced in existence generates anxiety about the loss of substance. This anxiety is most profound at the approach of death, when the individual has to face up to the complete loss of self. This is the anxious element of substance. This anxiety however, is balanced by courage that is found in the acceptance of the inevitability of the loss of substance.

So we have seen that the categories, for Tillich, are the forms encapsulating both the internal and the external world of the human being. As a result, our understanding of reality is determined by time, space, causality and substance and, as such, is ambiguous. The ambiguity is derived from the fact that the categories are the categories of finitude and so relate not simply to being, but to non-being as well, for finitude means being in relation to non-being. In other words, the categories are

⁸⁴ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, p.197.

ontological in nature;⁸⁵ they are the forms that underpin existence. Life is, therefore, inevitably ambiguous.

Earlier, we saw the way in which finite life participates in the divine life. It is necessary now to consider the following question: If the categories belong to and underpin finitude and if humanity is unable to escape them, how is it possible for the creature to participate in the divine life? In other words, what is it that connects the existential creature with God? To answer these questions it is necessary to consider Tillich's understanding of the nature of reason and logos.

Reason and the Categories

We have seen in Tillich's description of the three Principles of the divine life that Logos functions to give meaning and structure to the creative power of the Godhead.⁸⁶ We have also seen the way in which finitude participates in the divine life. The three divine principles are present in the life of the finite being; the rhythm of the life of being itself provides the rhythm for the life of the finite being. In terms of the structure of finitude, then, the Logos principle of being itself is present in finite being. Tillich recognises its presence through the structure of reason in finite being. Reason links the structure of finitude with the structure of being itself and is part of the very fabric of being.

Tillich draws a careful distinction between *ontological reason* and *epistemological reason* and it is to a consideration of each that we must now turn.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.164.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p.251.

Ontological Reason

Tillich defines *ontological reason* as the structuring principle of being, in which all that is finite participates.⁸⁷ In so far as it is derived from the divine life, ontological reason is Logos. However, in so far as it is Logos that participates in finite being, it is Logos that is separated from the other two principles of Power and Spirit that make up the divine life. It is, therefore, wrong to suggest that ontological reason is identical to Logos in the divine life. Unlike ontological reason, Logos in the divine life is part of a trinitarian unity. Nevertheless, ontological reason is derived from Logos, and therefore, from the divine trinity. Tillich thus, equates ontological reason with what he describes as *logos*, not *Logos*. By using the lower case, Tillich wishes to highlight the essential difference between Logos and logos and, at the same time, by using the same word, he establishes their essential connection. Ontological reason is Logos embraced by time, space, causality and substance. It is Logos in separation from its unity with Power and Spirit. It is Logos searching for reunion.

Thus, ontological reason is derived from, but also distinct from Logos. The ontological structure of being is derived from Logos, but with a character of its own determined by its participation in both being and non-being. Unlike the Logos principle of the divine life, ontological reason participates in the conditions of finitude: it is determined by the four categories of time, space, causality and substance and therefore, operates within a frame of ambiguity. Tillich states:

...reason, if actualised in self and world, is dependent on the destructive structures of existence and the saving structures of life.⁸⁸

Ontological reason is both the structure of the world and the structure of the mind. In other words, just as the categories influence both the external and the internal world of the creature, so does ontological reason. Because of this resonance

⁸⁷ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, pp.171-172.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.74.

between self and world, it is possible for the mind to grasp and shape reality. By establishing this, Tillich avoids the trap of solipsism when he speaks of the mind grasping and shaping reality. Reality is as much mind as it is world. That is not to say that reality is all in the mind. On the contrary, because of the resonance between the internal reality of the self and the external reality of the world, when we speak of the mind, we speak of reality because we speak of mind as it resonates with the world. Equally, when we speak of world we speak, again, of reality because we speak of world as it resonates with mind. This is not solipsism. For Tillich, the self cannot exist without the world and neither can the world without the self.

If we forget the basic ontological polarity of self and world, then we may accuse Tillich of solipsism. But if we do, we must equally accuse ourselves of misunderstanding him at a fundamental level. The self-world polarity is a resonating one, not a mutually exclusive one, although mutual resistance is an essential component of that resonance. Self and world should be regarded as mirror images not of a static nature, but of a thoroughly dynamic kind. It is not that we see the same image through each, but that the same dynamic process is reflected in each and when the one looks at the other, something is added to the consciousness of that process.

Epistemological Reason

Tillich describes *Epistemological reason*, technical reason, as an instrument for the expression of ontological reason.⁸⁹ It is “the knowledge of knowing”,⁹⁰ which contrasts with ontological reason, “the knowledge of being”.⁹¹ Epistemology is concerned to find “the means for ends”.⁹² It is properly the tool for ontological reason and when it is aligned with the latter, there is harmonious accord between

⁸⁹ Ibid., p.73.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p.71.

⁹¹ Ibid., p.71.

⁹² Ibid., p.73.

them. As long as epistemological reason is aligned with the logos of ontological reason, the searching for means for ends will be done in the service of God. However, if epistemological reason becomes severed from ontological reason, we have a situation in which the power to search is unleashed from its controlling structure. Tillich asserts:

Technical reason...dehumanises man if it is separated from ontological reason. And, beyond this, technical reason itself is impoverished and corrupted if it is not continually nourished by ontological reason.⁹³

Technical reason, which, unlike ontological reason, can never know the nature of things, operates upon presuppositions that lie beyond its ability to grasp. If both types of reason are separated, technical reason operates in ignorance of the presuppositions upon which it depends.

The great discoveries of the nineteenth century aroused a sense of confidence in the human ability to understand. Scientific discoveries showed humanity its power to control its world. This great awakening is an important period in world history. However, Tillich highlights the danger of going too far in our assumptions that the process of reasoning can find solutions to all of our problems and questions. It can only work for us if it acts as a channel for ontological reason. We must never forget our own alignment not simply in relation to our world, but in relation to that which created, sustains and directs us. Only ontological reason may keep our connection with being itself and so to imagine that epistemological reason has the creative source of power wholly within itself is to run the risk of severing our umbilical cord with the ground of our being. This is a threat that Tillich wishes us to guard against.⁹⁴

⁹³ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, p.73.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.72-74.

Thus, reason in finitude is present in both the ontological and the epistemological sense. Ontological reason provides us with our understanding of who we are, while epistemological reason equips us with the capacity to realise our full potential through the acquisition of skills. As long as the ends to the means are in relation to God, then, the actualisation of being will proceed through technical reason. However, as finite being is being in existence, it is being in ambiguity. The alignment so necessary for a harmonious resonance between creaturely life and divine life is threatened at every moment by the negation of being. This threat is as present in the relationship between ontological and epistemological reason as it is in every other aspect of finite life. The threat of a separation between the two is an example of the effect that the threat of non-being has in existence.

Reason and the Self-World Correlation

Tillich argues that humanity's capacity to think in a self-conscious way sets it apart from the rest of creaturely existence. This ability is derived from the logos structure of the mind, without which the human being would not be able to develop a sense of self because there would be no sense of world. In other words, without the logos structure of the mind, there would be no self-world correlation. Equally, without the self-world correlation, the logos dynamic would not operate in existence. Once again, resonance is the theme underlying Tillich's ideas. Let us be clear that we speak in terms of correlation between the self and world through *existential* logos. This is the logos present through the ontological structure of being: it is present in the form of ontological and epistemological reason. It is not the Logos of the divine life, for that is part of the trinitarian unity that is God. Existential logos is reason present in the world and in the mind. Tillich defines the former as *objective reason* and the latter as *subjective reason*. Thus, existential reason (or logos) consists of subjective and objective reason and by virtue of the basic dynamic ontological relationship between self and world, it is reason of a dynamic nature.

Essential and Existential Ontological Reason

Existential logos or reason, then, is the logos of finitude. Tillich, however, makes it clear that it is not totally severed from that which goes beyond existence. He speaks of *essential reason*, namely, reason imbued with the logos of being. Here, he speaks in terms of ontological reason rather than technical reason and he seems to suggest that a distinction must be made not only between ontological reason and epistemological reason, but also within ontological reason itself: there is existential ontological reason, discussed above, and then there is essential ontological reason, which Tillich equates with the content of revelation.

Essential ontological reason is imbued with the logos of being. That is not to say that it is equated with Logos: Tillich would never suggest this because he is acutely aware of the sheer qualitative difference between divine life and finite life. Instead, he attempts to mark out a route through which Logos filters into existence, which leads him inevitably into the depiction of a form of hierarchical order of the different forms of reason. It is most probable that this was not a deliberate intention on his part; in his discussion of the multi-dimensional unity of life, he deliberately offers a language that does not smack of hierarchy.⁹⁵ However, in his depiction of the relationship of essential ontological reason and existential ontological reason, it is hard not to understand them in a hierarchical way. He would seem to suggest that the logos of being imbues essential ontological reason: it appears that the two are synonymous at this level. However, at the level of existential ontological reason, it would seem that the synonymity has been lost. As existence consists of a mixture of being and non-being, reason in existence cannot be an expression of pure being: it expresses non-being as well. Existential reason may point toward essential reason, but in view of its existential nature, it lacks the clarity of that from which it is derived.

As was noted earlier, it was probably not the intention of Tillich to suggest a hierarchical order, but his particular use of language perhaps made it inevitable. If

⁹⁵ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, p.15.

we use another type of imagery here, however, the hierarchical image dissipates, somewhat. It is possible to understand Tillich's ideas about the nature of the relationship between essential and existential reason in terms of *alignment*. Let us regard essential reason as being rational structure in total alignment with the power of being. In this light, existential reason is rational structure pulled out of alignment with the power of being by the clouding presence of non-being. It is confused by the disturbance generated by the negative force of non-being.

The idea of alignment perhaps helps us to appreciate Tillich's vision of the divine life. Perhaps when he speaks of the union of the trinitarian forces of Power, Structure and Spirit, he refers to the three principles in alignment, in harmonious union. Just as when the individual colours that make up a spectrum of light are aligned, there is the clarity of light, so too, when the three principles of the divine life are aligned, there is God. It would follow from this that existential being is that which is not aligned; the dynamic forces of being are pulled out of alignment by the negative forces of non-being. Thus, what is unified in the divine life is fragmented in finite life.⁹⁶

Reason in its existential form is thus reason limited by the categories of existence and clouded by the presence of the negative force of non-being. Existential reason is ambiguous. Life, as it participates in the rational structure of being, is ambiguous and consciousness of reality is ambiguous because of the limitations of reason in existence.

Tillich asserts, as we have seen, that the process of actualisation of being, which takes place in existence, does so through the dynamic correlation between self and world. A sense of self is possible only if one is able to stand apart from self. This is achieved only if there is a world which one can enter. At the same time, the ability to stand outside oneself requires the capacity for reflection. The rational structure of the mind makes this possible. Thus, if we consider the way in which

⁹⁶ The suggestion here is not that Tillich himself was consciously aware of such imagery, but that it can be invoked from his ideas and can help to shed light upon his theology.

the self-world correlation is expressed through the ontological structural elements of being, it is plain that the interplay of the polar forces is built upon the structure of reason. There would be no centring dynamic between the polar forces of individualisation and participation without the presence of reason because the sense of self in relation to world lies at the heart of that dynamic and the importance of reason in that fundamental polarity has already been demonstrated. To put things simply: if I cannot think reflectively, I can have no sense of self over against another being. Therefore, I am not able to be a centred participant in a group or to withdraw from the group in order to express my individuality. As the other polar elements of dynamics and form, freedom and destiny are built upon the fabric of the centring dynamic of the first set of polarities, the role of reason in the ontological structure of being, as expressed through the elements of that structure, can be seen to be pivotal.

However, there is something else that operates in the dialectical dynamic of the ontological structure, which has not yet been addressed. We have seen that reason provides the structure within which the actualisation of being can be realised in existence. We have not yet considered what it is that provides the drive for the dynamic. We have seen that the rhythm of the divine life is reiterated in finite life, but that is not sufficient to explain the powerful driving force that appears as a strong theme in Tillichian theology. So where are we to look in order to understand this driving dynamic? We must turn to his idea of *eros*.

Eros and the Categories

Tillich describes *eros* as the classical name for the inner dynamics by which life is driven toward fulfilment.⁹⁷ It is a quality of love that represents the drive toward value and is present in human passion and striving. He makes reference to Plato's appreciation of *eros* as that which drives the mind toward the true.⁹⁸ For Tillich,

⁹⁷ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, p.56.

⁹⁸ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, p.72.

eros is an energy that provides the movement of the inferior in terms of power and meaning toward the superior. It is desire “for the summum bonum” and passion for fulfilment.⁹⁹

Eros is the “urge toward the reunion of the separated”.¹⁰⁰ It is a dynamic of a wholly finite nature, for finitude is based upon the divine principles in separation and such separation generates the ambiguity of life in existence. This contrasts starkly with the unity of the divine life, from which finitude is derived and in which it is cradled. Eros is the urge for the reunion of those principles as they are in the divine life.

Eros, then, is a vital concept in Tillichian theology because it is derived from his appreciation of the relation of divine life to finite life. It is that dynamic in life that drives the creature to go beyond itself in search of the union that is not possible in existence. Eros is the driving force of reason in its ontological sense and, as such, permeates the very structure of existence to the core. We noted earlier that logos is Logos searching for reunion. Perhaps now we can appreciate the way in which the search is conducted: eros harnessed to the structure of logos is the vehicle by which the creature reaches beyond creaturely limitations.

As it is a quality of finite life, eros is also conditioned by the limitations of the categories and therefore, is subject to the ambiguities of existence. Eros is threatened at every moment by the negative forces of non-being, which distort it as it drives toward ultimate good.

Tillich cites as an example of the possible distortion of eros, the notion of concupiscence. This he defines as “the unlimited desire to draw the whole of reality into one’s self”.¹⁰¹ He argues that in such a state, the eros of the human being strives not for reunion, but to draw into oneself that which is not one’s own. There

⁹⁹ Ibid., p.281.

¹⁰⁰ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, p.137.

¹⁰¹ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 2, p.52.

is a seeking of one's own pleasure through the exploitation of other beings.¹⁰² In such a situation, the drive of eros in its distortion generates a vortex, in which the ego of the individual stands out of a moral relation to others and draws them into what s/he considers to be his/her world. This world however, is distorted because, by failing to recognise the humanity of those whom the individual draws in, s/he fails also to recognise his/her own. Thus, concupiscence expresses a collapse in the basic resonance between self and world.

Eros and Agape

Tillich suggests that the only way distortion of the power of eros can be overcome is by the alignment of eros with a love not conditioned by the categories, namely, by alignment with *agape*. For Tillich, "Love as agape is a creation of the Spiritual Presence which conquers the ambiguities of all other kinds of love."¹⁰³ In other words, just as Spirit is the uniting principle of God, so too, the involvement of the Spiritual Presence in finite life realigns that which is distorted by the ambiguities of existence. Agape is the expression in love of the principle of Spirit: through agape, the drive of eros may be realigned with the "summum bonum", for which it properly seeks.¹⁰⁴ Thus, it is through agape that eros may overcome the threat of non-being.

For Tillich, eros does not stand in conflict with agape. It is wrong to interpret eros as fleshly, selfish desire in opposition to the selfless agapeic love of God. Of course, eros can be selfish and apparently in conflict with agape, as we have seen in the example of concupiscence, but such conflict is only apparent: Eros cannot threaten agape. Just as there is a qualitative difference between finite life and that of the divine, so too, is there a similar difference between eros and agape. Equally however, just as finite life participates in that of the divine, so too, does eros participate in agape.

¹⁰² Ibid., p.54.

¹⁰³ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, p.137.

¹⁰⁴ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, p.281.

Apparent conflict occurs when eros is out of alignment with that in which it participates. The Nazi drive to exterminate the Jewish people would seem to provide sound grounds for arguing that eros stands in conflict with agape. Surely, the love of God found an equal counterpart in eros, if the atrocities of the Holocaust were allowed to take place? But such atrocities do not point toward the conflict between eros and agape because eros is derived from agape. Rather, such events occur when eros has become distorted, the effect of the ambiguities of finite life. When creaturely drive toward the summum bonum loses sight of that ultimate good, the drive goes wild. Just as epistemological reason must be directed by ontological reason in order for there to be a creative actualisation of potential within existence, so too, the drive of eros must be directed by the light of agape. Thus, Tillich states:

Eros and agape cannot contradict each other.¹⁰⁵

Eros is the dynamic in existence that drives the creature to seek the ultimate good and, as such, is a drive conditioned by the categories and made ambiguous by the dynamics of life. What authorises eros to drive toward the ultimate good is not an inherent quality of its own, but its derivation from, and subjection to the loving Spiritual presence of agape. There is a correlation between eros and agape: without agape, eros is directionless and so cannot drive toward the summum bonum. Equally, without the drive toward that ultimate good, the love of the divine could not be made actual. In so far as eros is subject to the threat of non-being, it is, at every moment, ambiguous. Its creative drive is threatened by the destructive forces of non-being, making eros volatile. However, through its correlation with agape, eros overcomes the negative forces and drives creatively toward the reunion of that which has been separated.

One question must be asked at this point: in what way is agape present in the life of the finite being? How is it possible for that which is beyond the limitations of the

¹⁰⁵ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 2, p.129.

categories to be involved in existence? This question will be answered, at least partially, in the next section.

Spirit and the Categories

Tillich defines humanity as “bearer of the spirit”¹⁰⁶ and describes spirit as the “unity of power and meaning”.¹⁰⁷ We have already encountered such a unity in the divine life, in which Tillich defines God as the unity of power and meaning. He goes on to state that God both *has* and *is* Spirit. Thus, Spirit is also defined as the unity of power and meaning. We may be forgiven therefore, if, at first glance, we assume that humanity, as the bearer of spirit, is the bearer of the divine. However, on closer inspection we see that humanity is not bearer of Spirit, but bearer of spirit. Once again, as with logos and Logos, Tillich uses upper and lower case to make a distinction between the divine and finite lives and at the same time, by using the same word, he draws our attention to the essential connection between them. This paradox of the distinction and yet connection between Spirit and spirit brings us back to one of the central questions of Tillich’s theology, referred to earlier, namely, how is it possible for the creature to participate in the divine life? Before we can address that question, it is necessary to examine precisely what Tillich means when he attributes the title *bearer of spirit* to humanity.

His notion of humanity as the bearer of spirit is derived from his understanding of the way in which all life exists in total interdependence, which he refers to as *the multi-dimensional unity of life*.¹⁰⁸ An examination of this term, therefore, is a necessary prerequisite for an examination of the term *spirit*.

¹⁰⁶ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, p.25.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.22.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.11-28.

The Multi-Dimensional Unity of Life

When Tillich speaks of existence and finite life, he has in his mind not simply the life of humanity, but of all that lives, from the inorganic to the human being. All categories of living things relate to each other and this he terms *the multi-dimensional unity of life*.

All encountered reality can be identified as belonging to different realms. A realm indicates a section of life in which a particular dimension is predominant.¹⁰⁹ He distinguishes several obvious dimensions: the inorganic, organic, psychological and spiritual. The criterion for establishing a dimension is revealed in the way in which time, space, causality and substance change under its predominance. He argues that things are not in time and space, but rather have a time and space.¹¹⁰

He suggests that when one dimension supercedes another, the categories of the preceding dimension are built upon. Thus, the multi-dimensional unity of life refers to the way in which everything in life contributes to, and is a part of the overall unity of life. It is an understanding that transcends the notion of fixed time and fixed space. Although subjection to the categories is universal for all living beings, their expression is by no means of a uniform nature.

Tillich defines life as the actualisation of potential.¹¹¹ In order to explain the process involved in this actualisation, he chooses terminology that presents the process of life as a unified whole. Deliberately, he chooses not to speak of the *levels* of existence, as he argues that this generates a sense of hierarchy, which tends toward a confrontational understanding of life: hierarchy suggests rank and rigidity, superior and inferior levels and thus, tends to deny the dynamic aspect of life. Instead, Tillich adopts the terms *realm* and *dimension*, as they provide a more flexible, dynamic and interrelated image.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p.16.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p.18.

¹¹¹ Ibid., pp.15-17.

A realm is a section in life in which a particular dimension predominates. He cites as examples the realms of vegetable, animal and history. What distinguishes one from another is the dimension of life that predominates in each. Tillich suggests that all dimensions are potentially present in each realm, but not all are actualised. There are many different dimensions, the most fundamental being the inorganic. This is the first condition for the actualisation of every dimension, the foundation dimension. Without it, according to Tillich, all realms would dissolve.¹¹² The second dimension, the organic, evolves out of the inorganic and predominates in the vegetable realm. However, the inorganic does not disappear. On the contrary, in the vegetable realm, the inorganic is still present but through evolution, a constellation of inorganic factors causes the dimension of the organic to find expression. Thus the vegetable realm is characterised by the predominance of the organic dimension, which evolves out of the inorganic. For this reason, Tillich argues that it is wrong to suggest that the organic is a dimension superior to that of the inorganic because without the latter the former would not have emerged. Neither is the realm of matter inferior to that of the vegetable. The realms are differentiated by the way the categories of time, space, causality and substance operate as the result of the predominance of a new dimension.

Tillich also wishes to guard against drawing too clear a distinction between realms. There is no clear delineation because of the evolutionary way in which they are born. The realms are too dynamic and perpetually evolving for it to be possible neatly to characterise all that exists into one realm or another. Instead, Tillich suggests that we can only speak in very broad terms. He argues that while it is perhaps defensible to state that the organic dimension predominates in the vegetable realm, at the same time, it must be acknowledged that it also predominates in parts of the animal realm. With some animals however, (for example, in monkey and ape species), it is the psychological dimension that can be seen to predominate. Out of the constellation of psychological factors emerges the dimension of the spirit, which

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p.19.

is predominant in the realm of history - the human realm.¹¹³ Although the psychic dimension begins to appear in the animal realm, it is not fully actualised until the historical realm, the realm of the human being. So, Tillich argues that the spiritual dimension predominates in the realm of humanity out of the constellation of psychic factors.

Important to remember here is the dynamic aspect of the dimensions and realms. Tillich lived in a period of history greatly influenced by the thinking of Darwin and his theory of evolution. Tillich acknowledges this theory when claiming that the predominance of a particular dimension is something that emerges over millions, if not billions of years. He says:

Billions of years may have passed before the inorganic realm permitted the appearance of objects in the organic dimension, and millions of years before the organic realm permitted the appearance of a being with language. Again, it took tens of thousands of years before the being with the power of language became the historical man whom we know as ourselves.¹¹⁴

In these words, Tillich emphasises that the spiritual dimension did not come to predominate with the appearance of the first homo-sapien. Rather, the psychic dimension had to evolve to such an extent that human psyche and historical circumstance were both ripe for the shift into a new dimension, namely, the spiritual. This is important because it is an illustration of the way in which Tillich regards the spiritual dimension to be part of the process of evolving consciousness that begins not simply with the first primitive human being, but with the inorganic dimension in the realm of matter. The dimension of the spirit has integral to it all other dimensions, but it adds to those dimensions by actualising what was only potential in them. Just like a set of Russian dolls, all dimensions are interlinked; the dimension of spirit is the product of the constellation of psychic factors, which, in

¹¹³ Ibid., p.21.

¹¹⁴ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, p.16.

turn, is the product of a constellation of organic factors, and so we go on until we reach the most basic, most fundamental dimension of the inorganic. The dimension of spirit is the actualisation of all that is potential in the inorganic dimension.

Once again, we see the idea of resonance in Tillich's understanding of the process of the actualisation of potential. The dimension of spirit resonates with that of the inorganic. There is mutual participation. If we consider in more detail how the dimension of the spirit comes to predominate in the realm of history, we learn that spirit is related to the psyche through the personal centre,¹¹⁵ which makes sense of the psychological material around us. Every thought is based upon what we sense and experience consciously and unconsciously. Without it, there would be no content for the thinking process. The personal centre is not the same as the psychological contents that it processes, although, at the same time, it is the centre for those contents, the integrating principle of the psyche.

When all psychological contents have been integrated into a whole, we can say that the contents have been transcended. Tillich calls this transcendence a manifestation of spirit. It is perhaps easy to see why he chooses the term *spirit* here, if we remind ourselves of his understanding of Spirit in the divine life, in which it is the unifying principle that integrates the opposition of the dynamics of power and structure in the divine life. It is the principle of divine creativity. In just the same way, spirit in the human being is the unifying principle. It is manifested in the unity of the personal centre. In Tillich's words:

If the dimension of the spirit dominates a life process, the psychological centre offers its own contents to the unity of the personal centre.¹¹⁶

In this sense, Tillich asserts that humanity is the bearer of spirit.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p.27.

¹¹⁶ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, p.27.

To summarise, we have seen that in Tillich's view, life is a united whole, comprised of different realms in which different dimensions predominate. No realm is superior to the others, although each builds upon the foundations laid by those that precede it. Humanity belongs to the historical realm, in which the dimension of spirit predominates. This is the dimension in which all that is potential in other realms is made actual. Humanity's role in this respect is expressed in the title, *bearer of spirit*. By virtue of the fact that the emergence of this dimension stands dependent upon all preceding dimensions, humanity is the bearer of spirit not just for itself, but for all realms of life. If the purpose of the realm of matter is to provide the foundation for all that builds upon it, then the purpose and duty of those in the historical realm is to bear spirit for that upon which it is built.

The unity of life is one that is unified out of resonance and mutual participation. There is no king-pin and no under-dog. When each realm actualises potential to its limit, another realm is born to continue the process. As the new realms emerge, the positions of those preceding become clearer. When foundations of a building are laid, it is not until the building has been built that they can clearly be identified as foundations. As they are the first things to be built, initially, they are not foundations. Only when they have been built upon do they begin to fulfil their function as foundations, and only when the building has been completed do they function fully as foundations. In the same way, in the process of actualisation, there is no dying off of realms, but a progressive clarification of the function of each in the light of those that follow. The duty of humanity, as bearer of spirit, is to shine the light of Spirit onto life so that the participation of each realm may be clarified.

Clarification is the process of evolving consciousness and this is what is meant by the actualisation of potential being, so closely connected with the multi-dimensional unity of being. Perhaps now we are in a position to return to spirit as it relates to the categories.

The Dimension of spirit

The dimension of spirit is the unifying dimension, through which all others become integrated into the unifying wholeness of life. It is the dimension in which all that remains potential is actualised and the duty of humanity, as bearer of spirit, is to bring about the fulfilment of the actualisation process. This process is one of expanding consciousness and it falls to the human being to be the vehicle for this because consciousness of the spiritual dimension is possible only through the structure of reason, in which the human psyche is housed. Such a structure is necessary for spiritual consciousness because it is the structure not only of the human psyche, but also of the world external to the human being. Reason is the structuring principle of being and therefore, permeates everything that has life. Only humanity, in whom the same structuring principle predominates, has the capacity to bring to full consciousness the potential of the structure of reason, namely, the dimension of spirit. It is important to reiterate the relationship between reason and spirit in order to be clear as to the precise way in which consciousness of the potential of reason brings about the manifestation of the dimension of spirit.

As we have already seen, the structure of reason makes possible a sense of self and world. Through this self-world correlation the human being becomes self-aware and as a consequence, becomes socially aware. Only the human being is capable of self-consciousness, and by virtue of its correlation with the world, self-consciousness also means world-consciousness.

The human being develops such consciousness by means of the personal centre, the house in each individual in which all experiences and senses, both conscious and unconscious, are integrated. The integration represents a transcending of each of the individual experiences, so that the personal centre is more than the sum total of the experiences themselves. The personal centre, structured out of reason, is that centre in which the dynamic of eros becomes creative. The desire to make sense of experience is the drive of eros; the ability to make sense of experience is the presence of the structure of reason. Therefore, the personal centre is that in which

eros and the structure of reason creatively integrate with each other. The product of this integration is the emergence of the predominance of the dimension of spirit.

However, the spirit is not only the offspring of this integration, it is also the principle present in the personal centre that integrates eros with reason. It is, if you like, the unifying ingredient, the creative principle that brings about transcendence and works through both the drive of eros and the structure of reason. It cannot be distinguished from the elements through which it works but, at the same time, without it, transformation would not occur. It is so empty that it can only be seen through the effect of the unification of two forces or principles.

Thus, spirit is the creative unifying principle in life, which is brought to self-consciousness through the life of the human being. As such, it is the principle in existence that mirrors the creative unifying principle of the divine life. The description of the spirit in the preceding paragraph is reminiscent of the description of the Spirit in the section on the divine life: both spirit and Spirit are creative unifying principles. Both creatively unify power (the eros of finite life and the Godhead of divine life) and reason (the logos of finite life and the Logos of divine life). So, we come to the inevitable question: what is the difference between spirit and Spirit?

We have already seen that logos is Logos separated from the creative unity of the divine life by the categories of time, space, causality and substance. Eros is the power of God separated by the categories from the creative unity of the divine life. It also follows that spirit is divine Spirit conditioned by the categories.

It is important to appreciate however, that spirit is not Spirit in separation, as logos and eros have been described, because Spirit is the unifying principle in both the divine life and that of the finite creature. There is, nevertheless, a distinction to be drawn between finite spirit and divine Spirit and it is the influence of the categories that draws it. The dimension of spirit is Spirit in time, space, causality and substance. The categories are the barriers which creaturely life cannot escape.

There is, thus, a gulf between spirit and Spirit that the creature can never bridge. However, in Tillichian theology, although the gulf remains unbridgeable, as the divine reaches out to the finite through the creative principle of Spirit, humanity is able to reach out and grasp in the dimension of spirit, and to glimpse that which is offered through the veil imposed by the categories. An eternal fragment is received and an eternal moment is experienced, sufficient to nourish the dimension of spirit within existence. That nourishment, in turn, sustains not only humanity, but *all* that lives.

For Tillich, divine life reaches out to finite life through Jesus as the Christ.¹¹⁷ He is the bridge between finite existence and the divine, but not a bridge made by the former. He represents the love of the latter for the former because through Jesus as the Christ, God moves away from the unity that is God into the separation that is finitude, in order that through the consciousness that is finitude, the potential that is God is made actual.

Finitude does not stand independently of divine life; it is born out of the creative movement away from divine unity and, as such, always stands apart from that unity. However, through Jesus as the Christ, the dimension of spirit is nourished by the Spirit of divine life, allowing finitude to move closer to the unity of the divine through an evolving consciousness of the divine nature of life.

To conclude, what makes the distinction between divine life and creaturely life inevitable and unbridgeable is the conditioning influence of the categories of time, space, causality and substance, by which all that exists is bound. However, despite the qualitative difference between divine life and that of the creature, there is a point of connection in Tillichian theology between the two, a connection sought through the question posed earlier in this section, how is it possible for the creature to participate in the divine life?

¹¹⁷ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 2, p. 93.

The creature participates in the divine life because finite life is an essential element of that life. The creature was created by, and continues to be sustained by the divine. The dynamic processes in existential life echo those of divine life, but the echo has undergone transformation upon its return. Finite life is not passive in relation to that in which it is grounded; on the contrary, there is a qualitative difference between divine and finite life, and the relationship is based upon mutual participation. Finite life stands alone and separated from the divine by virtue of the conditioning quality of the categories of time, space, causality and substance. At the same time, however, the dynamics of divine life resonate with those of finite life and through this resonance, finitude seeks out the source of its being. The dynamic forces of power and structure, united in Spirit, work in existential life, as they do in the life of the divine. However, they work ambiguously and through tension in the former as the consequence of the effect of the inescapable categories of existence. This contrasts starkly with the way in which the powers are unified through Spirit in the life of the divine.

The drive for reunification of that which is separated is derived from the ground of finite being and through that drive, reunification is achieved fragmentarily and fleetingly at every moment of transcendence in life. Such moments begin in the personal centre of every individual and ripple out into every aspect of reality in which the individual is involved. They are experienced through the integration of the rational structure of the psyche with the drive of eros. The point at which the two become one represents the point at which spirit is made manifest. In this way, the unifying principle of Spirit of the divine life finds expression within existence and, through this presence, finite life participates in divine life.

Conclusion

In the introduction to this chapter, it was suggested that Tillich discovered the presence of dynamic forces lying behind the events and circumstance of existence that drove history and therefore, all that lived in history in a particular direction. He

used these dynamic forces to find a language that would express the healing power of the Christian message to modernity.

He perceived a driving force as well as a structuring dynamic to underlie life, and both were grounded in the dynamic of the divine life itself. The three divine principles of Godhead, Logos and Spirit expressed the dynamic forces of power, structure and unity, which, for Tillich, presented themselves as phases in the divine life. The three were in union and inseparable. The union was dynamic in nature and characterised by an eternal emanation and return within God. The rhythm of the interplay of the divine forces in union was a pulsating one, which gave life to finite being. The pulse of the divine became the pulse of being in existence. Finite life was rooted in divine life, but in the movement-away-from-God phase of that life. Thus, finite life was life in separation: creaturely life represented the divine life in separation from itself and creaturely life in separation from the Creator. The creature was separated from God but, at the same time, grounded in God. Tillich's theology used dynamic principles to attempt to work through this paradox; creaturely life was not static, but a dynamic process that was a vital element of the divine pulse. Created in the movement-away-from-God phase of that pulse, finite life made manifest the dynamic divine forces in separation from each other. Thus the movement-away-from-God phase was a breaking down of union and a manifestation of the components of that union. The dynamic structure of finite being was therefore, the presence of manifested forces in separation, searching for reunion.

This is perhaps the first correlation in Tillichian theology, although, Tillich himself was perhaps not fully conscious of it. The process of finite life is one in which dynamic forces make actual what is potential through the tense, oscillating dynamic generated by polar forces. Humanity brings to consciousness this process through the logos structure of mind and lives to complete the actualisation process.

The process of actualisation of being is therefore, one of consciousness of being. For this to take place, there must be that which negates being, as Tillich's theology

is based upon the fundamental principle of the self-world correlation: consciousness of self requires a separation from self in order for self to become manifest. This self-world correlation is at the heart of Tillich's understanding of the divine life: God must stand in separation from God, in order for God to become consciously God. Thus Tillich's method of correlation is the instrument he uses to express the dynamic rhythm of divine life in relation to finite life. Indeed, this very relation is based upon correlation; there is a mutual participation and resonance in which creature reaches out in need of sustenance to the divine and the divine embraces the creature as Sustainer. Creaturely need is satisfied by the presence of Spirit in existence, accessible, albeit in a fragmentary way, through the dimension of spirit in history, and by means of the sustenance of Spirit, human consciousness of the Eternal Presence in time and space makes manifest that which is hidden in the unity of God.

Chapter 2

The Theme of Microcosm in the Renaissance

Tillich makes fifteen references to the term *microcosm* in his three volumes of *Systematic Theology*.¹¹⁸ In one of these, he ponders the issue of humanity's relationship to the world and to all creaturely existence. He considers this relationship with regard to humanity's role in saving the whole creaturely world. When Christian theology speaks of the fall of the world, what precisely does it mean? Is it the world of humanity alone or does it include every creature that lives in that world? Tillich suggests that this is perplexing for the modern day because it is steeped in the idea of individualism. He claims that we have "half-forgotten" a theological truth that antiquity took for granted, of which we must be reminded, if we are to begin to address the issues with regard to the fall of the world and its salvation. What is that half-forgotten theological truth? Tillich answers this in the following way:

What happens in the microcosm happens by mutual participation in the macrocosmos, for being itself is one.¹¹⁹

Through these words, Tillich wishes to remind modernity of an understanding of life present in previous periods but which became half-lost in the individualism of modernity. So, where are we to look in our history to find that understanding of life? Tillich himself provides the answer, for in his system he makes repeated reference to the theme of microcosm present in the thinking of Nicholas Cusanus, Paracelsus, Jacob Boehme, Leibniz and Schelling.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ See p.115, footnote 227 below.

¹¹⁹ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, p.261.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.260-261.

The thinkers above, cited by Tillich, span a period of four hundred years. Cusanus, Paracelsus and Boehme are considered to be among the most influential thinkers of the Renaissance period, while Leibniz and Schelling made their marks on the ideas of the Enlightenment and beyond. Tillich suggests that their ideas shared a common ground: they all portrayed a sense of humanity as microcosm. The fact that these thinkers spanned such a huge period would suggest that the theme of microcosm was one deeply embedded in the world-view of the eras in which these men lived.

This chapter offers an exploration of the theme of microcosm present in the classical thinking of the Renaissance through exploration of the microcosmic perceptions of Cusanus, Paracelsus and Boehme. It aims to establish ideas characteristic of the microcosmic motif of the period, which will be used in Chapter Three to evaluate the extent to which such a motif is implicitly present in Tillich's theological system.

The Renaissance period is selected for two reasons: firstly, Tillich refers directly to its microcosmic perspective by citing the names of Cusanus, Paracelsus and Boehme in this respect. However, as he also refers to the Enlightenment by citing the names of Leibniz and Schelling, this is not reason enough to consider the Renaissance period without also considering the Enlightenment. This brings us to our second reason: the Renaissance gives powerful expression to microcosm, a theme that had its roots in the period preceding the Renaissance, and which gradually lost its voice with the dawn of the Enlightenment. The Renaissance, then, may be seen as the period in which the microcosmic theme enjoys a certain vigour, which it gradually loses with the emergence of Enlightenment thinking. As the aim of the chapter is simply to establish the presence of the microcosmic theme in the classical tradition in which Tillich was rooted, it is sensible to turn to the era in which the theme thrived, rather than to one that witnessed its demise. Consequently, Leibniz and Schelling's positions in the Enlightenment period render their microcosmic perceptions to be beyond the scope of this thesis.

As history is dynamic in nature, it would be somewhat of a distortion to discuss Renaissance microcosm without making any reference to the roots of the theme. For this reason, the chapter begins by offering introductory background to the microcosm of the Renaissance by outlining the microcosmic theme present in the Middle Ages. In particular, it offers an overview of the theme as it finds expression in the two key medieval traditions of Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism. In addition, it outlines the microcosmic theme present in alchemical thinking. This is done in order to establish the necessary background for the ideas of Paracelsus and Boehme, both of whom displayed a strong alchemical influence in their writings.

Section One: Medieval Background to Renaissance Microcosm

As we make our distinctions and assign labels to portions of history, it is important to remember that one period flows from that which precedes it and into that which follows. Time is a continuum and to imagine that each period is totally separate from those between which it is buffeted is to forget this. Thus, when we speak of the Renaissance as distinct from the Middle Ages, we must be conscious of the fact that those trends which made the Renaissance so distinctive were rooted in the preceding period. Cassirer suggests that it would be wrong to attempt to draw a clear distinction between Medieval and Renaissance man. Renaissance culture was deeply entrenched in medieval presuppositions, which largely were based upon Aristotelian theory.¹²¹

Coplestone would seem to support this view when he argues that it is important to remember that although there was a significant and not necessarily gradual transition from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the contrast between them was not as dramatic as historians might choose to believe. He claims that the great

¹²¹ E. Cassirer, *The Individual & the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, (New York, Harper Torchbooks, Harper & Row, 1963), p.5.

discoveries of Renaissance science were rooted in the Middle Ages and were the product of a gradual dissatisfaction with the Aristotelian world-view in the light of new theories.¹²² One of the themes prevalent in the Middle Ages and continuing into the Renaissance, with its roots in Greek thought, was that of *microcosm*.¹²³

Microcosm means literally *a little universe* and is used to denote a sense in which the universal (i.e. *the macrocosm*) is manifest in the part. In medieval times, the relationship of God to humanity was described in microcosmic/macrocosmic terms and found particularly powerful expression in the Neoplatonic and Aristotelian world-views.

Neoplatonism

One of the philosophical systems that emerged out of the process of synthesis between Christianity and Hellenistic culture after the capture of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. was that of Neoplatonism. It applied the basic tenets of Platonic philosophy to the pagan and Christian traditions, the result being a gradual assimilation of Platonic thought into pagan and Christian ideas.

Neoplatonism was not one cohesive system, but a term used to embrace the many thinkers who sought to apply a philosophical system to religious practices. Platonism had many schools and so the variety of Neoplatonic schools was inevitable.¹²⁴ Nevertheless, in broad terms, Neoplatonists applied the Platonic principle of archetypal Ideas to their Christian or pagan world-view. Plato held that the phenomenal world was inferior to the world of Ideas, the former owing its existence to the latter. Thus, every object in the phenomenal world was a concrete expression of the archetype that formed it.¹²⁵ The phenomenal world could never

¹²² F. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol.3, (London, Burns, Outes & Washbourne Ltd., 1953), p.17.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp.20, 21.

¹²⁴ R.Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind*, (New York, Ballantine Books, 1991), pp.101-103.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.4.

access the perfection of the Ideas (or Forms), for the Ideas had a superior quality of being. Just as rays emanate from the Sun alone, so the world of matter emanated only from the archetypal Ideas that formed it. Thus, for Plato, the Ideas formed the world of matter and, at the same time, were beyond it. The Neoplatonists expressed this Platonic notion in terms of *World Soul* or *the One*, which was transcendent, but also issued divine *Nous* to the world.¹²⁶

Plotinus

Plotinus, considered to be the founding father of Neoplatonism,¹²⁷ described the One as indefinable and transcendent. In his philosophy, he depicted a Holy Trinity: the *supreme One*, the *Spirit (Nous)*, and the *Soul*. Spirit, or Nous, emanated from the One as its image. Nous was the light by which the One saw itself. The Soul was inferior to Nous, although it was the creator of all living things and the child of the divine *Intellect*. The Soul had two natures: the inner soul, focused upon Nous and the outer soul, focused upon the external world. In this way, Plotinus depicted a world-view in which the material world was the lowest quality of being, yet one that emanated from the One through the hierarchy of the Holy Trinity. Russell points out that emanation from the One was compared by Plotinus to the way in which light emanated from a candle flame.¹²⁸ Just like the light of a flame, the source of the divine emanation was at the centre.

Thus, in his depiction of the hierarchy of being, Plotinus spoke in circular, spiralling terms - the source was at the centre.¹²⁹ The phenomenal world was on the periphery of the circular hierarchy and was, therefore, close to darkness, in just the same way as that on the edge of the candle flame was bordered by darkness. However, at the same time, that which was on the edge was still a part of that from which it was derived. Thus, although the phenomenal world was the lowest order

¹²⁶ Ibid., p.103.

¹²⁷ B. Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*. (London, G.Allen & Unwin Ltd.,1946), p.308.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p.85.

¹²⁹ The idea of the flame evokes circular imagery, while the idea of hierarchical order evokes spiralling imagery.

of being in the hierarchy, it was still part of the circular whole that emanated from the Source. The human being was connected to the divine source through the human imagination, which could access the divine Intellect. By casting off the shackles of the world of matter, the human being, through the imagination, could begin to return to the Source.¹³⁰

Thus, the phenomenal world was a part of the divine emanation and part of a beautiful organic whole kept in universal harmony by the World Soul. Contained in this understanding was the idea of divine emanation and return, which took place through the hierarchy of the Trinity. Russell states:

The entire universe exists in a continual outflow from the One to created multiplicity, which is then drawn back to the One – a process of emanation and return always moved by the One's superfluity of perfection.¹³¹

This perpetual eternal emanation and return maintained the harmony and wholeness of the universe. Thus, when Plotinus spoke of the human being making the return to the source by freeing himself from materiality, the return was driven by the One.

In the thinking of Plotinus is a microcosmic world-view. This is derived from the spiralling imagery of the hierarchy of being,¹³² which depicts the organic wholeness of the universe, in which the One emanates from, and returns to itself. The human being owes its existence to the World Source and participates in it by virtue of its imagination, which can access Nous. Plotinus confirms this idea of microcosm when he speaks of the capacity for the philosopher to make a gradual ascent back to the Absolute by turning inwards and casting off the ties of the material world. J. Gregory suggests:

¹³⁰ This evokes spiralling imagery: the human being both ascends and moves toward the centre, where resides the power of the Source.

¹³¹ Ibid., p.86.

¹³² From now on, *spiralling* will be used instead of *circular*, as the former contains within it the idea of the circle.

Plotinus was assured by personal experience that the individual human being is a microcosm of the universe.¹³³

Pseudo-Dionysius

Echoes of the thinking of Plotinus are found in the sixth century writings of Pseudo-Dionysius. In a similar vein to Plotinus, he described the structure of the universe in terms of divine emanation and return through various hierarchies: *the Celestial*, *the Ecclesiastical* and *the Legal*. As in the thinking of Plotinus, he argued that the soul of the human being could return to God by ascending through the hierarchies. However, unlike Plotinus, he suggested that this ascension took place through a positive/negative dialectic. God was approached by the dialectical process of affirmative and negative theology, which led on to a reconciling superlative theology.¹³⁴ In the affirmative phase, scriptural names, such as the One, Good, Living, etc. were applied to God. Having made these affirmations about God, in the negative phase, all predicates were denied, for God was utterly incomprehensible. The only way to God was through learned ignorance. The acceptance of God's incomprehensibility was expressed in the reconciling phase of the dialectical process, in which superlatives were attributed to God; God was Super-being, Super-goodness, Super-life, etc.¹³⁵ It was possible to state this because the universe had been created by God. Therefore, it participated in the Source but inevitably fell short of it. The stages of the hierarchy closer to the Source were closer to the perfection of that Source, but inevitably never matched it. At the same time, the universe was never separated from the Source. It was thus a symbolic manifestation of it; the superlative attributes of God were symbolic expressions of the qualitative difference between the Source and the phenomenal world on the one hand, and of the connection between the two on the other.¹³⁶ The Source emanated from itself and, as a result, became the central point of that which was created through the

¹³³ J. Gregory, *The Neoplatonists*. (London, Routledge, 1999), p.12.

¹³⁴ J.R.Weinburg, *A Short History of Medieval Philosophy*. (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 46.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.47.

¹³⁶ <http://orb.rhodes.edu/encyclo/culture/Philos/coulter.html>, January, 2002, p.2.

emanation. Thus, as in the thinking of Plotinus, the human being's hierarchical ascent to the Source was spiralling in nature.¹³⁷

As the universe was the emanation of the Source, and as there was an eternal procession from and return to the Source, the human soul could ascend the stages of the three hierarchies in its search for union with its Source by means of the return phase of this eternal procession. The soul's elevation was achieved through contemplative prayer (a yearning for union), faith and self-knowledge. In this way, the soul recognised the symbols hidden in the universe that were illuminations of the Source and it was through the deciphering of symbols that the soul could continue to ascend through the stages of the hierarchies until the ultimate goal, the mystical union with the Source, was achieved.¹³⁸

Thus, in the work of Pseudo-Dionysius, we see the way in which the human being had to work the soul back to mystical union with God as God entered the return phase of the divine movement. This was achieved through a communion between God and the human creature, which took place through divine revelation in, and human interpretation of symbols that were hidden in the stages of the three hierarchies of being. Interpretation was achieved by means of a dialectical process, which demonstrated first, the immediacy and then the distance of God from the creature. The dialectic drew the human being to a realisation of the ineffability of God, which was the point of reunion of the human soul with the divine.

Thus, we can see in the writings of Neoplatonists such as Plotinus and Pseudo-Dionysius, reflections about God and the human being that were based upon a microcosmic view. What appeared to be common themes were firstly, a spiralling understanding of the hierarchical nature of the universe in relation to God, with God at the centre and emanating out; secondly, the appreciation of the universe as the

¹³⁷ Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names and the Mystical Theology*, trans. C.E. Rolt (New York, Macmillan, 1940), p.99: The soul has spiralling movement when it is "enlightened with truths of Divine Knowledge".

¹³⁸ Weinburg, *Medieval Philosophy*, pp.47,48.

effect of divine emanation, part of an eternal procession of emanation and return; thirdly, the assumption that the universe, although wholly inferior to God, was nevertheless, an expression of God. Finally, the view that the soul of the human being was able to return to its Source by virtue of the fact that it participated in the divine Intellect through the faculty of reason.

It was against the backdrop of the principles of Neoplatonism that the works of Aristotle, rediscovered in the thirteenth century, were read.

The Aristotelian World-View

Guthrie suggests that the drive behind Aristotle's philosophy was his desire to understand the phenomenon of motion and change.¹³⁹ In this regard, he developed two concepts fundamental to his understanding of the universe, namely, the conceptions of *immanent form* and *potentiality*.¹⁴⁰

Immanent Form

Aristotle held that underlying the apparent change and flux of the world were basic unchanging principles, existing within the world of sensible objects, which could be distinguishable from the matter of the sensible object only by the process of thought. To explain this, he argued that each material thing found in the world consisted of a compound of substratum and form. The form (or formal nature) was that of opposites.¹⁴¹ In other words, change, taking place in the substratum of matter, occurred in the world because of the principle of opposition underlying every sensible object.

¹³⁹ W.K.Guthrie, *The Greek Philosophers: From Thales to Aristotle*. (London, Routledge, 1967), p.128.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.122.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.129. This idea was in keeping with the Ancient Greek view that change occurred through the dynamics of opposing forces.

Potentiality (dynamis)

Aristotle argued that the phenomenon of change in the sensible world was driven by the inward urge of every sensible object to perfect itself. He called this drive *physis* (*nature*).

This idea was rooted in his belief that life was derived from parenting: every new-born creature had a parent, which served two functions: it caused the creature to exist in the first place, and to grow in a particular way. In other words, the nature of the creature to perfect itself was derived from the presence of the parent, who/which acted as a model for the new-born creature to grow. It was the purpose of every life to make actual the potential that was present at birth. Aristotle concluded that just as the new-born creature had a model of perfection in the parent, so too, there was a model of perfection which all life moved toward. As life was characterised by the movement (change) from potential to actuality, perfection was total actuality. Therefore, perfection had to be unchanging because as total actuality, there would be no potential to be fulfilled. It followed from this that perfection was, therefore, separate from matter, as matter was found only in the world of change. Perfection was pure form that existed apart from anything in the world. The world existed eternally because God, perfection, was eternal (God was not in the world of time and space because God did not change) and the world (characterised by change and movement) owed its existence to the presence of God, perfection (for the function of change was to move toward self-perfection).¹⁴²

Thus, contained in Aristotle's notion of potentiality was the contrasting idea of actuality. Only God could be actual in its purest form. God, as pure actuality, meant eternal thought - God was Nous. However, every living creature had a blueprint, and the purpose of each creature was to bring its blueprint to full actuality. Thus every sensible object strove for its own perfection, although, this perfection was qualitatively different from the perfection of God. Aristotle suggested that there was a difference between the dynamic of growth and that of

¹⁴² Ibid., pp.131,132.

actuality. He described the former as *kinesis*, namely, the process of growing up, of moving from potential to actual. He attributed the term *energeia* to that energy which flowed once actuality had been achieved. However, *energeia* was not the same as *Nous*, for *energeia* was the flow of a fully actualised sensible object, which was qualitatively different from the flow of God (*Nous*).

With regard to the human being, Aristotle suggested that it was possible to gain a fleeting insight into the *Nous* of God through the faculty of reason in the psyche (soul).¹⁴³ This was only possible once the process of reason began its approach to perfection. Only a fleeting insight of *Nous* was possible, for the human being, as with all that lived in the world, was subject to change and flux. The soul (psyche) dwelt in the body of the creature, through which it found expression. For Aristotle, it represented the actuality of the body: without the soul, the body would be lifeless.¹⁴⁴ In this respect, humanity was set apart from other creatures. The soul in the human being, as the principle of actuality for the body, equated with the nature of God. In the faculty of the soul, the human being could access *Nous*. However, at the same time, the tapping into *Nous* could not be constant due to the fact that the human being also had the principle of opposition underlying his nature. The human being was the unity of physical form and soul.¹⁴⁵

In this way, Aristotle displayed an understanding of humanity as the microcosm of God; the human creature possessed all the faculties that were present in the supreme being, although in partial form. Humanity, as the microcosm, was able to participate in God, the macrocosm. Only the human being was the microcosm because only the human being had the faculty that could access *Nous*.

With regard to Aristotle's view of the universe, the concepts of form and potential applied in the same way. The universe was spherical, with the Earth at the centre and the fixed stars at the circumference, with the planets, the Sun and the Moon

¹⁴³ Ibid., p.139.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p.144.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p.160.

lying between. Each sphere revolved at differing speeds, the respective movement of each being determined by a combination of its own revolution and those of the spheres above. The heavenly spheres consisted of aether, whereas the non-heavenly spheres consisted of the inferior elements of earth, water, air and fire. Each element had a natural movement: aether was circular because it was considered to be divine. The sub-lunar elements were paired together: earth and water had a downward movement, compared with the upward movement of air and fire.¹⁴⁶

All matter was made up of a combination of each of these four sub-lunar elements and what distinguished one sensible object from another were the different proportions and combinations of these elements inherent in it. To be consistent with his concept of immanent form, Aristotle argued that each element was made up of a pair of contrary properties; thus, fire consisted of hot and dry properties, air was made up of heat and moisture, water was a combination of cold and moisture, and earth a combination of cold and dry.¹⁴⁷

Matter could change because each element had the capacity to transform into its neighbouring element. Through the conflict between the downward movement of earth and water and the upward movement of air and fire, the transmutation of one element into another took place, the effect of which was the change of one sensible object into another. The transmutation of elements, then, coupled with the concept of dynamis, effected the process of transformation, characteristic of life.¹⁴⁸

Coplestone suggests that the Aristotelian idea of the cosmos had generally been accepted by the thirteenth century and argues that the discovery of the almost complete works of Aristotle by the Christian west is possibly the most important philosophical event in medieval philosophy.¹⁴⁹ Tarnas suggests that the rediscovery of Aristotle in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries sparked an extraordinary shift in

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p.137.

¹⁴⁷ G.Roberts, *The Mirror of Alchemy* (London, The British Library, 1994), pp.45-48.

¹⁴⁸ E. Cassirer, *The Individual & the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, (New York, Harper Torchbooks, Harper & Row, 1963), p.24.

¹⁴⁹ Copleston, *History of Philosophy* 3, p.3.

the Christian philosophical outlook.¹⁵⁰ Aristotelianism provided an alternative to the world-denying Neoplatonic world-view: the purpose of the soul was not to escape the body to ascend back to the divine Source, but to actualise the body to fulfill the potential of life.

Medieval interest in Aristotle was not simply of an ecclesial nature. His views on the universe and on the human being's ability to reason encouraged a broader cultural interest in his work. There was, in the thirteenth century and beyond, an increasing interest in the natural world and an increasing confidence in the power of human reason. Roger Bacon, a pupil of Robert Grosseteste, combined the mathematical principles of the Neoplatonic tradition with the Aristotelian focus upon direct experience and applied both to scientific experimentation, expressed in the esoteric practice of alchemy.¹⁵¹ In our later discussion of Renaissance thinkers, Paracelsus and Jacob Boehme, reference will be made to their respective interests in alchemy. For this reason, it is important to provide some background to the practice.

Alchemy

Central to the philosophy of alchemy was the premise that the human being was the microcosm of God and of the universe.¹⁵² Its principle of the transmutability of base metal into gold was derived from the Aristotelian principle of the transmutability of elements. The alchemist used this principle and extended it; not only could one element change into another; one material could also be transformed into another. According to Roberts, Aristotle claimed that the air surrounding the earth was moist and cold and contained exhalations from the earth that were hot and dry. The same earthly exhalations (or secretions) occurred below ground and the effect of this secretion was the production of minerals and metals. Minerals were the product of the interaction of the moist and dry elements of the secretion. Metals

¹⁵⁰ Tarnas, *Passion of the Western Mind*, p.176.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.200.

¹⁵² C.Jung, *Alchemical Studies*, trans, R.F.C.Hull, (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), p.93,94.

were the product of the interaction of the moist and cold elements of the secretion; a kind of liquid that solidified before the secretion became water. Fire affected all metals with the exception of gold.¹⁵³

The alchemists adopted this view and added an intermediate step to the process: the moist secretion was the secretion of mercury; the dry was that of sulphur. Thus, it was the combination of mercury and sulphur in varying proportions that formed the metals and minerals. Therefore, mercury and sulphur were key alchemical principles and became the basis of the alchemical theory of transmutation: nature was based upon mercury and sulphur. In accordance with Aristotelian ideas, nature strove for perfection and gold was that perfection because it was made from the brightest mercury with the clearest red sulphur in the correct proportions.¹⁵⁴ The aim of the alchemist was to assist nature and to speed up the natural process of purification and perfection: the achievement of this was the production of gold, the symbol of perfection.

Why did the alchemists wish to turn base metal into gold? Were they simply in pursuit of material wealth? The key to the answer lies in the microcosmic world-view central to alchemical practice. We have already seen that Aristotle held the human being to occupy a unique position in relation to the universe and to God (perfection): through the soul (psyche), the human being could access Nous, albeit fleetingly. In this regard, the human being was the microcosm of God. Equally, in so far as the soul of the human being was housed in a body, then the human being was fully participant in the world of matter. In this respect, he was a microcosm of nature. The alchemists used this presupposition as the basis for their belief in the pivotal role of the human being in the speeding up of the process of perfection in nature: the alchemist himself could bring nature to perfection (symbolised in the turning of a base metal into gold) by using his mind to access divine secrets and his

¹⁵³ Roberts, *Mirror of Alchemy*, p.50.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.51.

body to work with the material of nature.¹⁵⁵ In this way, the alchemist could provide the link between the world of matter and the world of Nous. H.H. Brinton states that in alchemy:

Man was a denizen of all three worlds, natural, astral and celestial. Therefore he could know of all three. In the natural world knowledge is sensual, for the body is in nature; in the "astral" world knowledge is intellectual because through man flow the rational emanations of the stars; in the celestial world knowledge is intuitional, for a spark of infinite Deity dwells in the human soul.¹⁵⁶

It followed, therefore, that the alchemist should work alone, for he was doing God's work. He had to be guided by God in his laboratory.¹⁵⁷ It was the work of philosophers rather than commoners, for communion with God required the use of the reasoning faculty of the psyche to the point at which the divine Nous could be accessed.

In the notion of gold as a symbol, we can perhaps detect the Pseudo-Dionysian notion that ascension back to the divine was facilitated by means of the discovery of hidden divine symbols. The alchemist was not only speeding up the process of perfection in nature; he was also making his own ascent back to God. Therefore, he had to be austere and pious in his work in order to purify his own soul, for the unearthing of the hidden divine symbols was possible only for those whose souls were returning to the Source.

¹⁵⁵ The term 'symbolised' should be understood as communicating the divine presence in the phenomenal world. Alchemical gold became the manifestation of God in the phenomenal world whilst still retaining its material form. Thus, alchemical gold connected the divine with the phenomenal world and in this way it was symbolic.

¹⁵⁶ H.H.Brinton, *The Mystic Will*. (London, Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1931), p.86.

¹⁵⁷ Roberts, *Mirror of Alchemy*, p.78.

However, the alchemist was doing more than unearthing divine symbols; he was actually seeking to create something that would become a symbol of the divine. Thus, in alchemy, the notion of microcosm found powerful expression: the alchemist was the microcosm of God in both a Neoplatonic and an Aristotelian sense. The alchemist was a man who sought his soul's return to the Source by means of inner knowledge, prayer and meditation. In this respect, we hear echoes of Neoplatonism. At the same time, by working on the transmutation of metals in his laboratory, he was assisting in the process of actualisation of nature, emphasised in the Aristotelian system.

Unlike the Neoplatonic world-view, in which the human being had to unharness himself from the shackles of the material world in order to make the return to the Source, the alchemical world-view regarded the human being as capable of speeding up the natural process of material perfection in the world through a synchronous process of personal purification. It was the Aristotelian emphasis upon the natural movement toward perfection in the universe, coupled with the Neoplatonic insistence upon the soul's return to the Source that provided the synchronicity for the alchemist.

Of interest here is the subtle shift in world-view of the human being that finds expression in alchemy. Whilst the draw toward the Source, away from the world of matter, so powerfully expressed in Neoplatonism, is also to be found in alchemical writings, the draw is expressed through material processes that are led by pious philosophers. Thus, we see the beginning of an awareness of the power of the human being to influence nature, but power always derived from the Source. Developing from this in later history, perhaps finding its fullest expression in the Enlightenment and beyond, is the awareness of the power of the human being to influence nature without making the synchronous return to the Source.¹⁵⁸ Copleston

¹⁵⁸ "Medieval alchemy prepared the way for the greatest intervention in the divine world order that man has ever attempted: alchemy was the dawn of the scientific age, when the daemon of the scientific spirit compelled the forces of nature to serve man to an extent that had never been known before." (Jung, *Alchemical studies*, p.127).

suggests that one of the ways that the fourteenth century differed in character from the thirteenth was that the former witnessed a widening of the gap between theology and philosophy. This was a gap with its roots in the appearance of the convincing philosophy of Aristotle in the late twelfth, early thirteenth centuries, but a gap that had been contained within an apparent synthesis between philosophy and theology. If the thirteenth century was characterised by a philosophising done in the light of faith, then the fourteenth was characterised by a weakening of metaphysics in the light of logic and the emergent sciences.¹⁵⁹

In a similar vein, Tarnas describes the transition from the Medieval to Renaissance world-view as being characterised by an increasing awareness of the elevated role of the human being in the universe. This finds most powerful expression in the humanism of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, particularly in the humanistic Neoplatonism of the early Renaissance. If medieval Neoplatonism expressed the view that nature and humanity were permeated by the divine, from which they emanated, then humanistic Neoplatonism emphasised the power of the human being to discover within himself the image of the divine. In Tarnas' words:

The human being was a noble microcosm of the divine macrocosm.¹⁶⁰

The subtle shift in world-view in connection with alchemy is detectable here. The power of the human being to carry out the work of God, so central to alchemical thinking, would seem to epitomise the shift away from a medieval sense of dependence upon God to a Renaissance discovery of the potential of the human being. The power of reason had not yet reached the full force of Enlightenment philosophy, but the trend toward human autonomy could be detected in the late thirteenth, early fourteenth centuries. Thus, according to Copleston, with the beginning of the Renaissance, there came a gradual breakdown of the medieval social framework and the emergence of a kind of individualism.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Copleston, *History of Philosophy* 3, pp.11-15.

¹⁶⁰ Tarnas, *Passion of the Western Mind* p.214.

¹⁶¹ Copleston, *History of Philosophy* 3, p.18.

Section Two: Renaissance Microcosm

By the fifteenth century, on the brink of the era of the Renaissance, there was a strong humanistic movement in Europe, which was intrigued by the potential of the human being and which expressed the exalted position of humanity in the universe. The notion of microcosm still remained, but it was transformed somewhat from that of the Middle Ages. The medieval appreciation of the microcosmic nature of humanity had been based upon the belief in the vital connection between the divine and the human intellect. Whilst this held, the synthesis between theology and philosophy could remain. The shackles of the material world hampered the human being in his microcosmic relation to the divine. Thus, the medieval microcosmic theme was theocentric. The early humanistic understanding of microcosm however, expressed a shift away from this vital connection toward a more potent sense of microcosm; the human being had the divine spark within, which was empowering. With this view, philosophy no longer needed to be the handmaiden of theology, for if the divine was within, philosophy, as well as theology, could find truth.¹⁶² Moreover, the human being no longer needed to escape the shackles of the material form. Rather, nature was to be celebrated. The human being could elevate himself spiritually because the divine spark was within. Thus, the microcosmic theme became increasingly anthropocentric.

Nicholas Cusanus

The humanistic sense of the ultimate separation between the divine and the human being is a theme that resounds in the work of Nicholas Cusanus. He was a thinker who stood on the brink of the Renaissance and, as such, produced writings that showed their roots to be in the Middle Ages, with their ideas thrusting into the new direction expressed in the Renaissance.¹⁶³ He had humanist friends and was greatly

¹⁶² Tarnas, *Passion of the Western Mind*, p.206.

¹⁶³ Copleston, *History of Philosophy* 3, p.231.

influenced by the mystical thinking of Meister Eckhart,¹⁶⁴ but at the same time, expressed ideas that were rooted in the Neoplatonic tradition, as conveyed, for example, by Pseudo-Dionysius.¹⁶⁵ In his work, *De Docta Ignorantia*, we can see the way in which these influences converge and for that reason, examination of his thinking will be conducted through a consideration of this particular work.¹⁶⁶

Cusanus' main concern in *De Docta Ignorantia* was to show the way in which the human being was inevitably a finite creature, with no innate ability to access the nature of the divine, but who, nevertheless, had the capacity to transcend finitude through an ability to symbolise and think metaphorically.¹⁶⁷ This idea was expressed through four philosophical doctrines central to the work: *docta ignorantia*, *coincidentia oppositorum*, *complicatio et explicatio* and *trinitas universi*.¹⁶⁸

Docta Ignorantia (Learned Ignorance)

Central to the doctrine of *Docta Ignorantia* was the premise that the finite creature could not comprehend the true nature of the infinite because the infinite was absolute and the finite mind could only conceive in comparative, non-absolute terms. Cusanus argued that as the human mind was incapable of apprehending absolute knowledge, the object of thought had to be the discovery of human ignorance through the contemplation of God, nature and the Incarnation.¹⁶⁹ Thus, Cusanus promoted a negative theological approach to the contemplation of the divine.

¹⁶⁴ P.Moffatt-Watts, *Nicolaus Cusanus: A Fifteenth-Century Vision of Man*. (Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1982), p.22.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.22.

¹⁶⁶ Nicolas Cusanus, *Of Learned Ignorance*, trans.W.Stark, (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954).

¹⁶⁷ Moffatt-Watts, *Nicolaus Cusanus*, p.85.

¹⁶⁸ P.E.Sigmund, *Nicholas of Cusa & Medieval Political Thought*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1963), p.246.

¹⁶⁹ Moffatt-Watts, *Nicolaus Cusanus*, p. 40.

For Cusanus, thinking was a dialectic between what was known and what was not known, which moved the thinker toward an approximation of truth but, because of the perpetual dialectical nature of the thinking process, never toward a precise knowledge of truth. Human truth was always relative and, from this, Cusanus derived his argument that knowledge of God was inevitably relative, never absolute.

However, Cusanus did not imply that nothing could be said about God. Our knowledge of God could only be approximate, but because Cusanus accepted the microcosmic nature of the relationship between the infinite and the finite, he was able to argue that through our limited minds, our approximations approached God. He argued that God was in all things and, equally, everything was contained in God. Thus, in our approximations we were never removed from God. If we described God as the absolute maximum, we were as close to God as if we were to use the term absolute minimum. As maximum and minimum were contraries, the use of both terms would represent the limit of what we could say about God. Cusanus concluded from this that all the finite creature could say about God was that in Him maximum and minimum coincided.¹⁷⁰ This was the second doctrine of his *Docta Ignorantia*.

Coincidentia Oppositorum (the Coincidence of Opposites)

Cusanus emphasised the importance of the human being accepting its inability to gain actual knowledge of God. The human mind only approached the divine when He was perceived as both absolute maximum and absolute minimum. Reason, which worked only within the realm of opposites, could say no more about God than that in Him, opposition coincided. Cusanus went on to suggest that to gain greater insight into God, the realm of reason had to be left at its perimeter fence and transcended by the intellect into the realm beyond words.¹⁷¹ Only through an intellect that had transcended the need for language could the God that transcended

¹⁷⁰ Cusanus, *Of Learned Ignorance*, trans. Stark, p.12.

¹⁷¹ Moffatt-Watts, *Nicolaus Cusanus*, p.40.

contradictions be more accurately apprehended. Thus, God transcended all opposites.

This claim marked a dramatic departure from the ideas of medieval scholasticism and shows Cusanus to be in the light of the Renaissance, for the scholastics of the late Middle Ages maintained the notion of the potential absoluta of God.¹⁷² That is to say, God's power was absolute within the law of contradiction. By asserting that God transcended all opposites, Cusanus challenged the validity of the scholastic view of God.

This challenge was of tremendous significance because the law of contradiction was based upon the presupposition that human reason contained the seed of divine Nous, a view held by the Neoplatonic tradition and derived from the ideas of both Plato and Aristotle. Thus, in his doctrine of the coincidence of opposites, Cusanus effectively denied the special connection between the human mind and the divine. Cusanus' God was totally free and human reason had no divine seed sown within it.

However, it should not be concluded that Cusanus' God therefore, had no connection with creation. On the contrary, the connection was far more intimate than that promoted by medieval Neoplatonism, for his God embraced all things, and all things had God within them.¹⁷³ How, then, was this intimacy to be understood, if the human mind was an inadequate tool for apprehending the true nature of the divine? The answer lay in his final two doctrines: *complicatio et explicatio* and *trinitas universi*.

¹⁷² Ibid., p.46.

¹⁷³ Ibid., p.46.

Trinitas Universi (The Threefold Nature of the Universe) and Complicatio et Explicatio (Enfolding and Unfolding)

The doctrine of the coincidence of opposites was used by Cusanus as a metaphor for, rather than as a definition of God, for it was important to remember that language could only approximate God. The value of metaphorical language in the approach to God was based upon two ancient views presupposed in Cusanus' work: firstly, the assumption that the visible world was a reflection of the invisible one,¹⁷⁴ and secondly, the understanding that God was ultimately hidden from humanity and could only be discussed through riddles and paradox.¹⁷⁵ Thus, through metaphor and symbol, human understanding could approach the unknown by seeing in them what was contrary to the reality of the unknown. To use an analogy; if I see something ugly, I can move toward its contrary, beauty, by observing the nature of ugliness. I do not know positively the true nature of beauty; nevertheless, I learn through ugliness what beauty is not and in that way begin to approach beauty.¹⁷⁶ This idea holds when there is an understanding of the dialectical relation between opposites, an understanding clearly demonstrated in Cusanus' third doctrine, *trinitas universi*.

In *trinitas universi*, Cusanus argued that the universe reflected God's threefold nature of Unity, Equality and Connection so that every unity was also three-fold.¹⁷⁷ The mirror reflection of God was found in the visible world of plurality in which the human being was situated, but the reflection did not show God's face; rather it showed what God was not and therefore pointed the finite being in the direction of God via a negative route. Thus, for Cusanus, God was hidden, but at the same time, because the universe was perceived to be the reflection of God, God remained very present as we looked at ourselves.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p.49,50.

¹⁷⁵ Moffatt-Watts (p.51) suggests that such a view was expressed in the works of Dionysius and Proclus. Roberts (p.68) suggests that the use of paradox was adopted by the alchemists to express transcendent value.

¹⁷⁶ Moffatt-Watts, *Nicolaus Cusanus*, p.51, citing Proclus, *In Platonis Rem Publicam Commentarii*, ed. W.Kroll, (1954), lines 15-19.

¹⁷⁷ Moffatt-Watts, *Nicolaus Cusanus*, p.50.

Cusanus also assumed the dialectical relationship between opposites when he asserted that the plurality of creaturely existence led the mind to search for the unity that underlay it. Here, we see his thinking rooted in the ancient presupposition of the existence of two worlds: the visible world, which Cusanus expressed in terms of a world of plurality, was a reflection of the invisible world, expressed as unity.

He went on to claim that plurality was the unfolding of the Unity and Unity was the enfolding of the plurality, a notion described in his doctrine of *complicatio* (enfolding) *et explicatio* (unfolding).

The doctrine of *complicato et explicato* is an expression of the dialectical relationship between plurality and unity, which Cusanus used metaphorically to depict the relationship between the creature and God. His hypothesis was based upon the assumption that the visible universe was a reflection of the invisible one.¹⁷⁸ He used number as his symbolic language for God because, he claimed, along Pythagorean lines, that mathematics provided the firmest ground upon which to proceed toward the unknowable. God embraced all things in His unity and the plurality of things was a development of the unity that was God.¹⁷⁹ This idea appears to echo those of Dionysius and Plotinus, in which the universe was depicted as an emanation of the divine. However, unlike Dionysius and Plotinus, Cusanus did not regard there to be a hierarchy of beings leading toward the divine Source. Instead, he argued that there was a direct unfolding and enfolding between Creator and creature and the Creator was consequently imminent in the whole of the universe. Significant here was the value that was therefore attributed to the sensible world. The whole of creation, both the intellectual and sensible realms, was imbued with the presence of God. In this way, Cusanus revealed his inclination away from the more traditional Neoplatonic perspective, and toward one of a more mystical nature.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p.50.

¹⁷⁹ Sigmund, *Nicholas of Cusa*, p.250.

How did the human being grasp divine immanence if the faculty of reason was not the link? The answer to this lay in Cusanus' understanding of the microcosmic nature of the human being. Humanity alone was the microcosm of the universe because in this creature alone was found the realms of the senses and of the intellect. Angels were exclusively of the intellectual realm and animals of the sensory. Thus, the being of humanity mediated between the absolute being of God and the contingent being of the finite world.¹⁸⁰ It was inevitable, then, that the Incarnation took the form of a human life, as the purpose of the sending of Christ was to convey God's message to the universe through humanity.

We see here in Cusanus' work a further shift in the notion of microcosm: man was no longer the microcosm of God by virtue of his reason, that faculty of mind, in which, according to medieval scholastics, the divine seed resided. Man was no longer the microcosm of God, despite the shackles of sin and earthly existence. Now man was the microcosm of God because of his intellectual capacity to transcend reason. Not only that, but he was the microcosm of the universe because he embraced both the intellectual realm of the divine and the sensory realm of the material world. Earthly existence was no longer a shackle, but a vital component of the microcosmic nature of the human being. Through involvement in both realms, the human being was elevated to the position of mediator, made possible through the incarnation of Christ.

Thus, Cusanus was able to move on from the hierarchical relationship of Source to creature, characteristic of Neoplatonic thinking, to proffer a God that was imminent to the creature through the Incarnation. At the same time, he preserved the utter transcendence of God by emphasising the inability of the finite, contingent mind fully to grasp the true nature of the absolute divine in the absence of the Incarnation.

In Cusanus' work we do not yet witness a fully anthropocentric image of microcosm, for his thinking was too theocentric for that to emerge; the centre of his

¹⁸⁰ Moffatt-Watts, *Nicolaus Cusanus*, p.76.

world was still God, but by focusing upon human ignorance of God, a vital step in the direction toward human self-consciousness was taken. By considering the question of human ignorance in relation to the divine, Cusanus showed that the human mind functioned independently of both the divine and natural worlds. In the words of Moffatt Watts:

Cusanus' conception of mind represents an important step on the road to Cartesianism.¹⁸¹

Paracelsus

The century following the death of Nicholas Cusanus heralded the arrival of the Renaissance proper: the masterpieces of Leonardo Da Vinci, Michelangelo and Raphael were created, Luther rebelled against the Catholic Church, Columbus reached America and Copernicus produced the outline of a heliocentric universe.¹⁸² Such landmarks in human discovery both reflected and contributed toward a greater sense of the potential of the human being.

However, not all was positive, for this century was also characterised by tremendous religious strife, ravaging diseases, such as the Black Death, severe economic depression and the thriving of black magic and devil worship.¹⁸³

It would seem that the late fifteenth, early sixteenth centuries marked a Europe in transition; a shift toward a greater sense of human potential and creativity, which was shrouded in the vulnerability of the circumstance of human reality. Whilst the discoveries of the era highlighted the power and drive of the human spirit, the strife of disease and war was a reminder of the supernatural forces that overrode that spirit. In such an environment emerged Paracelsus, an enigmatic doctor, who

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p.225.

¹⁸² Tarnas, *Passion of the Western Mind*, p.224.

¹⁸³ J.Hargrave, *The Life & Soul of Paracelsus*, (London, Victor Gallanz Ltd., 1951), p.200.

derided the wisdom of the establishment, and claimed that human knowledge was derived not from books, but from God alone.

Paracelsus spent most of his life at loggerheads with the established medical profession, as he challenged the accepted medical authorities of the day on the basis that their wisdom was not derived from God, and was, therefore, nothing more than ignorance.¹⁸⁴ He provided his own medical system, which was based upon the principles of alchemy, the central principle of which was the microcosmic nature of the human being.

His *doctrine of Signatures* was based upon the idea that every part of the human being corresponded to some part of the universe and that the connection was made obvious by a similarity of form or colour – its signature. Once the similarity had been established, that part of the natural world, be it a leaf that had the shape of a human kidney, or a plant root that resembled another human organ, could be used to effect a treatment for the diseased organ that it resembled.¹⁸⁵

Such an idea may well sound bizarre to a mind steeped in modern scientific presuppositions. It did, nevertheless, resonate with the Neoplatonic view of the inseparability of the human being from the universe in which he lived. As with Neoplatonism, a sense of the microcosmic nature of the human being was being expressed. The doctor could find the hidden connection by means of his intellectual faculty, that gift from God, so prized by the Neoplatonists, but only if that very same doctor used his intellect in the light of absolute faith in God, and pious prayer. The intellect was to be turned inwards into the innermost depths of the doctor, as well as out into the natural world; the intellect had to understand from the heart if the connections that would make his healing effective were to be found.

¹⁸⁴ Paracelsus, *The Archidoxes of Magic by Paracelsus*, Intro. S Skinner, (London, Askin Publishers, & New York, Samuel Weiser, 1975), Introduction: The main authorities were the writings of Hippocrates, Avicenna and Galen.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Introduction.

Here are echoes of the ideas of Pseudo-Dionysius: Just as for him the hidden symbols of the divine could be discovered through prayer, faith and self-knowledge, so too, for Paracelsus, the healing of disease could be achieved only through the prayer, faith and self-knowledge of the doctor.¹⁸⁶

However, Paracelsus went beyond Pseudo-Dionysius by showing through the work of the doctor that the human being, as a microcosm of God and of the universe, could be empowered to heal in the natural world; thus, he portrayed the doctor as a channel for the restoration of health and balance in the natural world. Paracelsus expressed the potential of the human being to influence the world in which he lived that was so characteristic of his era, but at the same time, highlighted the utter dependence upon God to achieve this. His criticism of medical contemporaries was based upon his view that by acquiring their skills through textbooks and universities, they were ignorant of the divine wisdom hidden in, and communicated through nature. The knowledge of medicine could be intuited totally through nature, for in nature resided the wisdom and power of God.

Thus, unlike Cusanus, who stressed the importance of learning of our ignorance of God, Paracelsus emphasised the accessibility of divine secrets to the human being. In this respect, we can regard his image of microcosm as anthropocentric. However, the one big proviso that this accessibility depended upon the creature's total piety, prayer and self-knowledge showed that although the microcosmic image of Paracelsus was anthropocentric, it was the image of an anthropos absolutely focused upon God.

Paracelsus' image of microcosm was an alchemical one.¹⁸⁷ He reiterates the alchemical anthropocentric image of microcosm that was, nevertheless, based upon a pious faith in the guidance of the divine. The relation between God and the universe remained intact: the divine secrets were accessible through nature, as long

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p.30.

¹⁸⁷ Jung, *Alchemical Studies*, trans. Hull, p.124: Jung suggests that the spiritual aspect of Paracelsus' work and life can only be understood in the light of esoteric aspects of alchemy.

as the alchemist (or doctor) did not imagine he could access them apart from God. This is very important, for it demonstrates that although the microcosmic image was anthropocentric, God was still central in the alchemical and medical process.¹⁸⁸ God's centrality, however, was of a different ilk from the centrality of the medieval scholastic microcosmic image. In the latter, the human being was on the perimeter of the realm of the divine. The focus of the human creature was fixed upon the emanating centre of the divine, which lay far removed from the natural world. The eyes of the creature looked out toward the source of life and light. The creature participated in the divine and sought to approach that Source, despite his material form.

In the thinking of Cusanus, we detect a change in focus; the eyes of the creature become more introspective, although the aim of the introspection is to move toward that which lies beyond: look at ourselves to see what we do not know and then we can approach God. Here then, there is a greater acceptance of the importance of the material form: it has a role to play in the approach to God, albeit a negative role.

In the thinking and alchemical methods of Paracelsus is a more intensive introspection; the eyes are focused upon natural processes, the process of perfecting nature or of restoring balance and health to the human being.¹⁸⁹ The eyes of the human being are no longer drawn away from his natural habitat toward a remote emanating centre, but rather the human being finds himself as the centre: God can be found hidden in the creature's own habitat. Focus turns upon the human creature and upon his natural domain as the means of accessing the divine. God at the centre has not been usurped by the human being; it is more a case of the human being discovering his central role in the universe and discovering the divine hidden in the heart of his centre – the kernel within the nut within the fruit, so to speak. The medieval spiralling ascent out of corporeal form toward the purity and perfection of

¹⁸⁸ C. Jung, *Psychology & Alchemy*, trans. R.F.C. Hull, (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), p.314: Jung asserts that all alchemists believed their work was sacred and could only be passed on with God's help.

¹⁸⁹ Jung, *Alchemical Studies*, p.122: Jung suggests that Paracelsus was unaware of the more sinister aspects of alchemy and used it principally as a tool for healing the sick.

the Source became much more a spiralling inwards through the natural world to reveal the divine within.

A balanced nature was a perfected one and therefore one that expressed the divine. By means of alchemy, Paracelsus searched for a method of purifying mineral, plant and animal substances to release the active principles he believed to be contained in them. Under the guidance of God, the active principles could then be made into cures for diseases. Thus, Paracelsus' God dwelt in the hidden depths of the universe and was approached through experience and observations of nature, not through abstract thought.

The universe of Paracelsus, as with other alchemists, was a unified one, embraced, as well as permeated by God. God's creation was characterised by plurality, which pointed toward God's unity, hidden within the plurality. Thus, Paracelsus' cures were tailored to the needs of the individual patient, for no person was the same as another.¹⁹⁰

The One, symbolised by Paracelsus as the Sun, was the source of all life, but every expression of life was a unique combination of the varying proportions of the elements of sulphur, mercury and salt, which intermixed with the effects of astrological movement to create life. Sickness occurred when these three elements became separated. The aim of Paracelsus' alchemy was to find ways of restoring the delicate balance of the three elements and so to restore the health of the patient.

Again, echoes of the Neoplatonic appreciation of the relationship between plurality and unity are heard. However, to suggest that Paracelsus was a Neoplatonist would be far too simplistic. It is perhaps impossible to attribute any one influence upon him, as most of his life was spent wandering from country to country in search of the divine wisdom found not in books, but in the universe.¹⁹¹ As an alchemist, his world-view would have been influenced by Neoplatonism, Aristotelianism and

¹⁹⁰ Paracelsus, *Archidoxes of Magic*, p.103.

¹⁹¹ Hargrave, *Life and Soul of Paracelsus*, p.55.

possibly also Hermeticism.¹⁹² We also know that he was impressed by the Shamanism of the Mongolians and the healing methods of the Russian Tartars.¹⁹³ Hence, we must be wary of claiming an exclusively Neoplatonic influence upon his ideas. As with any genius, to attempt to pin down the source of his wisdom to a particular historical heritage is to deny the nature of his genius. He is perhaps best understood as standing outside tradition as a beacon of originality, which provided inspiration to many that followed, including Jacob Boehme, as well as being an uncomfortable thorn in the side of contemporary orthodoxy.

That having been said, it is perhaps legitimate to suggest that although we may not claim his ideas to have been derived solely from Neoplatonism, there is, nevertheless, a resonance with that tradition in his thinking. Thus, although as an individual he stands alone as an enigma, in terms of his contribution to the historical evolution of thought, his ideas, in many respects, are consistent with general Neoplatonic themes of microcosm, of the relationship between plurality and unity, of the notion of the universe as a mirror reflection of the Creator, of the belief in the hidden secrets of the divine in the universe and, consequently, of the understanding of the symbolic nature of life.

Where the resonance ended, however, was in Paracelsus' emphasis upon the earthly nature of the human being; mortals did not come down from Heaven, but grew out of the earth.¹⁹⁴ The human being was connected to the divine through the imagination, which imbued the body with life. The human being was unique within the creaturely world because through the imagination, the secrets of all life could be found within creaturely life, not beyond it. Although a product of the earth, at no point was the creature or any living thing separated from God, for God was hidden within all that had life. God was the light that gave life. The role of the doctor was to search for the light in the depths of his soul so that he could access the hidden

¹⁹² Jung, *Alchemical Studies*, p.122: Jung suggests that the chief figure in philosophical alchemy was Hermes or Mercurius of the Hermetic tradition.

¹⁹³ Hargrave, *Life and Soul of Paracelsus*, p.55.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.185.

light in all that existed in order to heal those whose light had been lost or obscured by the distortion of disease.

Thus, Paracelsus' sense of microcosm placed the human being in a pivotal position: as a product of the earth, he embraced all the features of the earth, and as the astrological movements determined the nature of every individual human being, he also embraced the features of the universe. Not only that, but as God the Light Source permeated the universe, the human being also housed within himself that very same light. The light resided in the human imagination and through this faculty, the mysteries of the divine were accessible to him, for the latter was the microcosm of God and the microcosm of the universe.¹⁹⁵ This was not a pantheistic understanding of God and nature, but a deep understanding of the meaning of unity in relation to plurality. The One manifested itself in the many and therefore, the many were manifestations of the One.

What distinguished this from pantheism was Paracelsus' understanding that the many did not possess the power of the divine; the tree, for example, did not have divine power within it, but rather the tree, or any other material thing, *symbolised* the power from which it emanated. The Paracelsan world was a deeply symbolic, metaphorical one. Such a world-view was certainly not unique to Paracelsus, for it was held by the Ancients and thus found expression in such medieval traditions as Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism. However, Paracelsus perhaps succeeded in taking the symbolism to a new depth: as symbolic of the divine Source, creation not only had the secret of self-perfection hidden within it, but also the power of healing.¹⁹⁶ The key to this secret lay in the human imagination and, therefore, the human being was pivotal. In this way, Paracelsus was able to depict a divine that was not simply the object of creaturely aspiration and identity. It was a divine that granted the human being the power of self-healing. However, this did not provide

¹⁹⁵ Paracelsus, *Selected Writings*, trans. N.Guterman, (Oxford, Princeton University Press, 1951), pp.21,103.

¹⁹⁶ A.Weeks, *Paracelsus: Speculative Theory and the Crisis of the Early Reformation*, (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1997), p.108.

humanity with autonomy, for the power was accessible only through total submission to divine guidance. In other words, the symbolism of the Paracelsan world-view promoted the potential of the human imagination to prolong life and to heal through its pious, self-less search for the divine Light within.

Jacob Boehme

Late sixteenth century Europe bore witness to tremendous mind-shifts: Tarnas points out that Lutheran protestation against Catholicism had become a powerful force, finding expression in the Reformation movement and being instrumental in the reawakening of the religiosity of the Catholic Church.¹⁹⁷ The ideas of Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo began to oust the Aristotelian and Ptolemaic astrological theories that had dominated up until this point.¹⁹⁸ What Copernicus suggested, and what Kepler and Galileo confirmed was that Aristotelian and Ptolemaic theories were wrong in supposing that the Earth was fixed and that planets revolved around it. Instead, it was the Sun that was fixed. Earth therefore, moved around the Sun, as did the other planets. This threw into jeopardy the whole Christian framework of cosmology, theology and morality. If the Earth was no longer at the centre of the universe, how could the human being be the central focus of the cosmos? What were the implications for God's special creature as the pivot connecting the spiritual and corporeal realms?¹⁹⁹

Thus, the sixteenth century was a tumultuous period, and the turmoil reached even the backwaters of Europe. Weeks suggests that the trends of Renaissance and Reformation culture could be felt in such places as Lusatia and Silesia, territories within the kingdom of Bohemia, an area which experienced political, religious and cultural restlessness.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ Tarnas, *Passion of the Western Mind*, p.233.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, pp. 248–250.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., p.253.

²⁰⁰ A. Weeks, *Boehme: An Intellectual Biography of the 17th Century Philosopher & Mystic*, (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1991), pp.14,26.

This region was the birthplace of Jacob Boehme and Weeks suggests that his writings, often appearing contradictory, were perhaps so because of the diversity of beliefs and ideas that characterised the region. It would appear that there was a strong tradition of alchemical practice here, which antedated the Reformation movement and which may well have influenced the strongly alchemical flavour of much of Boehme's writings. There was also a tradition of Paracelsan medicine, the preferred medical method of many doctors in the Lusatian city of Gorlitz. One such doctor was Abraham Behem, an important mentor for Boehme.²⁰¹

Boehme, then, had connections with alchemy and Paracelsan medicine and, like Paracelsus, considered nature, not books, to be the source of philosophical knowledge.²⁰² His writings had a strongly mystical theme, perhaps not surprising for a thinker born so close to Silesia, the "land of East German mysticism".²⁰³

The main purpose of his work was to express the powerful harmony between the inner and the external life, which he had found and which he wished others to find.²⁰⁴ Perhaps the desire to communicate such a message was made stronger by the turmoil and darkness that he felt around him in daily life. The discovery of the heliocentric universe, the heretical burnings and the political warring epitomised the nature of the transition that the sixteenth century was experiencing; a transition away from a theocentric universe, in which humanity played centre stage under the all-embracing eye of God, toward an anthropocentric universe, in which humanity searched for knowledge, either with or without God.²⁰⁵

Brinton states, "the fundamental concept to Boehme's philosophy was life."²⁰⁶ His universe consisted of "living forces, whose outer aspects half concealed and half

²⁰¹ Ibid., p.29.

²⁰² H.H. Brinton, *The Mystic Will*, (London, Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1931), p.11.

²⁰³ Weeks, *Boehme*, p.14.

²⁰⁴ Brinton, *Mystic Will*, p.8.

²⁰⁵ Weeks, *Boehme*, p.33.

²⁰⁶ Brinton, *Mystic Will*, p.81.

revealed the inner vital essence.”²⁰⁷ As Brinton suggests, the Renaissance emphasis upon life was a step away from the medieval emphasis upon idea, and a step short of the modern interest in matter and energy. Thus, by focusing upon life, Boehme showed himself to be part of the historical period bridging medieval and modern thinking.²⁰⁸

For Boehme, the universe was driven by a powerful internal dynamic, the source of which was the abysmal energy of the divine Will, which had two aspects: a driving out-going Will and an introspective in-going Will.²⁰⁹ Divine consciousness was aroused through the tension generated between them. Sophia, the passive mirror of divine wisdom and the product of the out-going Will, provided the means by which the raw power of the divine could reflect upon itself, stirring divine consciousness. Thus, there was a triadic pattern, described by Brinton as trinitarian,²¹⁰ to the dynamic underlying the universe; the tension between the two polar wills of the divine generated the third element, divine consciousness. A second trinity emerged out of this: the interaction between the divine and Sophia produced the divine Son and through the interaction between the Son (the principle of light) and the Father (the principle of darkness), the divine came to know itself.²¹¹

As divine consciousness accumulated, Sophia, the mirror of divine consciousness, became the divine imagination. The Son was the principle of light because it was the product of divine reflection through the mirror of consciousness. Contained in this image is the understanding that consciousness occurs only through the relation of an object to a subject. In the first trinity, the passive Sophia provides the mirror through which the divine can reflect upon itself. In this way, the divine subject sees itself as an object in the mirror. The arousal of divine self-interest generates divine desire to acquire full self-knowledge, possible only by having an object wholly separate from the divine abyss. The Son is the light of the Father, the product of

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p.11.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p.2.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., pp.13,14.

²¹⁰ Ibid., p.169.

²¹¹ Ibid., p.182.

consciousness. The Father remains the power of darkness, in terms of the hidden potential of the divine. The Holy Spirit is created through the interaction between Father and Son, i.e. the interaction between darkness and light. This forms the second trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which composes the divine plan of creation, referred to by Boehme as the divine imagination. Through the divine imagination, the unconditioned divine Wills become manifest and conditioned.²¹²

In this way, Boehme depicts the vital energies that lie at the heart of creation. His description of the way in which nature is created through the conflicting interaction between the opposing forces of ingoing Will and outgoing Will is of a seven stage process, the first two stages being the making of the two trinities, outlined above. At each stage, the interaction between opposing forces triggers an effect.²¹³ In the third stage, for example, the opposing forces of the previous stage operate against each other in such a way as to generate a rotation, called by Boehme the *wheel of nature*, through which physical nature is produced. The wheel is moved by the tension and conflict generated by the opposing forces of the ingoing and outgoing Wills, which generates a spark – the creation of nature.²¹⁴

Boehme depicts the continuing process of divine self-knowledge in a similar way, by showing the opposition between polar forces to build up to a crescendo, culminating in a sudden, dramatic spark or explosion, which brings about the creation of the next stage of the process. Upon the attainment of the seventh and final stage of nature, there is a harmonisation of the opposing forces of the divine Will; it has come full circle and achieved true self-knowledge through the creation of nature and the universe, that which stands in objective relation to the divine.²¹⁵

²¹² Ibid, p.106.

²¹³ Brinton, *Mystic Will*, p.186: In Stage One, the interaction between Sophia and the divine power causes the creation of the Son, the principle of Light. In the second stage, the effect of the interaction between the Father and the Son is the creation of the Holy Spirit.

²¹⁴ J.Boehme, *The Threefold Life of Man*, trans. J .Sparrow, (London, J.M. Watkins, 1909), p.xxv-xxix.

²¹⁵ Ibid., p.53.

Thus, Boehme depicts a multi-staged progression toward a return to the Source. In this respect, there are echoes of the Neoplatonic notion of the hierarchical ascension to the Source. However, whereas the Neoplatonists depict this as a creaturely ascension, Boehme describes it as both creaturely ascension and divine return. The journey of developing human consciousness interacts with the divine return to Source so that, upon the seventh stage of nature, there is a total harmonisation of human consciousness and divine self-consciousness, expressed as mystical union.

What is the connection between the human creature and the divine? The answer to this lies in the microcosmic nature of humanity. In a very similar vein to Paracelsus, Boehme shows that human imagination is the potent link between the divine and the universe, for it is the microcosm of the divine imagination, which is accessed through *vernunft* (*conceptual reasoning*) and *verstand* (*mystical understanding*).²¹⁶

Reason, referred to by Boehme as *vernunft*, is the faculty by which the human being is able to recognise the outward forms of the divine power. These outward forms of the physical world are the effects of the inner dynamics of the divine life. The human being in the world of nature is therefore, able to perceive the outer layer of the divine life. However, *vernunft* enables the human being to perceive no more than this outer layer, which is nothing more than the effect of the dynamic clash of opposing Wills at the centre of life. As Brinton suggests, *Vernunft* knows “outwardly after the form” but not “inwardly after the power.”²¹⁷ However, *Vernunft* houses true knowledge, expressed by Boehme as *verstand* and true knowledge is the means by which the human being accesses divine wisdom. For Boehme, the main weakness of *vernunft* is its incapacity for the reconciling of contradictions. *Verstand*, by contrast, penetrates the contradictions of form by accessing the source of wisdom.

The two notions of *vernunft* and *verstand* are symbolic expressions of the ingoing and outgoing Wills of the divine. *Vernunft* represents the assertive, aggressive

²¹⁶ Brinton, *Mystic will*, pp.100-102.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.* p.100.

outgoing will caught up in materiality and the world of distinction. Verstand represents the still, ingoing Will in pursuit of unity. Thus, by means of the two terms, Boehme shows the way in which the internal dynamics of divine life are reiterated in human life.

He stresses the importance of vernunft's being harnessed to verstand, for in that way, vernunft is fortified by the penetrating wisdom of verstand, allowing vernunft to become the vehicle of verstand. Verstand is mystical, vernunft conceptual. The former is superior to the latter, but the latter is necessary to the former as its mouthpiece.²¹⁸

Thus, Boehme establishes the understanding that divine wisdom is accessible in human mystical experience. In this respect, his view reiterates that of the alchemists. By knowing the innermost depths of the self through verstand, one learns also the innermost depths of life. However, he does not promote verstand at the expense of vernunft. Knowledge of God is not simply through introspection, but also through knowledge of nature; in order to penetrate the secrets of nature, the secrets of the self must also be penetrated. In other words, Boehme promotes a microcosmic understanding of the human being. Through vernunft and verstand he can learn of the power of life in both his internal and external life. Here, echoes of Paracelsan thinking can be heard. It is the role of the human imagination to seek out the power of the divine hidden within nature and to do this, the divine power hidden within the self must be discovered. Human imagination is connected to that of the divine and, through this connection, the divine journey through the process of the seven stages of nature is executed. In other words, divine self-knowledge is facilitated through human consciousness.²¹⁹

²¹⁸ Ibid., p.103: "What is opaque and meaningless and full of contradictions to vernunft is transparent to verstand because vernunft attempts to go through the external to the internal while verstand works through inner unity outward."

²¹⁹ Ibid., p.108.

Human consciousness, like that of the divine, requires an object upon which the subject may come to know itself. It is the divine that provides the object for the human creature and the human creature that provides the object for the divine. The consciousness of the human creature is reflected back to the divine through Sophia, the Mirror of Wisdom, which allows God to gain true self-knowledge and, again, through Sophia, divine consciousness is communicated to the human creature, for Sophia, as the agent of divine consciousness, is divine imagination.

Thus Boehme ascribes an active role for the human being in the process of divine self-knowledge. Unlike the Neoplatonic ascent to the source, in which the divine return was independent of creaturely ascent, the Boehmic divine return was determined by the ascent of the creature. Through the consciousness of the creature, the divine return through self-knowledge was facilitated. Boehme depicted an utterly connected relationship between the universe and the divine, with the human imagination binding the two. Thus, Boehme's understanding of the way in which the universe mirrored the divine was far more dynamic and interactive than his predecessors', for, through his emphasis upon the subject's need for an object for the attainment of self-knowledge, not only did the universe reflect the divine, the divine also reflected the universe. As Brinton suggests:

Life for Boehme is a circular process, which arises out of an organic union of subjective and objective.²²⁰

By establishing the objectivity of the creature, while preserving its vital connection with the divine, Boehme moved toward a far more anthropocentric sense of microcosm, in which the connection between the divine and the creature was expressed in terms of shared intrinsic dialectical forces in the lives of both.

²²⁰ Brinton, *Mystic Will*, p.105.

Conclusion

The Renaissance was a period in history that grew out of the soil of the Middle Ages. The fact that the microcosmic theme was central to the thinking of Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism made it a theme that would inevitably permeate the Renaissance as well as the Middle Ages, for both philosophies remained deeply entrenched in the European psyche into the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and beyond.

The Renaissance retained the spiralling cosmology of the Middle Ages, until the scientific revolution shook those foundations. It also retained an acknowledgement of the connection between the creature and its Creator. The universe mirrored the divine; the multiplicity of the universe was in relative opposition to the unity of the divine. The universe was caught up in the dynamics of the divine.

However, although the Renaissance was the offspring of its medieval parent, as with any offspring, it had its own voice that sang a tune very different from its parent. Although the above mentioned themes of the Middle Ages could be found in the Renaissance, they had evolved; cosmology was still of a spiralling nature, but the dynamics within it were different. Thus, between the time of Plotinus and Paracelsus, the creature's relation to God had dramatically changed. No longer was the creature on the periphery of the divine Light; he was centre stage with the divine accessible through the depths of his soul and the depths of nature. By the time of Boehme's writings, the status of humanity had been upgraded even more: the self-sufficiency of Plotinus' divine was no longer valid. Human consciousness worked alongside that of the divine to facilitate God's return. The universe was still a mirror of the divine, but the nature of the reflection had changed: it was now a reflection that revealed the divine to Himself, not simply a passive reflection of a God, self-sufficient in His perfection. The medieval theme of the perfection of the Ideal, which lay beyond life, had now been replaced by the inner vitality of life itself.

The shift in mindset from the medieval theocentric universe to one of a more anthropocentric nature was reflected in the development of the microcosmic theme. For Cusanus, the human being was not the microcosm of God because he could ascend toward the *Nous* of God or because he had the potential of *Nous* within his soul, as medieval thinkers had maintained. Instead, God was qualitatively separate from creation. However, humanity had the ability to commune with God by going beyond reason and experiencing mystical unity with the divine. Moreover, God was also accessible through the human senses. The two qualities of mystical intuition and sensory perception made humanity the connecting link between God and the universe. Thus, Cusanus' microcosmic theme placed humanity in the role of mediator and conveyor of divine understanding. With Cusanus can be seen the beginning of a more dynamic and intimate relationship between God the macrocosm, and humanity the microcosm.

What Paracelsus added to the microcosmic theme was the idea that the microcosm was capable of healing within the universe. Thus, not only could the human being assist nature in the process of perfection, as propounded by the alchemical tradition, he could also fathom the secrets of the universe in order to prolong life. There was no longer a sense of needing to escape the physical realm in order to return to God: God, it would seem, was present in the physical and accessible through the piety, self-knowledge and prayer of the microcosm.

So, from the theocentric microcosm of the medieval Neoplatonists, we arrive at the anthropocentric microcosm of Paracelsus. The evolution of the microcosmic theme from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance was characterised by an intensifying sense of human empowerment. The ultimate empowerment came, however, with Jacob Boehme and his appreciation of the divine's need for humanity in the quest for divine self-knowledge. In his writing, humanity's role was not simply to channel divine power for the benefit of the universe, but to bring divine consciousness to full realisation. The human being was the microcosm because he participated in the polar forces of the divine. Thus, Boehme's microcosmic theme was a thoroughly

dynamic one, elevating humanity and history to such a status that the divine purpose would be unfulfilled without it.

The evolution of the theme of microcosm was one in which humanity was shown to be increasingly empowered. From a God-centred understanding of the universe, emerged a human-centred one. However, let us remember that this was not the anthropocentrism of the Modern and Post-Modern periods. It was anthropocentrism within the context of microcosm/macrocosm; the human being was empowered by the macrocosm, God. The relation with God was still very present and the harmony and unity of the universe was still preserved by God. There was a growing sense of empowerment, but empowerment in relation to the whole. The microcosmic theme of the Renaissance retained the sense of the organic, complete and harmonious nature of creation, which had been maintained in the Middle Ages, even though human consciousness began to show signs of the sense of empowerment that would later erode this unity. Before the ideas of the Renaissance fully matured into those of the Enlightenment, the microcosmic theme still retained the power of the spiral, that symbol of unity, perfection and empowerment that was broken when the force of reason became unleashed from that of imagination.

Chapter 3

The Microcosmic Theme Underlying Tillich's Theology

This chapter aims to expose the microcosmic theme in Tillich's theological system and to consider the way in which an appreciation of it brings Tillich's method of correlation into a new pattern of coherence. In particular, the chapter focuses upon four aspects of Tillich's theology: his insistence upon triadic formulation, in terms of both content and structure, his use of dialectic, the significance of symbol in his system and the centrality of the notion of creaturely freedom. Through a consideration of these aspects, it is hoped that the microcosmic theme underlying his theology will be made plain and that the method of correlation will be recognised as an integral part of that theme.

Kenneth Hamilton offers a critique of Tillich's method of correlation. He argues that Tillich has a whole system into which he fits the elements he wishes to first and then applies the method to show the way in which everything interlocks.²²¹ He suggests that this invalidates the method on the grounds that the questions and answers have been fabricated by Tillich in order that his system should be kept whole. There is, Hamilton argues, consequently, no clear distinction between question and answer. Tillich's attempt to show that analytical questions and religious answers are quite distinct and, at the same time, have a strong resonance makes his method "barren and incredible".²²²

²²¹ Kenneth Hamilton, *The System and the Gospel: A Critique of Paul Tillich* (London, SCM Press Ltd., 1963), p.28.

²²² Hamilton, *The System & the Gospel*, p.123.

He argues that with regard to the method of correlation, the questions asked and the answers given can only correlate when the asker shares with the respondent a common view of the universe. He questions this assumption with regard to modern humanity and the Christian message and accuses Tillich of “demanding that the message of Christianity” conforms “to the mental horizons obtaining to this theory”.²²³

Hamilton observes that Tillich’s unity between question and answer is “the unity of the system itself”,²²⁴ that the system is circular in nature, within which the method of correlation operates.²²⁵ He argues that the circle is nothing other than the “fenced-off area circumscribed by his ontology”.²²⁶

Hamilton’s claim that Tillich begins with a view of the whole and that his theological system evokes a sense of circle is a view with which this thesis would certainly concur. However, it would not agree that the circle was simply the parameters of his ontology. If Tillich does begin with the whole system, it is necessary to ask why he begins in that way. What underlying appreciation of wholeness did Tillich have that made him envisage the whole system first? What is the circular imagery that underlies the system? Is it nothing more than the limiting boundaries of his ontology?

It is the argument of this thesis that the circular imagery is derived from a sense of the microcosmic/macrocosmic relationship between creature and Creator. This is an appreciation that is not created by Tillich and his ontology, but one that is rooted in the depths of the Christian tradition, into which Tillich was born. Tillich does not create a circle to fulfill his ambition of constructing a complete theological system, but does so out of the sense of wholeness that is generated by a microcosmic appreciation of life in relation to the divine.

²²³ Ibid., p.121.

²²⁴ Ibid., p.127.

²²⁵ Ibid., p.128.

²²⁶ Ibid., p.132.

To suggest that Tillich's system and, consequently, his method, are based upon a sense of microcosm, does not mean that Tillich had a conscious awareness of it. That he had a partial sense of it is quite apparent – he refers a total of seven times in the first two volumes of *Systematic Theology* to the Renaissance microcosmic world-view.²²⁷ However, he does not state explicitly in his theology that he speaks in microcosmic terms. It would be misleading, therefore, to assume that the circular nature of his system is a deliberate attempt to depict a microcosmic/macrocosmic relationship between creature and Creator. Nevertheless, it is possible to suggest that the circular nature of his ontology and his system are expression of a partially conscious and, therefore, partially unconscious sense of the microcosmic world-view that had been so deeply entrenched in the western Christian psyche of Europe prior to the period of the Enlightenment.

Hamilton assumes that Tillich's theology is based upon a Platonic-Hegelian view.²²⁸ Whilst not wishing to contradict Hamilton in this respect with regard to the conscious aspects of Tillich's thinking, what this thesis wishes to argue is that Tillich's theology is also based subliminally upon the microcosmic world-view that predominated in his theological heritage of the Renaissance. Tillich's explicit theology concurred with such a world-view, but it was perhaps not fully realised by Tillich himself. Thus, his attempt to express the wholeness he instinctively felt led him to produce a system that was self-sufficient. It is the aim of this chapter to show the way in which his explicit theology concurs with a microcosmic world-view.

²²⁷ References to microcosmos in *Systematic Theology* appear in the following places: vol.1: pp.176, 190, 260, 261; vol.2: pp.23,120; vol.3: pp.18, 19, 34, 52, 84, 85, 322. In vol.1, p.176 two references to microcosm are made in relation to Nicholas Cusanus. The later thinking of Leibniz is also mentioned. On p.260, reference is made to Paracelsus & Boehme. The later ideas of Schelling are also referred to. On p.261 both Paracelsus and Schelling are mentioned again. In vol.2, pp.23 and 120, reference is made to microcosm in connection with the Renaissance, in general. The Enlightenment is also mentioned. In vol.3, all references to microcosm are made in connection with the realms making up the multi-dimensional unity of life.

²²⁸ Hamilton, *The System and the Gospel*, p.121.

Section 1: Triadic Formulation in Tillich's System

Triadic Formulation in the Content of Tillich's System

In Chapter One, we discovered the presence of triadic formulation in Tillich's system with regard to the life of the divine, described as the unity of the three divine Principles of Godhead (power), Logos (structure) and Spirit (meaning). The polarities of Godhead and Logos are united by the third principle, Spirit. We saw also that this pattern is repeated in the life of the creature by virtue of the fact that finite life is grounded in that of the divine. However, in contrast to the harmonious unity of divine life, creaturely life is characterised by the tense dialectical relationship between eros (power in existential terms) and logos (structure in existential terms). The third element of the triad, Spirit, is made accessible to the creature through the dimension of spirit, manifest in existence through the reflective capacity of the human psyche.

The triadic formulation is repeated in the content of Tillich's theological system; his depiction of the ontological structure of being has two polar elements, subject and object, which are given coherence through the third element, reality. Moreover, the ontological structural elements of being consist of the same triadic formulation: the polarities of individualisation and participation are reconciled by the transcending third element of self-integration; the polarities of dynamics and form find resolution in the third transcending element, self-creation, and freedom and destiny find reconciliation in self-transcendence. Through the process of life, the creature participates in the rhythmical phases of the ontological structure, expressed as self-identity - self-alteration – return-to-self, which reiterate in existential terms the very rhythm of the divine life itself, described by Tillich as the eternal movement within God of emanation and return.

Hence, the content of his theological system is based upon the principle of polar tension reconciled by a transcending, uniting principle. For the creature, the dialectical nature of existence is reconciled through the uniting principle of Spirit.

For the Creator, the unity becomes dialectical through the actualising process of existence.

Having established above that there is a connection in Tillich's system between the three functions of life (self-integration, self-creation and self-transcendence) and the rhythm of the divine life (emanation and return within unity), it is important to make very clear the precise nature of the connection because by so doing, the utterly dynamic resonance between divine and creaturely life is revealed. Through the resonance, the creature becomes ever more conscious of being itself fuelling creaturely existence.

The Resonance between Divine Life and Creaturely Life

In Chapter One, we learned that the ontological structure of being was based upon the self-world correlation. Only when a subject has an object can the subject come to know itself. In Chapter Two, we saw this idea featuring strongly in the thinking of Boehme.²²⁹ For him, the creature became the object for the divine, enabling the latter to come fully to know itself. Equally, the divine provided the object for the creature, necessary for the full realisation of human consciousness. A similar idea is expressed in Tillich's self-world correlation and subject-object structure of reality.²³⁰

Thus, in the self-world correlation there is a three-phased movement: the starting point of self, which Tillich defines as self-identity; the movement away from self, which Tillich terms self-alteration, and finally, the return to self, referred to as self-transcendence. This is the reiteration of the very rhythm of the divine life itself.²³¹

²²⁹ John Dourley, 'A critical Evaluation of Paul Tillich's Appropriation of Jakob Boehme.' Presented at the European Tillich Society (May, 2000), p.1. Dourley suggests that Boehme's central assertion is, "...that a deity unable to unite its own conflictual opposites in eternity created humanity out of necessity in order to perceive and resolve in human historical life the self-contradiction it could not resolve in its own."

²³⁰ John Dourley, *The Psyche as Sacrament: A Comparative Study of C.G.Jung and Paul Tillich* (Toronto, Inner City Books, 1981), p.19.

²³¹ See pp.21,22 above: for Tillich, divine life is an eternal process of emanation and return.

What distinguishes the latter from the former is the unity in which the principles of the divine life act. Hence, the three principles of the divine life appear to generate a two-fold rhythm of emanation and return. In contrast, in the self-world correlation, there is no unity and so in existential terms there are three distinct elements in the rhythm: self-identity, self-alteration and self-transcendence. (The significance of this distinction will be returned to later in this chapter.)²³²

The ontological structure of being, argues Tillich, is of a thoroughly dynamic nature. It is energy, not mass.²³³ Moreover, it is energy given structure by its dialectical nature. The force of self-identity - the introspective, contractive, structuring force - is in perpetual conflict with the force of self-alteration - the outgoing, expansive force. Both forces are equal, creating a tension that is utterly vibratory and oscillatory. Through the tremendous tension comes a breakthrough, a release, which Tillich describes as a transcending of both polar forces.²³⁴ This breakthrough is a creative overcoming of mutual resistance, which generates a new identity of self. The scene is therefore set for the next creative breakthrough to occur through the next build up of tension generated from the new identity of self.

The ontological structure itself is non-substantial, non-causal, non-spatial and non-temporal. It is the very energy of the divine as the divine relates to the creature. In short, the creature is grounded in the dynamics of divine energy.

Tillich then attempts in his discussion of the ontological elements of being to establish the connection between time, space, causality and substance on the one hand, and divine energy on the other. He attempts to show the way in which this energy finds expression in existential life. So he makes the very abstract principle of ontological structure more concrete by focusing upon life itself, rather than the

²³² See pp.150-156 below.

²³³ Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1959), p.23:

“Awareness of the Unconditioned has not the character of ‘intuition’, for the Unconditioned does not appear in this awareness as a “Gestalt” to be intuited, but as an element, a power, as demand.”

²³⁴ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, pp.30-31.

dynamic structure underpinning life and, at the same time, showing life to be grounded in the ontological structure.

He begins with the idea of the individual; the way one individual encounters another corresponds to the self-identity phase of the underlying rhythm of the divine forces.²³⁵ The tension of the forces in this phase is expressed in creaturely life as the tension between being an individual and being a participant. The breakthrough is expressed as self-identity in creaturely life. Again, even in terms of creaturely life, it is important not to understand the dialectical process in categorical terms: we know, for example, that our need to be accepted as an individual and as a member of a group or of a community is simultaneous. Sometimes, we incline more toward one extreme than another, but even then, the fact that it is an inclination means that the draw toward the other pole is still present. There may well be, in the lives of each and every one of us, examples of times when we wanted to be alone, or of places when we wished that we were not alone, but these are not to be confused with the non-temporal and non-spatial dynamic forces that underlie those experiences.

Life is ambiguous at every moment because the forces in which we are grounded are oscillatory. The oscillation is undetectable because it is not conditioned by time, space, causality or substance. It is perhaps better described as vibratory. Tillich wishes to 'show us that as long as we are in existence, the power of the dynamic forces of being, in their mutual resistance, are inescapable. They are in our depths, not external to us. However, that does not mean that we are their passive victims. We are not like driftwood being tossed on a chaotic sea. We are rooted in them and therefore, they are part of our identity and an integral part of our humanity. If we are to understand what it means to be human, we must realise that we are rooted in this way. Life is ambiguous because of forces in which we are grounded, but despite its appearance, they are not chaotic. The forces that underpin life are creatively held together as unity and so we, as the manifestation of those

²³⁵ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, p.30.

forces, are part of the creative unity. Thus, with regard to the first function of life, the creative resolution of the tension between individualisation and participation is depicted as self-integration - the existential manifestation of the self-identity phase of the ontological forces. The process of consciousness starts here with the individual and corresponds to the introspective, structuring phase of the ontological forces.

Tillich moves on to depict the self-alteration phase in existential terms as the dynamics and form polarity.²³⁶ Here, Tillich broadens the focus from the individual to culture. We see the way in which individuals look beyond themselves and create a community and the community looks beyond itself and blends with others. Out of this outgoing drive emerges culture.²³⁷ The ambiguities of life are still present because the oscillating divine forces generating the ambiguities still underpin culture, as they do the individual within culture; but in cultural terms, they are present as the ambiguity between dynamics and form. The tension of the underlying forces finds expression in existence through the perpetual conflict between the drive of culture to create itself and the expression of that drive; creative expression is a perpetual battle between creativity and structure. Culture transcends the individual and yet, is generated by every individual's desire to go beyond self. Thus, this aspect of life naturally corresponds to the self-alteration phase of the dynamic rhythm.

In the third set of polarities, we see a further broadening of focus from the self-alteration phase of the ontological rhythm to the return-to-self phase. Tillich uses the polarities of freedom and destiny to depict this in existential terms. Chapter One depicted this as the crescendo in Tillich's theology, the point at which the finite creature reaches out beyond self, beyond culture, and finally beyond finitude.²³⁸ This is the point at which the finite creature asks what it means to be finite. In asking this question, the creature cries out for the object that will reveal the nature

²³⁶ Ibid. p.31.

²³⁷ See pp.35-37 above.

²³⁸ See pp.36-39 above.

of finitude to it. The object is provided in the form of the infinite. But the crying out, as with any heart felt cry, is a cry from the depths as well as into the beyond, and through the depths as well as from the beyond the cry is answered. The answer received tells us that to be finite is to be grounded in the infinite, but to be grounded in such a way that the infinite cannot be embraced by us because we are embraced by it. Thus, the third set of polarities leads to the return to self: the creature discovers its humanity by means of venturing to go beyond itself.

The third function of life, self-transcendence, is the transcending phase that satisfies the process generated by the two previous functions of self-identity and self-alteration. The process generated is one of reaching out in search of our identity. In our movement out beyond ourselves we find the divine response, the effect of which is the triggering of the return to our creaturely selves in satisfaction and completeness. In this way, the third phase expresses the return-to-self phase of the self-world correlation.

As suggested earlier, not only does the creature come to know itself through the reaching out to the divine, but the divine is also recognised as Creator. When the creature asks about the meaning of finitude, it effectively asks the infinite to reveal itself. In this revelation, the infinite is recognised as the Creator not only by the creature, but by the infinite as well.

Now we must be very careful not to lead Tillich too far in the direction of Boehmic thinking at this point. It would be wrong to conclude from the above statement that Tillich therefore regarded the creature as necessary for divine actualisation, as Boehme's ideas suggest.²³⁹ Tillich retains the idea of God's utter self-sufficiency in his theology. He retains the notion of the abysmal nature and sheer perfection of God and therefore, the impossibility that God should be lacking in any way. So how does he do this if he asserts at the same time that the creature does have a function in the divine life?

²³⁹ See Dourley, 'A critical Evaluation of Paul Tillich's Appropriation of Jakob Boehme'.

He achieves this by drawing a distinction between the infinite in relation to the finite and the infinite beyond the infinite.²⁴⁰ The face of God that turns to the creature is that of the infinite Creator. Just as an individual can only know another as s/he relates to the individual, so too, the finite can only know the infinite as it relates to the finite. The nature of that relationship is one of Creator and creature. In other words, although the finite creature is grounded in the life of the divine, it is the life of the divine in its creative function that we recognise. Through the resonance, or as Tillich would perhaps prefer, through the correlation between Creator and creature, the creature comes to know itself as finite and the Creator comes to show itself as the creative ground of finite life.

The question of the meaning of finitude is asked through culture and inevitably, therefore, through history, making human self-consciousness evolve and expand through the process of history. The nature of the question asked by the creature and the answer given is determined by the conditions of existence. Thus, through the conditions of existence, the divine as Creator comes to reveal itself to the creature. Through the reality of time, space, causality and substance, the fullness of the creative power of the divine is realised.

Tillich's theology depicts the resonance between human self-consciousness and infinite consciousness, or the correlation between human self-manifestation and infinite manifestation. Existence is crucial for the infinite/finite relationship, for the finite creature comes to know itself as finite and the infinite Creator comes to show itself as infinitely creative.

If we return to consider how the functions of the ontological structural elements of being correspond to the rhythm of the divine life, we can perhaps see a little more clearly the way in which the rhythm of self-identity, self-alteration and return-to-self of the creaturely life correlates with that of the divine life. There is synchronicity between the two, brought about by the pivotal role that creation and

²⁴⁰ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, p.191.

the creative process of life plays for both. Only through the historical process of creaturely consciousness can the Creator manifest its creativity.²⁴¹

In Chapter One, it was suggested that triadic formulation permeated the structure as well as the content of Tillich's theological system. Brief reference was made to Kelsey's observations of the structure of Tillich's *Systematic Theology* in this respect. It is necessary now to take a closer look at those observations, in order to illustrate the precise way in which the structure of Tillich's system reiterates the triadic pattern of the content of the system.

Triadic Formulation in the Structure of Tillich's System

Kelsey argues that Tillich's three volumes of *Systematic Theology* are divided into five parts. Each part addresses specific existential questions, which are answered by reference to particular religious symbols, i.e. each question is correlated to an answer in the form of a religious symbol. He argues that Part One, *Reason and Revelation*, raises questions about the possibility of certain truth, which are answered by the religious symbol, *Logos*. In Part Two, *Being and God*, questions are asked about the nature of human finitude and correlated with the answering symbol, *God*. Part Three, *Existence and the Christ*, deals with questions raised with regard to the estrangement of humanity. The symbol proffered in response is that of *Jesus as the Christ*. Part Four offers *Spirit* as the answer to the questions raised by the ambiguities of religion, culture and morality. Finally, Part Five asks questions about the meaning of history, which is answered in the symbol, *Kingdom of God*.

Kelsey goes on to suggest that the five parts do not form a sequential argument because Tillich's theology is arranged by a different principle. The five parts resolve into three distinct subdivisions. Parts One and Two deal with questions

²⁴¹ Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, p.31: "What has happened in nature unconsciously happens in man and history consciously".

concerning man's essential nature, Part Three considers the question of his existential nature and Parts Four and Five raise questions about the meaning of historical life.

The relationship between the three subdivisions is not parallel, argues Kelsey: the third embraces the issues that are raised in the other two.²⁴² The structure of Tillich's system reiterates the dialectical approach taken with regard to the content of his theology; the third subdivision of the question of history and its correlation to the symbols, Spirit and Kingdom of God, embraces the two previous subdivisions. Thus, it echoes the synthesising function of the third element of the dialectical method: from the yes of essential being to the no of existential being, onto the synthesising and transcending yes of Spirit and the Kingdom of God. Kelsey's observations help us to see that triadic formulation is present in the very structure of Tillich's system.

Kelsey does not suggest a triadic connection between the structure and content of Tillich's theological system. Nevertheless, Kelsey's observations, outlined above, can be used to lend weight to the argument of this thesis that triadic formulation is crucial both to the structure and content of Tillich's theological system. It is the means by which the dialectical nature of the divine in relation to the creature is depicted. J. L. Adams comments upon this in a discussion about Tillich's interest in architecture. He suggests:

.... Just as in his 'Address to Dedication' one observes in Tillich the impulse always to form an architectonic structure, so one may observe it also in his whole system of thought. One is reminded of Goethe's famous characterisation of the philosophy of Aristotle in which he compares it to a pyramid. Tillich's

²⁴² Kelsey, *The Fabric of Paul Tillich's Theology*, p.14.

thought as can readily be observed in his 'System of the Sciences' also possesses pyramidal quality.²⁴³

Now, what are we to make of Adams' and Kelsey's observations and of the presence in Tillich's theology of triadic patterns? Could it be simply confirmation of Hamilton's argument that the structure of Tillich's system demands a certain cohesive pattern for the contents of the system; that the outline is established first and the contents are made to fit into the shape? Or could it be that underlying his thinking and the consequent shape of his system is something much deeper than an idiosyncratic style of thinking? Could it be that this triadic style is determined by Tillich's deep sense of the microcosmic/macrocosmic relation between God and humanity? Could it be that the dialectical method of *yes*, *no* and on to a transcending *yes* is used by Tillich because it is a wholly appropriate way of depicting the microcosmic understanding of life?

The same dialectical approach is detectable in the classical notion of divine emanation and return, discussed in Chapter Two. There, we saw that Pseudo-Dionysius employed a dialectical method in his theology. For him, the approach to God was through the process of theological affirmation, followed by negation, leading to a resolving superlative theology.

Nicholas Cusanus employed a similar method in his *de Docta Ignorantia*, in which he propounded his doctrine of the coincidence of opposites – God transcends all opposites; in other words the *yes* and *no* are transcended by the reconciling *yes*.

Finally, Jacob Boehme depicted the relationship of the divine and the creature in terms of subject and object: the creature, the product of the outward dynamic of the divine will, provides the object upon which the divine can project, in order that the divine may achieve full self-knowledge. Here, he expresses the idea that in the divine emanation away from itself, the *no* that the creature as object represents

²⁴³ J.L. Adams, *Paul Tillich's Theology of Culture, Science and Religion* (New York, Harper & Row, 1965), p.99.

provides the means by which the divine transcends its original *yes* as potential and finds expression as *yes* as actual.

It would appear, therefore, that the method of dialectic is a wholly adequate way of depicting the classical idea of divine emanation and return, intimately connected with the understanding of the microcosmic relation of the human being to God. This is supported by Tillich's own words:

...they [classical German philosophers] were right (and so were most classical theologians) in using the dialectics of life in order to describe the eternal process of the divine ground of being.²⁴⁴

What can be concluded from this is that Tillich's employment of a triadic, dialectical method in his theology, therefore, would not preclude him from having a microcosmic sense of the relation between the creature and the Creator.

Now, to argue that his theology concurs with a microcosmic appreciation of life on the strength of his use of dialectic alone would be somewhat weak. However, to couple his use of dialectic with his understanding of finitude's relation to the divine would dramatically strengthen the argument. The idea that dialectic was the means by which Tillich chose to depict the life of the divine in relation to that of the finite creature would appear to be an approach consistent with the classical understanding of the microcosmic relationship between creature and Creator. Just as in the classical tradition, life was the product of divine emanation and, as such, was part of the unity that was held together by the divine, so too, for Tillich, the creature is grounded in the divine by virtue of the fact that the latter participates in the dynamic forces of the divine life. Tillich's assertion that the Doctrine of the Trinity is dialectical and reflects the dialectic of life, "namely the movement of separation and reunion" supports the view that Tillich's theological perspective was consistent with

²⁴⁴ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, p.284.

the classical tradition in this respect.²⁴⁵ He argues that the trinitarian statement that three is one and one is three is not paradoxical, but rather the description of “all life processes”.²⁴⁶

The suggestion here is not that Tillich’s use of dialectic was a deliberate tool for depicting a microcosmic theme, but that behind Tillich’s deliberate choice of correlation and dialectic in his system was a sense of unity that he intuited but perhaps was unable to make fully explicit in his work. It was a theme that lay in the depths of the western Christian tradition and which was, therefore, part of Tillich’s heritage, but it was a theme which had been covered over by a more recent heritage with which he was more consciously engaged.

If this argument is to be upheld, it is necessary to consider what difference a microcosmic appreciation of life would make to Tillichian theology. More specifically, we must ask: what difference would it make to his method of correlation, if it were seen as an expression of a microcosmic world-view?

In order to begin to answer this question, it is necessary to consider Tillich’s use of symbol in his system, for symbol is the means by which Tillich shows the life of the creature to participate in the life of the divine in a meaningful way. For Tillich, divine life and creaturely life correlate through the vehicle of finite language, for language functions in a symbolic way to depict the Creator/creature relationship.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., p.284.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., p.285.

Section Two: Microcosm and Tillich's Method of Correlation

Symbol

One of the expressions used by Tillich to depict God is *being itself*.²⁴⁷ Everything that has life participates in being itself because being itself is the power that is in all life forms. It follows that, for Tillich, being itself, or the unconditioned, to use another of his terms, is present in the universe and in culture.²⁴⁸ He argues that religion is not simply a sphere within culture, but is concerned to seek out the unconditioned. It is that which is ultimately concerned and expresses the dimension of depth in every cultural activity.²⁴⁹ In this way, Tillich shows everything in life to be grounded in being itself and to be a potential source of religious expression. By expressing God in such terms, he establishes firmly that existential life is rooted in the dynamic forces of the divine life through the ontological structure of being. God is in the depths and, indeed, *is* the depths of existence. The life-force of existence is the manifestation of the divine power.

An awareness of this power is not gained through a particular mental faculty of the human being, but through the wholeness of the human being in the everyday activities of life. To live spiritually is not to separate oneself from everyday existence, but to recognise the dimension of depth in every activity, no matter how mundane that activity may be.

Tillich argues that the capacity to live a spiritual life is rooted in our capacity for language.²⁵⁰ This idea is derived from his understanding of the relationship between the psychic and spiritual dimensions in the human being, referred to in Chapter One. There, we learned that the dimension of spirit is born out of the total

²⁴⁷ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, p.243.

²⁴⁸ Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, p.26.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.40,41.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.42.

integration of all psychological contents in the personal centre of the psyche. For Tillich, this centre makes sense of the psychological material present around each individual. Every thought is based upon conscious and unconscious experiences in life, including sensory experiences. The personal centre is the reasoning faculty, in which these experiences are processed and integrated into a whole. Such integration represents a transcendence of the psychological contents, which Tillich calls a “manifestation of spirit.”²⁵¹

Thus, for Tillich there is an intimate relationship between spirit and reason. To live spiritually is to live in an integrated way, possible only through the reflective process of reason in the psyche. Reflective thought requires language, be it “spoken or silent”,²⁵² and as spiritual life is the product of reflective thought, it too, requires language to become an active spiritual life.

To suggest that to live spiritually is to live in an integrated way is to highlight the involvement of every aspect of humanity in the spiritual life. To be fully human is to live life meaningfully, which means to attend to the mundane in such a way that the dimension of depth is activated at every moment of life, whether we are washing dishes, playing football or facing death. The question is, how does the individual unlock those depths? For Tillich, *symbol* provides the key.

Symbol, for Tillich, means two things: firstly, it is that which points beyond itself, and secondly, it is that which participates in that to which it points.²⁵³ For example, a king is a symbol of a nation in that he points beyond himself to the power or meaning of the nation.²⁵⁴ The pointing beyond, however, would not occur if he did not also participate in that very power or meaning. Thus, a symbol mediates a power or a meaning that goes beyond the immediacy of the object itself. He explains that a symbol, therefore, is both similar to, and different from a sign.²⁵⁵

²⁵¹ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, p.27.

²⁵² Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, p.42.

²⁵³ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, pp.239-240.

²⁵⁴ Kelsey, *The Fabric of Paul Tillich's Theology*, p.46.

²⁵⁵ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, p.239.

While both point beyond themselves, the latter does not participate in that to which it points. So, for example, a red flag has a significance that lies beyond itself; it signifies danger. However, there is nothing inherently dangerous about the redness of the flag; it is simply a colour that has been chosen to denote danger. It is conceivable that another colour might be used to convey the same message, and as long as people were notified of the change, the new colour would function to signify danger as adequately as the red. Thus the sign does not participate in that toward which it points. A symbol, in contrast, cannot be chosen at random. There is something inherently meaningful or powerful about the person of the king that qualifies him to hold such a position over all other contenders. His power is recognised by those whom he rules, not simply because of the position he holds, but because of the kingly qualities of his inherent nature or of his line. Hence, the symbol of the king indicates an integration of the person of the king with his function as the king.

Tillich argues that symbols are born out of the collective unconscious of a group and die when the collective unconscious no longer recognises their power or meaning. A symbol is born when an object, an action or a word opens up the dimension of depth in reality. For this opening up to be recognised, a similar process must be effected in the internal reality of an individual or group. A symbol, then, opens up the dimension of depth in the external and internal realities of an individual.²⁵⁶

This is most interesting, for here, Tillich shows the correlation between human inner reality and external reality, i.e. he shows the symbol to correlate the self and world. To put it another way, the subject-object correlation is achieved through the symbol. To express it in yet different terms, the external reality of the world is synchronised with the internal reality of the individual by means of the symbol.

We are reminded of Tillich's appreciation of the resonance between self and world, referred to in Chapter One. There, it was argued that Tillich regards there to be a

²⁵⁶ Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, pp.58,59.

resonance between the reality of the psyche and the reality of the external world, which is derived from the self-world correlation. Self and world correlate through the structure of reason present in both. The presence of reason in the human psyche enables the psyche to make sense of the external world in a meaningful way, and the presence of reason as the structure of the external world allows the human being to grasp and shape reality in a meaningful way.

Hence, self and world oscillate in relation to each other: they are polar forces, held in relation by the unifying presence of reason. Reason acts in a pivotal way to hold the polar forces together while, at the same time, allowing those forces to work dialectically. Out of the dialectical correlation between self and world something happens that transcends both poles: on the individual level, through the personal centre, the experiences of life (i.e. the interaction of self with world) are integrated by means of reason and the individual becomes centred, integrated, balanced, aligned. At the same time, through the community of integrated, centred individuals, external reality takes on a sense of wholeness: the inner integration of the psyche is projected on to external reality and the wholeness of the external reality is absorbed through the integrative process of the personal centre of every individual. In this way, self and world correlate and the actualisation of being is processed within existence. Hence, actualisation of being takes place through synchronisation between self and world.

What happens to permit the synchronisation to take place? Does Tillich suggest that centring and wholeness are natural features of reality as it is experienced today? Does such a suggestion not contradict his insistence upon the ambiguity of life, the presence of being and the threat of non-being at every moment of existence? Do we not find ourselves in a world of distortion and disintegration rather than one of wholeness and integration? What, then, are we to make of the notion of synchronisation?

In the self-world correlation, Tillich depicts his sense of the ultimate unity between divine life and finite life; not the reality of existence on its own, but the reality of

existence in communion with God. When the dimension of depth is penetrated at every moment in existential life, synchronisation takes place. However, what stops this penetration from taking place is the ambiguity of existential life? We are unable to see the dimension of depth at every moment because finite life is under the constant threat of non-being, which renders obscure our root in being itself. The creature is tied to the categories of time, space, causality and substance, which bind every thought, sensation and experience. The creature is rooted in being itself but is, at the same time, qualitatively different from being itself.

So the notion of centredness and wholeness is not one that Tillich wishes to suggest is present in the physicality and immediacy of time, space, causality and substance, rather it is one that is present in the depths of existence. It is a notion that depicts the relationship of finitude beyond its bounds, as part of the divine life. Although it is not manifest in existence, it can be felt at every moment because in the depths of our experience of ambiguity lies the power of being itself. Tillich then attempts to show the way in which this power is accessed by means of the symbol, despite the distortions and ambiguities of life.

At the existential level, the symbol is a product of the presence of reason in existence. Through reason, the human being processes the experiences of life. As reason is the structure of the mind as well as the structure of the external world of the individual, the processing conforms to the structure of reality. In Chapter One, we saw reason to be born out of the Logos principle of the divine life. However, reason in existence is as vulnerable to the distortions and ambiguities of life as is every thing else in existence. Existential reason is bound by the categories of time, space, causality and substance.

Nevertheless, by virtue of the fact that reason is derived from the Logos principle of the divine life, it is capable of providing a connection between the divine and the finite creature that breaks the bounds of the categories, impenetrable by the creature from the inside. The bounds are broken from beyond existence, by the divine itself.

Tillich argues that in the search for the dimension of depth, the human being calls out to God and God answers the cry through revelation.²⁵⁷

The link between God and humanity is established through mutual participation. Through reason, the human being reaches out beyond and into the depths and through the very same reason, God speaks. Thus reason, or logos, becomes a symbol. Revelation shows the human being the divine power within logos and, at the same time, logos points toward the source of the power. The symbol of logos, therefore, becomes a channel through which the divine breaks through to the human being, caught up within the bounds of finitude, and reaches out to show the creature the power and meaning in the depths of creaturely existence. At this point, logos is empowered to become the symbol Logos.

Returning to the subject-object correlation, we can begin to discern the way in which the logos (reason) functions as a pivot for the dialectical relationship between self and world on the one hand, and finitude and the infinite on the other. It is a pivot in that it acts not simply as the correlate for the self and world within existence, but also, through its function as a symbol, it becomes a correlate for the finite-infinite relation. In other words, it provides the vertical dimension within existence that enables the human being to access the depths of being and thus to find the meaning of life.²⁵⁸

As the correlate for self and world on the horizontal axis and the correlate for the creature and Creator on the vertical axis, Logos functions as the pivot for a cross, that powerful symbol, not just for Christianity, but for all walks of life. The cross is a symbol that depicts equilibrium prior to change. It has a still, pivotal point, which may anticipate great transformation. The power of the symbol of the cross, then, is its stillness, its centrality, its equilibrium, its alignment. The Christian symbol of

²⁵⁷ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, pp.110-113.

²⁵⁸ In so far as it relates to the self-world correlation, logos (lower case l) is appropriate. However, in so far as it relates to the finite-infinite relation, Logos (upper case L) is appropriate. For clarity, the upper case will be used to denote Logos as symbol.

the cross embodies each one of those ideas, for in it can be found the point of communion with the divine. It is a communion central within life, as the horizontal axis of the self-world correlation denotes. It is also a communion with that which lies beyond life, as the vertical axis of the human-divine correlation denotes. Most importantly for Tillich's theology, the meeting point of the cross lies in the heart of existence. Communion with God is not a denial of life, but a total absorption in life in its fullest sense of living.

Thus, through symbol, Tillich attempts to show the way in which communion with God takes place in the heart of existence and penetrates its very depths. Symbol acts as the tool by which the power of being itself penetrates life and imbues it with the power to see through the distortions and ambiguity that clouds the Creator/creature reality. The symbol of the Logos as a correlate to the Creator/creature relationship causes the internal reality of the psyche to synchronise with external reality. If the Logos were not a symbol, but simply the correlate for the self and the world, then there would be no synchronisation. Indeed, this would be impossible in Tillich's system, for his method of correlation hinges upon the fundamental appreciation of the ultimate unity of life and such an appreciation is based upon a sense of the microcosmic relation of humanity to the divine.

This means that correlation and symbol are intimately connected in Tillich's system. With the microcosmic motif underpinning Tillich's system, we are able to see correlation as a structural tool used to frame his concept of symbol. The symbol motif provides the connection between divine life and finite life that the microcosmic theme requires in the *content* of his theology, while the method of correlation provides the connection between the existential questions and the divine answers that the microcosmic theme requires in the *structure* of his theology.

If we regard the method of correlation as merely a convenient tool for holding Tillich's personal ontological system in tact, as Hamilton suggests, we miss the powerful microcosmic theme that lies beneath the surface of his theology. Thus, with regard to the question asked earlier - what difference would it make to his

method of correlation, if it were seen as an expression of a microcosmic world-view? we can say that the microcosmic theme allows us to regard the method of correlation as the means by which we look through Tillich's ontology to the depth of meaning that lies beyond. It renders Hamilton's critique of correlation superficial. In contrast to Hamilton's view, correlation becomes a structural method that facilitates a sense of integration and synchronisation between the content and the structure of Tillich's system.

Returning to Logos, it is a symbol because it is rooted in the power of being itself. This we know because we have seen that existential logos is derived from the Logos principle of the divine life.²⁵⁹ Logos is the symbol that communicates the creative structure of creaturely life as it correlates with divine life. Through the human psyche, the logos functions to structure reality according to the structure of the divine life.

However, as illustrated in Chapter One, divine life does not consist of the principle of Logos alone, but also of the principles of Godhead and Spirit. If Tillich uses symbol to depict the human life as it correlates with that of the divine, then we would expect him to employ other symbols to show the resonance between the other principles of the divine life and that of the creature – and, as we will see below, this he does.

In the divine life, Tillich referred to the principle of Godhead as the polarity of Logos, the abysmal power of the divine. Tillich argues that this abysmal power is found in finite life through the symbol, *God*. Kelsey points out that *God* is the answer to questions raised by humanity about the nature of finitude.²⁶⁰ God, Tillich argues, is the name that is given to man's ultimate concern.²⁶¹ Humanity is ultimately concerned with that which lies in the depths of being and which helps us to understand what it means to be human. If humanity's question is concerned with

²⁵⁹ See pp.54,55 above.

²⁶⁰ Kelsey, *The Fabric of Paul Tillich's Theology*, p.14.

²⁶¹ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, p.220.

the nature of finitude, the answer must fully satisfy finitude. It cannot be the same as finitude and must, therefore, exceed it. God as the symbol of that which lies beyond finitude is therefore infinite. In so far as the infinite exceeds finitude, then God is unknowable to the finite creature. There is the infinite that lies beyond the infinite. At the same time, in so far as the very question of finitude leads us to a sense of the infinite, then we, as finite creatures, participate in the infinite. Thus, Tillich concludes that the symbol God expresses both the presence of divine power in existence and the abysmal nature of that power, with its consequent inaccessibility for the finite creature. By expressing the divine power in existence, God fulfills the first prerequisite of a symbol – to participate in that to which it points. By expressing the abysmal nature of that power, it fulfills the second requirement – to point beyond itself.

We may recall that the divine life had a third principle, Spirit, the unifying principle that brought the polar principles of Godhead and Logos into a transcending unity. Kelsey argues that Tillich uses Spirit as the symbol that answers the questions raised by the ambiguities of life.²⁶² We can see the appropriateness of this function in finite life, for it is a reiteration of its unifying function in the divine life. In Chapter One, we saw that the divine Principle of Spirit is the means by which the tension of the polar forces present in the ontological structural elements is transcended and resolved creatively.²⁶³ As the creative unifying principle of the divine life, the symbol Spirit in finite life serves a similar function. To see this more clearly, it is important fully to understand how Spirit functions as a symbol, i.e. how Spirit participates in that toward which it points and how it points toward that in which it participates.

So, how does the symbol Spirit participate in that toward which it points, namely, the Spirit principle of the divine life? The answer to this lies in its intimacy with logos in finite life. We learned earlier that the manifestation of the dimension of

²⁶² Kelsey, *Fabric of Paul Tillich's Theology*, p.14.

²⁶³ See p.41 above.

spirit in the human being is born out of the function of reason within the psyche.²⁶⁴ Because reason is derived from the Logos principle of the divine life, it participates in the Spirit principle, for in the divine life, logos is integrated with Spirit. Furthermore, because Logos is integrated with Godhead as well as with Spirit in the divine life, finite reason also participates in the Godhead principle. In other words, reason provides the structure within finitude through which the power of the Godhead and the unifying function of Spirit can be received. Thus, the symbol Spirit participates in the divine principle of Spirit because it is rooted in reason. Here, in Tillich's thinking, we detect a very powerful microcosmic theme; through the structure of reason, finite life is imbued with the integrated forces of divine life. The finite creature, specifically the human being,²⁶⁵ receives the divine forces in their integrated fullness but fails to recognise them as such, due to the distorting influence of the conditions of time, space, causality and substance. The creature fails to see the clarity of the divine forces due to the haze of the categories that condition existential life. The symbol Spirit is the means by which the human creature is directed toward an understanding of the unity and integration of the forces of life in relation to those of the divine. However, the conditions of existence determine that the symbol does not reveal the fully integrated nature of those forces. Such integration lies beyond the power of the symbol.

Thus, by referring to the symbols, God, Logos and Spirit, Tillich establishes the divine in the centre of existential life. The divine forces are imminent in existence. At the same time however, those forces are inaccessible to the creature because the conditions of existence distort their clarity. By demonstrating the divine presence in existence, specifically in the psyche of the human being, Tillich shows his understanding of life in relation to the divine to concur with the microcosmic world-views of Renaissance thinkers.

²⁶⁴ See pp.64-66 above.

²⁶⁵ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, p.25: Tillich argues that only the human being has the logos structure within its psyche.

There is more to be discussed on Tillich's use of symbol and on the microcosmic theme that emerges through it, for it is necessary to consider the two other symbols to which Kelsey refers in his analysis of the arrangement of Tillich's system.²⁶⁶ Tillich uses the symbols, *Jesus as the Christ* and *Kingdom of God*, as well as the symbols of *Logos*, *God* and *Spirit*. If we are arguing that Tillich uses symbol to depict the way in which the divine life correlates with finite life, what place do the two additional symbols have? There were only three Principles in the divine life: Godhead, Logos and Spirit. Why then, does Tillich employ the symbols, *Jesus as the Christ* and *Kingdom of God*?

So far, we have established the correlation between divine life and finite life in terms of the human psyche. We have established that human beings make sense of their environment through the ability to reflect and think. This process is determined by the logos structure of the human psyche and through this, the personal centre within the psyche of every individual turns environment into a world. Through the logos structure of the mind, self and world interact, facilitating the integration of the contents of experience in the personal centre of every individual. When this is achieved, the dimension of spirit is manifested.

However, Tillich insists that the process of actualisation is not purely a psychic phenomenon, but a process that is also external to the individual.²⁶⁷ It occurs within the individual, within history and within culture. The symbols, *Jesus as the Christ* and *Kingdom of God* are necessary in his system to demonstrate the essential placing of the psychic process of actualisation within history. The process requires time and place and therefore, must be grounded in actual circumstance. It has to be fully actual if, indeed, it is a process of actualisation. Thus, the fully actual event of the life and death of Jesus as the Christ is a vital element in the symbol, *Jesus as the Christ*.

²⁶⁶ Kelsey, *Fabric of Paul Tillich's Theology*, pp.13-15.

²⁶⁷ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, p.111: "Revelation, as revelation of mystery which is our ultimate concern, is invariably revelation for someone in a concrete situation of concern....."

Tillich emphasises the importance of the correct labelling of the symbol as *Jesus as the Christ*, for *Jesus* denotes the humanity, concreteness and historical validity of the symbol.²⁶⁸ *Christ* denotes the power and the infinite quality of the symbol. *Jesus* without *Christ* would not be a symbol because it would not fulfill the two criteria of a symbol. *Jesus* alone would not participate in the power to which it points. Equally, *Christ* would have no grounding in the reality of the human situation. It would therefore, have no salvific significance for the human being. *Jesus as the Christ* however, fulfills both criteria completely.

In this symbol, Tillich shows how the bounds of time, space, causality and substance are broken, thus lifting the haze that up until the Christ event had clouded the understanding of the Creator/creature relationship. Thus, *Jesus as the Christ* becomes the fullest symbol of that relationship because none of the other symbols are able to break through the conditions of existence in quite the same way. They fall short, for they are not symbols of an actual historical event. That is not to say that the symbol of *Jesus as the Christ* makes redundant all the other symbols. On the contrary, it fulfills them. Their function as correlates for the divine life and finite life is clarified through *Jesus as the Christ*.

The *Kingdom of God* symbol proceeds naturally from the symbol, *Jesus as the Christ*. It is the answer to the questions raised by humanity about the meaning of history.²⁶⁹ It is the symbol that guides humanity in terms of the social, political and personal direction within history in light of the historical event of Jesus as the Christ.

Let us be clear here that Tillich does not wish to suggest that the symbol proceeds historically from the historical Christ event. What we must remember when examining the symbols is that Tillich refers to them in terms of the way in which they act as the medium through which the Creator and creature commune. This takes into account the historical dimension, but is not wholly determined by it.

²⁶⁸ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, pp.144-149.

²⁶⁹ Kelsey, *The Fabric of Paul Tillich's Theology*, p.14.

Tillich wishes to show that the temporal communes with the eternal. The eternal enters the temporal and that is the turning point of the trans-temporal relationship between Creator and creature. Thus, the symbol, *Kingdom of God*, should not be understood as proceeding sequentially from the *Jesus as the Christ* symbol. Both exist within time and beyond time.²⁷⁰ It is, instead, a qualitative proceeding to which Tillich refers. The Kingdom of God is the human response to the divine breaking through of the conditions of existence through the historical life and death of Jesus as the Christ.

Thus, as God is eternal and humanity is temporal, the symbol is both temporal and eternal and this is the way in which it fulfills the two criteria of symbol. In so far as it points toward the power of the historical event of the life and death of Jesus as the Christ, it points beyond itself. In so far as it expresses the human response to the divine breaking through of the conditions of existence, it participates in that to which it points.

Through the symbols of Jesus as the Christ and Kingdom of God then, Tillich shows that the creature/Creator relationship is not just an inner, psychic experience, but is also external and concrete. Therefore, he is able to conclude that this relationship takes place both in the depths of the human being and in the external world of history and culture.

Through his symbol system, Tillich demonstrates how the principles of the divine life imbue the life of the creature, and how all three principles are concentrated in the comprehensive symbol, Jesus as the Christ. Thus, this symbol replaces Logos at the still-point of the cross, for Jesus as the Christ embraces Logos and surpasses it by symbolising the integration of Logos with historical circumstance.²⁷¹ Jesus as

²⁷⁰ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, pp.356-359; 364-369.

²⁷¹ Ibid, p.364: Tillich describes the appearance of Jesus as the Christ as "the centre of history". This is not a measurement in time, but an expression of "a moment in history for which everything before and after is both preparation and reception".

the Christ is the point at which self and world unify and Creator and creature become one. It is the point at which ambiguity is clarified and the oscillatory dynamics of polar tensions are aligned. In short, for Tillich, it symbolises the ultimate unity of being.

This evokes a sense of Jesus as the Christ as the central point of a wheel, a wheel that is thoroughly dynamic in nature, but whose pivotal point keeps the dynamics centred. This is very reminiscent of the microcosmic ideas of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. A microcosmic understanding of Tillichian theology allows his method of correlation and dialectic to clarify the divine/human relationship. Through microcosmic imagery, these methods depict the ultimate unity of the diversity of life. The polarities of existence are held together by the one central, pivotal point, without which diversity would have no focus and would be chaotic. Without the central point, the paradoxes of dialectical thinking would not be reconciled.

Microcosmic thinking is inevitably spiralling because of the need for the still-point of the centre. Medieval scholasticism placed God at the centre. Renaissance thinkers tended toward superimposing the human being upon God at the centre. Tillich places both the Logos and Jesus as the Christ at the centre and shows the significance of the Christ event to be born out of the integration of human drive and search for God within existence and the divine desire to break through history.

Thus, Tillich communicates a sense of mutual participation between God the Creator and Sustainer, and humanity the creature and the sustained, characterised by creaturely freedom. The creature finds freedom in its relation to the divine and through that freedom, the fullness of the creativity of the divine is made manifest. The idea of creaturely freedom is very important in Tillichian theology and in the microcosmic theme that can be seen to underlie his thinking, and so it is necessary to consider it in depth.

Creaturely Freedom

So far, it has been argued that the life of the creature is grounded in that of the divine. The rhythm of divine emanation and return is reiterated in finite life through the underlying structure of being, which consists of the dialectical relation between object and subject, self and world. Tillich argues that such a structure is present because of the presence of logos in existential reality. Logos is the ordering principle of the human psyche and of the world in which the human being lives. The logos of existence is the emanation of the Logos of the divine life. In its existential state, it is a logos conditioned by the categories of existence. Nevertheless, as the emanation of the Logos principle of the divine life, existential logos is grounded in the power from which it is derived and toward which it points. Thus, existential logos qualifies as the symbol for Logos. As bearers of psyches ordered by logos, human beings have the power to create a meaningful world and not to be bound by the environment in which we dwell. Through the gift of reason, the logos structure of the human psyche empowers humanity to make sense of existence, to interpret it and to transform it. For Tillich, this ability is what makes the human being free.²⁷²

Freedom must be understood clearly, for it is not arbitrary, chaotic or wild. If the creature is gifted with the empowering principle of Logos, and if human freedom is gained through that principle, then freedom must be based in some way upon that very principle. The question is how is it based upon logos? How does Tillich avoid human freedom becoming nothing more than divine lip service if he argues that the creature is grounded in the divine life? How can the human being truly be free if freedom is based upon structure? How can the creature stand apart from the Creator in freedom? All of these questions raise one fundamental issue: what does freedom mean in human terms?

This question is a fundamental one, for in order to understand the significance of freedom for the human being, it is necessary to understand the significance of being

²⁷² Paul Tillich, *The Courage To Be* (Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1952), p.82,83.

human. In other words, only when we grasp fully what it means to be human, can we understand what it means to be free. Of course, only when we live in a fully human way can we understand what it means to be human, and only then are we in a position to understand the meaning of freedom.

Tillich argues that being human means living in ambiguity. It means being finite and therefore, being threatened at every moment by non-being. At the same time, being threatened by non-being means being faced with the possibility, not the actuality of non-being. As long as non-being is nothing more than a threat, we know ourselves to be grounded in that which non-being threatens, namely, being itself. Our ambiguity in life is derived from this state of being grounded in being and, at the same time, being perpetually threatened by the possibility of non-being. Being human therefore, means to live creatively and anxiously at the same time. We can live creatively because we are grounded in the creativity of being itself. At the same time however, our creative drive must be harnessed by our need for self-preservation, a need generated by the perpetual ontological threat to our very being.

In one's desire to move away from oneself, *eros* finds expression and in the simultaneous desire not to lose oneself in the movement away, *logos* is expressed. To be human, then, is to be involved in the dynamics that underlie existence: to search beyond oneself and, at the same time, to preserve oneself. This ambiguity is the expression of the ontological structure of reality consisting of the dynamic correlation between self and world or, put another way, between subject and object. To be human is to live dynamically as a self in relation to a world and such existence demands two things of the human being: first, to have the freedom to let go of the self in search of the world and second, to have the freedom to let go of the world in search of the self. This is not a causal relationship, but one of resonance and reciprocity.

Freedom in this respect is a balancing principle; we might even see it as a synchronising principle; to fail to search beyond the self, consciousness of self is stifled and distorted. At the same time, to lose one's sense of self in the crowd, so

to speak, leads, once again, to distortion. To live creatively is to live dynamically in relation to both poles of self and world, so that consciousness of self grows in a balanced way. This is the way in which freedom can be seen as a balancing principle.

How then, is freedom to be seen as a synchronising principle? If our involvement in the world allows our sense of self to develop, it also follows that our sense of self colours our world and the way in which we participate in it. Our world becomes meaningful to us as we are in ourselves, and our sense of self becomes meaningful to us as we participate in the world. If we are unable to let go of our sense of self in response to our involvement in the world, then we begin to lose ourselves. We begin to be taken over by the polar force of participation and involvement and consequently, lose the ability to return to self in order to integrate our experience of involvement with our inner world of self. Tillich cites as illustrations of this kind of disintegration mental diseases in which dramatic personality changes take place.

On the other hand, if we are so afraid to become involved in the world that we choose to hang onto what feels like a safe sense of world, then we run the risk of becoming detached from the external world and consequently, of living a life that is distorted by our lack of freedom to let go. Tillich regards psychoneurosis as a diseased expression of such distortion.²⁷³

However, if we have the freedom to let go of self on the one hand, and of world on the other, then self and world become synchronised: what is learned through involvement in world finds expression in the integrated personal centre, and the ever-evolving personal centre finds self-expression in its world. In this way, freedom may be understood to be a synchronising principle.

Freedom, then, is not a being unleashed from controls or a free-for-all rampage in life. Such behaviour is displayed by those who have lost the connection between

²⁷³ Tillich, *The Meaning of Health*, p.166.

inner drive and meaning. For those people, life has lost its meaning because the rhythm of the movement-away-from-self and return-to-self has been lost. The loss of rhythm, as with a piece of music, becomes loss of direction, loss of composition and loss of content. Creativity is distinguished from chaos by the inherent structure of the former and the inherent lack of structure of the latter.

Thus freedom, for Tillich, is not chaos, but creativity that is inherently structured.²⁷⁴ Freedom is meaningful creativity. It follows therefore, that human freedom means living creatively in a way that is meaningful to the human being. If the human being gains meaning and purpose through the presence of logos in the psyche and in the world, then to live creatively in a humanly meaningful way means to live creatively through the logos.

We have already seen that the logos structure of the human psyche is the means by which the dimension of spirit becomes manifest in life. The process of integration between external world and internal meaning in the personal centre of every human being makes manifest the dimension of spirit in the inner world of the creature. At the same time, the way in which the internal psyche makes sense of the external world leads to the transformation of that very world. In other words, the unifying principle of spirit finds expression both within the personal centre and within the world. This expression allows the human being to become integrated and balanced and the world to become unified and whole. Once again, inner reality and external reality synchronise. The human being may live creatively because of the unifying function of spirit operating in the depths of every individual and in the external world of every individual.

Thus, living creatively means living life in the dimension of spirit. If the human creature is able to do this, there is freedom, for the dimension of spirit is the unifying principle that works through the logos structure of the human psyche and of the world. Through the synchronisation between inner self and external world,

²⁷⁴ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, pp.182-185.

the latter becomes fully meaningful to the former and the former can find full expression by living in the latter. The world becomes my home, not an alien environment that is external to me. I find freedom in my sense of belonging to it and being an integral part of it. Only through the dimension of spirit can the human being understand what it means to be human. Being human means to be the bearer of spirit in the world for the world.²⁷⁵ One's sense of belonging is therefore, so deeply entrenched in one's very being that there is no sense of separation, but the overwhelming sense of unity. Freedom lies in the realisation that as bearer of spirit, the human being finds meaning in life for itself and for all that constitutes life and world. Thus, Tillich's understanding of freedom is intimately related to his understanding of the multi-dimensional unity of life.

Once we have understood that, we are then able to realise that to live in a creative and meaningful way is to live in the dimension of spirit as that creature which makes the whole of life meaningful through its ability to integrate power and structure. To live in such a way gives us freedom, freedom, that is, to be fully human. Freedom, then, is not a running away, but an empowerment to act in the world, through the world, for the benefit of the world.

However, the empowerment is not derived from the human being. It is channelled through the human being, but derived from that in which the human being is grounded - being itself. The freedom of humanity lies in its role as mediator between God and life.

However, being a mediator should not imply distance between God and life. Instead, it should conjure up an image of the human creature at the hub of the wheel that is life. Humanity has a specific function, namely, to bring to consciousness the presence of the divine in life. Its authority for having such a function is its ability to recognise the divine forces underlying its very existence, and to participate in them. What pins the creature to the hub of the wheel are the symbols Logos, Spirit, God,

²⁷⁵ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, p.25.

kingdom of God and most significantly, Jesus as the Christ, the symbol that absorbs all others and fulfills them.

With regard to freedom then, Tillich expresses a profoundly microcosmic understanding of the way in which humanity symbolises the whole of life through its ability to participate in the world and to retreat into the self. Through this process of movement away from, and return to self, the human creature grasps and shapes reality creatively to bring about the process of actualisation of that which is potential in life. The ability to grasp and shape reality however, is derived from the principles of the divine life, namely, the principles of Godhead, Logos and Spirit. Although all being is rooted in the principles, only the thinking, reflective being can bring them to consciousness.

The ambiguity of life makes human freedom distinct from divine freedom. The perpetual threat of non-being requires the human creature to return to self and in this integrative process, the power of potential is made actual. Thus, human freedom brings to actualisation what is potential and latent. Freedom lies in the concrete circumstance of the human being. Specifically, freedom lies in the power of the human being to make concrete circumstance meaningful and creative. Freedom is integration of the whole being, not simply of the mind. For Tillich, freedom of the will alone does not indicate total integration. Freedom requires integration of all that makes up the human being: the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects of humanity.²⁷⁶

At this point, we can detect a close connection between freedom and health in Tillich's thinking. If freedom is the self-integration of every aspect of the being, and if self-integration requires the unification of the polarities of self-identity and self-alteration, then freedom equates with balance and unity. Tillich argues that disease is the effect of the predominance of one pole over another, which generates a

²⁷⁶ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, p.183.

disturbance in the balance of life.²⁷⁷ Thus, health, like freedom, is equated with balance. For Tillich, the ambiguities of life cause disease.²⁷⁸

We are now faced with somewhat of a paradox. On the one hand, it has been suggested that Tillich regards the ambiguity of life as that which distinguishes divine freedom from human freedom. On the other hand, Tillich appears to hold the ambiguities of life responsible for disease. We have equated health with freedom in so far as both represent balance. As disease represents imbalance and therefore, lack of health and freedom, how is it possible for life's ambiguities to be associated with freedom (i.e. balance) and disease (i.e. imbalance) at the same time?

Let us remind ourselves what it means to be human in Tillich's eyes. It means to live as bearer of spirit in the inescapable ambiguities of life, inescapable because they are generated by the very dynamic forces of power and meaning, which make up the underlying ontological structure of being. To overcome ambiguity therefore, would mean no longer to be human. Now, if human freedom means living creatively and meaningfully in existence in a totally integrated way, does this mean the overcoming of ambiguity? The answer has to be no, for, as we have seen, the overcoming of ambiguity would mean ceasing to be human. So, what does total integration really mean and what does it mean to live creatively and meaningfully? Is Tillich simply describing a human state that is unachievable by humankind? If so, surely he is not describing human freedom at all?

In Tillich's view, freedom is unachievable for the human being without the symbol Jesus as the Christ. Despite being grounded in being itself, the human being is not capable of attaining the integration and balance that human freedom describes. Without the symbol Jesus as the Christ, the human being can never be integrated fully because of the perpetually distorting threat of non-being. The real meaning of human freedom is revealed through the symbol Jesus as the Christ, and this revelation is possible because of its two-fold nature. Firstly, and crucially, Jesus

²⁷⁷ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 3, p.277.

²⁷⁸ Tillich, *The Meaning of Health*, p.167.

was a human being living in the circumstance of time and space. The symbol is grounded in the very humanity of Jesus, without which, it would be meaningless.

Secondly, Christ is the Son of God. That is to say, Christ is beyond the conditions of time and space and therefore, beyond the ambiguities that those conditions impose upon finitude. Thus, this symbol unites finitude with the infinite. In the union of Jesus with Christ, a symbol is created that unifies creature and Creator. Jesus as the Christ thus becomes the umbilical cord between creature and Creator, ensuring the perpetual and eternal flow of the Creator's sustenance for the creature. This sustenance, when received by the creature, empowers it creatively to overcome the perpetual threat of non-being that makes finite existence ambiguous. Human freedom therefore, is living creatively in an integrated way, but this is achievable only through that which has already attained total integration and therefore, gone beyond finitude, namely, the symbol Jesus as the Christ.

The symbol does not merely *describe* the power and authority of Jesus as the Christ, it *is* that power and authority. The symbol itself lives both eternally and within the circumstance of time and space. The symbol *is* life-force for it smashes through the conditions of existence. In so doing, it imbues the human creature with the power not simply to resist the threat of non-being at every moment, but creatively to transform that threat of meaninglessness into meaningfulness. Therefore, the human being has the freedom and the power to be diseased and to transform disease into health. If we stop short and say that we have the freedom to choose between health and disease, we deny our full humanity because we deny our role as bearer of spirit. To choose between two options is not to live in freedom because such a choice shows our imprisonment within the two. However, to know that disease can be creatively transformed is to recognise the third transcending position, the position of power and freedom. To be fully human means not to be caught in a tug-o-war between health and disease, clarity and distortion, self and world. Rather, it means to live through the struggle between poles and to find a creative resolution that transcends both.

Thus the symbol, Jesus as the Christ embodies the most powerful microcosmic imagery to be found in Tillich's theology. In it lies the freedom of the human creature to be fully human. At the same time, it reveals the Creator in its creative fullness. The freedom of the human creature is not simply divine lip service, for freedom is firmly situated within existence and embraces the full extent of the ambiguity that circumstance generates. The Creator's freedom to create and sustain finds full expression through the creature's freedom creatively to live through, and transform the ambiguities of existence.

The claim that the symbol Jesus as the Christ embodies the most powerful microcosmic imagery in Tillich's theology must be explained clearly and carefully. It may be understood only in the light of the microcosmic theme of Tillich's theology as a whole. It is therefore, the aim of the next and final section of this chapter to spell out the exact nature of the microcosmic theme and to show precisely the way in which Jesus as the Christ is the most powerful expression of that theme.

The Emerging Microcosmic Theme

We learned earlier that Tillich's use of dialectic was found in both the content and the structure of his theology. It was suggested that the triadic formulation found in its content and structure was the way in which dialectic permeated his theological system. The triadic formulation was the way in which Tillich moved from affirmation to negation and onto a transcending affirmation, which represented the creative resolution of the tension between the polar forces of *yes* and *no*. It was argued that this approach was consistent with the dialectical methods of classical thinkers, such as Pseudo-Dionysius, Cusanus and Boehme. It was further suggested that such a method was rooted in the understanding of the microcosmic/macrocosmic relation of the human creature to the divine. Creation was the result of divine emanation. As such, divine nous was present in finitude and in the human soul. It was possible for the human being therefore, to free itself from the shackles of materiality through the nous present in the soul and to make the

ascent through the hierarchies that stood between creation and the divine Source, thus participating in the return phase of the divine movement.

So, what is the connection between the dialectical method of classical theology and the notion of divine emanation and return? Before this can be answered, it is important to understand precisely what is meant by divine emanation and return. For the classical thinkers mentioned above, it meant emanation from eternal source into temporality and return to eternal source. The divine dynamic was of a two-fold nature: emanation from eternity into temporality and return to eternity. In terms of creaturely understanding of the divine dynamic, the classical thinkers recognised that although the divine movement was two-fold, creaturely understanding of that movement had to use a three-fold method - Why?

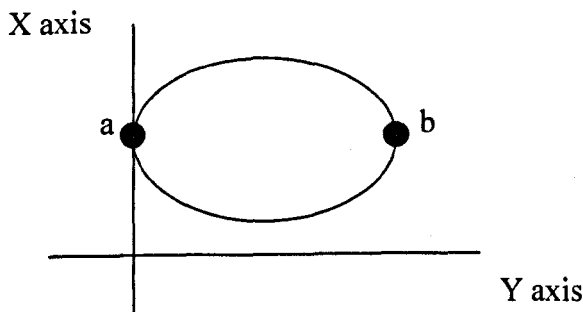
The creature, tied to the realms of time and space had only one way of understanding movement into the eternal realm. It had to be by means of affirmation, negation and then transcending affirmation. In other words, the theologian had to use the fabric of existence to approach that which went beyond existence. That meant that he had to exhaust all possibilities of God in existential terms and then go beyond existential terms to approach an understanding of God. The natural route, therefore, was to say what God was in terms of existential experience, to negate that and then to say that God was both and more. As existence was understood in terms of polar possibilities, any claim to move toward God had to embrace both poles. Not only that, but to depict divine movement out of temporality and into eternity required more to be said of God than merely to claim that God embraced both poles. God that simply embraced the polar extremes of existence could not be the same as God that broke through the confines of existence. Therefore, having established that God embraced both polar extremes, it was necessary to speak in superlative terms about God to depict the eternal dimension that was God. Thus, classical theology used a dialectical method consisting of three aspects: the paradox of affirmative theology in relation to negative theology and the third, transcending superlative theology. The third aspect

represented the breaking through the limitations of finite existence to approach the dimension of the eternal.

What was so significant about the three-fold method of understanding the two-fold dynamic of the divine was that it expressed the vital connection between God and the human being in terms of a spiral. The significance of the spiral will be discussed later, but first, it is necessary to clarify the way in which the two-fold movement of the divine and the three-phased dialectical method produce a spiral.

For the moment, let us think spatially rather than theologically in order fully to grasp the idea of spiral. Let us substitute the term *phase* with *coordinate* and attempt to draw a graph to depict a two-fold movement (not necessarily of a divine nature at this point). It is possible to depict a two-fold movement using only two coordinates.

Fig.1



In Fig.1, we have depicted movement from coordinate *a* to coordinate *b* and back to coordinate *a* using two axes, representing *time* and *space*. It is necessary to use both in order to generate the image of movement. In the words of Tillich:

We can measure time only by space and space only in time.
Motion, the universal character of life, needs time and space.²⁷⁹

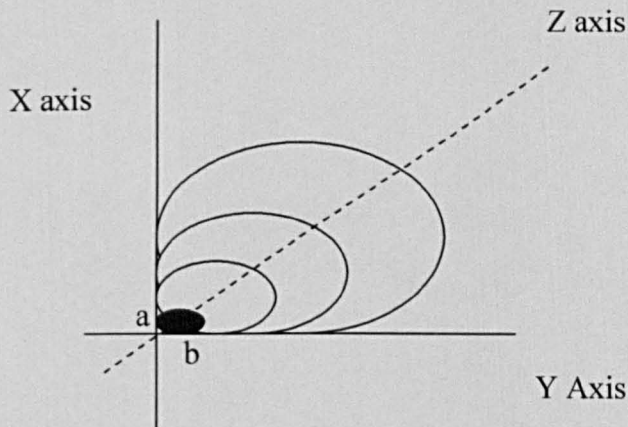
²⁷⁹ Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, p.30.

We see a circular image, in which the starting point is the same as the returning point.

The movement away phase appears not to have influenced the point of return in any way. There is nothing to suggest development, just circling.

Let us now look at two-fold movement using three coordinates.

Fig.2:



In Fig.2, there are three axes: *time* (X axis), *space* (Y axis), and a third dimension, which we will call *eternity* (Z axis). The third dimension generates a new perspective on the original two axes. By introducing the third dimension and the third coordinate relating to that dimension, we add depth and height to the circular image. The return phase now appears to have been affected by the outward movement to coordinate *b*. What appears in terms of time and space to be circular movement, turns into spiralling movement with the introduction of the third dimension. In the return to coordinate *a*, there is a transcending of the original departure point, revealed by the third dimension.

The diagrams attempt to represent pictorially the nature of the dialectical method employed by classical theologians. They show the way in which the third coordinate (or third phase) of the dialectical method makes the vital connection

between eternity and temporality. They demonstrate how the circle of bi-polar dialectic becomes empowered through the introduction of the third element. The impasse of the dialectic finds resolution through transcendence.

For the classical theologians, the microcosmic/macrocosmic understanding of the creature in relation to the divine authorised them to use superlative theology born out of the dialectic generated between affirmative and negative theology. There was a route back to the originating Source of Nous, accessible to the human being because he participated in that very Nous. He was born out of the divine emanation from eternity and could make the ascent back to eternity because divine emanation and return were eternal. Dialectical theology, culminating in the transcending superlative theology, was the means by which God could be approached.

So what is the significance of the spiral? The spiral denotes empowerment as well as transcendence. It evokes an image of theological ascension out of materiality through the hierarchies in search of the mystical union with the Source.

In summary, it is being argued that the classical theologians who employed a dialectical theology did so because of their understanding of the intimate relationship between divine movement and creaturely ascension. Divine movement was of a twofold nature: emanation from eternity to temporality and return from temporality to eternity. Creaturely ascension back to the divine Source had to be done through dialectic – the means of deciphering the divine secrets that, when discovered, would empower the creaturely soul to find its way back to the Source. The belief in the possibility of creaturely return to the Source hinged upon a microcosmic/macrocosmic understanding of life in relation to God that was theocentric in nature: the soul of the creature, trapped in the realm of materiality, sought to return to God by gradually shedding its attachment to that realm through the dialectical process.

Turning to Tillich, it has been argued that his dialectical approach is consistent with that of classical theology and, like classicism, is also rooted in the notion of divine

emanation and return. However, whereas classical theology depicted a divine movement that was self-sufficient, complete and independent of the activity of the creaturely soul, Tillich's divine movement is manifested through the process of life.

Thus, what the classical theologians depicted as divine emanation and return, Tillich expresses as correlation, which is his way of showing the two-fold movement of eternity to temporality and temporality to eternity. For classical theology, this flow was a wholly divine activity, which the creature sought to tap into in order to ascend back to eternity. This led the classical microcosmic theme to be theocentric. For Tillich, however, this flow is depicted in terms of resonance and reciprocity between the eternal Creator and the temporal creature, showing the way in which the creature is actively involved in the way the Creator makes the return. Tillich's microcosmic theme, therefore, is resonating and participatory rather than theocentric.

However, at no point does Tillich suggest that the creature is of equal status to the divine: the resonance between creature and Creator is firmly grounded in being itself and in this way, Tillich shows that the creature in its resonating relationship with the Creator is also part of the divine life, and as such, should never fall into the trap of believing itself to be autonomous. To live freely as a fully functional human being means to live a participatory life in relation to all that has and is life. In short, to live a participatory life means life in awareness of the unity of being. Here is the microcosmic theme of Tillich's theology. This theme allows the symbol Jesus as the Christ to be pivotal. It symbolises the full spiralling ascension of temporality into eternity by means of the eternal breakthrough into the temporal. It is an empowering symbol, expressing the fullness of the two-fold movement of the divine. It shows the fullness in terms of divine involvement in history and culture (i.e. time and space) and creaturely involvement in eternity through history and culture.

Tillich's use of dialectic, as demonstrated through his extensive employment of triadic notions and structures, is the means by which he depicts the connection

between the divine and the human creature. The third phase of his dialectic as a transcending position created out of the tension between the two preceding polar phases, is the means by which the human creature spirals toward the eternal. The spiral does not denote a movement out of time and space, but rather a qualitative movement of transcendence and depth *within* time and space – it is a spiralling into the third dimension, that of the eternal, which is present wholly within time and space and which is accessed by going beyond the physical and immediate.

Thus, through the microcosmic theme of Tillichian theology, those in modernity were reminded that the physical and the immediate are not the same as time and space. Moving beyond the physical does not mean escaping time. Looking beyond the immediate does not mean running away from the world. Rather, it means looking through the physical and the immediate, which are situated within time and space, to find the eternal, which is also situated within time and space. Classical theology understood this distinction between the physical and the immediate on the one hand, and time and space on the other. Alchemical practice provides a vivid example of the way in which such a distinction found expression.²⁸⁰ Modernity, however, with its great sense of empowerment through the discoveries of the physical sciences, had lost the distinction.

Tillich explicitly wished to remind modernity of a half-forgotten theological truth, namely that being itself is one.²⁸¹ He did this by referring his readers to the microcosmic themes of classical thinkers. At the same time, implicit in that reminder is another half-forgotten truth – the distinction between time and space on the one hand, and physicality and immediacy on the other. To be reminded of this is to be reminded that real empowerment lies not in the physical and immediate of time and space, but in the depths that lurk beneath them.

²⁸⁰ See pp.84-88, above.

²⁸¹ Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1, p.261.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that in order to fully understand Tillich's method of correlation, we must consider what drove him to use it. It has been suggested that underlying correlation is his sense of the microcosmic understanding of humanity in relation to the divine, a sense of which he appears to have been only partially aware. As it was only a partial awareness, the theme is argued to be implicit, not explicit, in his theology.

The chapter has gone on to suggest that this implicit theme helps to clarify his method of correlation. It has been argued that Tillich's use of dialectic is consistent with a microcosmic understanding of reality, as demonstrated by classical thinkers, such as Pseudo-Dionysius, Cusanus, and Boehme. His method of correlation concurs with the classical notion of divine emanation and return. However, that is not to say that Tillich's theology is a simple reiteration of classical theology. Far from it; if there is underlying his theology a microcosmic world-view, his sense of microcosm is not identical with that of classical theology.

Tillich's theology can be seen to be a further development of the microcosmic theme. His interest in, and emphasis upon the resonating relationship between Creator and creature reflects an understanding of the active and free role that the human being plays in the process of actualisation of potential. The creature is a microcosm in so far as it is grounded in being itself and participates in the process of divine consciousness by means of active involvement in the process of human consciousness. In this respect, we can find strong echoes of Boehmic thinking.

However, in so far as creaturely freedom is depicted as freedom to function as bearer of spirit for all that has life, Tillich ensures that the creature does not fall into a sense of equality with the divine, or a sense that the divine is in need of the creature. In this regard, Tillich moves away from Boehme. In that moving away, Tillich expresses the freely resonating relationship between the creature and the

Creator, in which the former participates in the latter as the sustained and the latter participates in the former as the Sustainer.

What may be extracted from Tillich's theology therefore, is a sense of microcosm that is neither theocentric nor anthropocentric, but more participatory and resonating. If classical theology expressed the dynamics underlying existence in terms of the rhythm of divine emanation and return, then Tillich expresses them in terms of the rhythm of the divine life in correlation with creaturely life. In creaturely terms, those dynamics are of a dialectical nature, making creaturely existence ambiguous.

Through the method of correlation, Tillich demonstrates how the clarity of the eternal breaks in through the conditions of existence as the creature reaches out for that which empowers it to make sense of the ambiguities of existence. The creature taps into divine clarity by means of symbol, the most powerful and complete being Jesus as the Christ, that symbol of the ultimate correlation between creature and Creator, microcosm and macrocosm.

Part Two

Questioning Tillich's Insistence upon Ontological Estrangement in Light of the Microcosmic Theme

Chapter 4

Bridging the Great Divide

This chapter considers the theme of the unconscious in Tillichian theology, a theme not so widely accepted as an important component of his system. Perhaps because the unconscious has such psychological connotations, theologians tend to overlook Tillich's interest in it. Nevertheless, a reading of Tillich's essays on matters of psychology and pastoral care demonstrates his deep interest in the subject.²⁸² Indeed, an appreciation of this interest is very helpful in understanding Tillich's insistence upon the vertical dimension with regard to the creaturely relationship with the Creator. Transcendence is not simply a matter of upward movement, but also of movement down into the depths of the human psyche.²⁸³

Tillich perceives an intimate connection between theological and psychological language. Nowhere is this expressed more strongly than in his understanding of creaturely freedom and separation. For this reason, the chapter offers an exploration of the relationship between Tillich's understanding of the unconscious, creaturely freedom and existential separation. The discussion stemming from this exploration challenges, from the psychological perspective, Tillich's insistence upon the necessary existential state of separation. It questions the validity of the ontological nature of creaturely estrangement for his system as a whole. It suggests that in view of the fact that ontological estrangement is not simply a Tillichian idiosyncrasy, but a theme inherited by Tillich from his western Christian background, it is necessary to step outside the Christian tradition, in order to assess the validity of such a presupposition. The final part of the chapter therefore, marks the stepping out of the western Christian tradition

²⁸² See P. Tillich, *Meaning of Health: Essays in Existentialism, Psychoanalysis, and Religion* (Exploration Press, Chicago, 1984).

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.200.

into the Chinese tradition of *Tao*. Here, the personal and academic risks involved in exploring another tradition are explored, and the methodology adopted for this purpose is explained.

Section One: Tillich and the Unconscious

Tillich describes the unconscious as power, 'potentia', the power that fuels consciousness:

The unconscious becomes actually what it potentially is, and for which it strives, by reaching the state of consciousness; and consciousness includes the potentialities driving within the unconscious as its vital reservoir.²⁸⁴

As potential, the power of the unconscious is ambiguous: it can be devastating and destructive if repressed, or creative and unifying if brought into consciousness through "union with the objective structures of reality."²⁸⁵ Tillich's choice of language here is similar to the language used in his theological system to depict the divine forces of Godhead and Logos. Godhead, as with potentia, can be destructive and devastating if unleashed from the structuring influence of Logos, but creative if unified with Logos.²⁸⁶

In Chapter One, the connection between eros and Godhead was established: eros was described as the finite expression of Godhead, the finite drive toward the Summum Bonum.²⁸⁷ It could be expressed in another way as the potential of God under the conditions of finite existence. If there is a parallel between Godhead and the unconscious as potentia, and if eros is the finite expression of Godhead, is it possible to make a connection between eros and the unconscious? More specifically, if the

²⁸⁴ Ibid, p.51

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ See pp.18,19 above.

²⁸⁷ See pp.56-58 above.

unconscious is potential, that which drives into the conscious, and if eros is the drive toward the Summum Bonum, can we assert that the unconscious and eros are fundamentally the same?

Tillich describes eros as the 'urge toward the reunion of the separated'.²⁸⁸ In order to be better placed to address the question asked above, it is necessary to unpack this statement. Let us start by considering Tillich's understanding of the term *separation*.

Separation

In his discussion with Carl Rogers,²⁸⁹ Tillich makes reference to the symbol, *dreaming innocence*, which he describes as the mythological state of Adam and Eve present in each and every human being.²⁹⁰ It is a symbol used to express human potential. Dreaming innocence is not to be confused with a historical state of innocence prior to a historical Fall, but is symbolic of the potential of humanity as a whole, which is situated within the human being as an individual.²⁹¹ Tillich explains his choice of expression in the following way: Both *dreaming* and *innocence* point toward something that precedes actual existence.²⁹² He describes *dreaming* as a state of mind 'which is real and non-real at the same time - just as is potentiality.'²⁹³ For this reason, argues Tillich, *dreaming* is an appropriate term to describe the state of essential being.²⁹⁴ With regard to *innocence*, Tillich suggests there are three connotations, which are appropriate for its use in the term *dreaming innocence*: absence of actual experience, absence of personal responsibility and absence of moral guilt.²⁹⁵

²⁸⁸ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol.3, p.137.

²⁸⁹ Tillich, *The Meaning of Health*, pp.194-202.

²⁹⁰ Ibid, p.197.

²⁹¹ 'Theology must clearly and unambiguously represent "the Fall" as a symbol for the human situation universally, not as the story of an event that happened "once upon a time."' (Tillich, *Systematic Theology* vol.2, p.29).

²⁹² Ibid, p.33.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

Tillich asserts that the term, *dreaming innocence* can “provide a psychological approach to the state of essential or potential being.”²⁹⁶ The Fall symbolises the transition from essence to existence.²⁹⁷ Essence was described in Chapter One as the potential that lies within being.²⁹⁸ It follows that if *dreaming innocence* is the state symbolically preceding the Fall, it is the state of potential,²⁹⁹ i.e. the state of unrealised, non-actualised power. The myth of the Fall depicts the eating from the Tree of Knowledge as the act triggering the transition from potential to actuality. The association of this change with knowledge shows the state of potential preceding the Fall to be one of unconsciousness. In so far as there is nothing conscious, then, dreaming innocence is pure potential. What happens in the Garden of Eden is the movement out of the state of unconsciousness into consciousness.

In the Fall, the notions of creaturely freedom and consciousness are entwined with that of sin. Tillich argues that the transition from essence (potential) to existence (actuality) is made possible by the reality of finite freedom.³⁰⁰ In Chapter Three, we learned that finite freedom stems from the human capacity to make sense of existence, to interpret it and to transform it.³⁰¹ The logos principle in the human psyche empowers the creature to go beyond the immediacy of environment, and creatively to turn environment into a world of meaning.³⁰² Finite freedom means having even the freedom to deny and to surrender one’s humanity – to resist one’s essential nature. This is where we see the ambiguity of existence.

If it is possible to be so free that we deny our own essential nature, what is the meaning of such freedom? The meaning comes from the relation of freedom to its polarity, destiny. Human freedom is only meaningful in relation to destiny. To speak of freedom without its polarity, destiny, is not to speak of freedom at all, for, as we have

²⁹⁶ Ibid, p.34

²⁹⁷ Ibid, p.30

²⁹⁸ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol.3, p.12.

²⁹⁹ “The symbol, ‘Adam before the Fall’ must be understood as the dreaming innocence of undecided potentialities.” (Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol.2, p.34).

³⁰⁰ Ibid, p.31.

³⁰¹ Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, p.82.

³⁰² Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol.2, p.31.

seen, freedom is not a running wild,³⁰³ but the ability creatively to transcend the immediacy of environment through the logos structure of the psyche. Human freedom, then, is empowerment in so far as it relates to, and resonates with, destiny. The ambiguity of life however, results from the human being's difficulty in seeing freedom within its polar relation to destiny. The ambiguity of life lies in the dialectical forces that threaten the alignment of freedom and destiny at every moment.

The freedom of the human being to destroy itself is the expression of non-being as it overpowers the alliance between freedom and destiny. Self-destruction is the manifestation of freedom when drawn from its alignment with destiny. It is the expression of the human being's surrender to the power of non-being, compelling the creature, in apparent freedom, to fall into the meaninglessness of life. This is *apparent* freedom, for true finite freedom is the capacity creatively to transcend the immediate in a meaningful way. Where freedom leads the creature to the conclusion of meaninglessness, there is distorted freedom, freedom drawn from its moorings with destiny and drifting uncontrollably into oblivion by the power of non-being.

Creaturely freedom is qualitatively different from that of the divine, for it is freedom made ambiguous by the perpetual threat of non-being. It is freedom either to live creatively in alignment with the polar force of destiny or to destroy oneself by denying the essential alignment with destiny. This is the choice that is made by the mythological figure of Adam in the Garden of Eden, after eating from the Tree of Knowledge. To know choice is to have consciousness, which means to move out of potentiality into actuality. To have consciousness is to fall from the state of dreaming innocence and to leave the blissful paradise of potential to enter the painful world of actuality. It is painful because of the process of actualisation, based upon choice and ambiguity.

Thus, the Fall symbolises the separation that permeates life. In the story of Adam and the Garden of Eden, it is expressed as the separation between God and the human

³⁰³ See p.142 above.

being, opted for by Adam, in his creaturely freedom. In psychological terms, the Fall symbolises, for Tillich, the transition from unconsciousness to consciousness; the transition from essential being to existential being, from potential life to actual life. It is the transition from non-awareness to self-awareness, from unity to plurality and from union to separation. Dreaming innocence is the state preceding the transition to self-awareness, preceding plurality and preceding separation.

We learned earlier that Tillich attributes three connotations to innocence: absence of actual experience, absence of personal responsibility and absence of moral guilt.³⁰⁴ He argues that all three meanings are appropriate in dreaming innocence because the term 'designates the state before actuality, existence, and history.'³⁰⁵ A pre-actualised state, asserts Tillich, implies innocence in terms of absence of actual experience. A pre-existential state implies innocence in terms of absence of personal responsibility, and a pre-historical state implies innocence in terms of absence of moral guilt. It is perhaps easy to see that a pre-actualised state implies absence of actual experience, for such a state is one of potential. However, it is perhaps not quite so clear to see why pre-existential and pre-historical states imply absence of personal responsibility and moral guilt, respectively. It is therefore, necessary to spend a little time exploring this, in order to appreciate the significance of *dreaming innocence* as it relates to freedom, the Fall and sin.

Innocence as it Relates to the Absence of Personal Responsibility and the State before Existence

We have seen that the Fall depicts the transition from unconsciousness to consciousness, and implied in such a transition is the discovery of choice. Adam discovered his freedom to choose and, consequently, lost his innocence. But *why does the freedom to choose imply the loss of innocence?*

³⁰⁴ See p.162 above.

³⁰⁵ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, p.34.

Freedom means creatively to live through the ambiguities of existence and freely to live in relation to our destiny. However, we have seen that freedom also means the possibility of moving away from our destiny and, in so doing, of losing ourselves. Freedom, therefore, means awareness of the potential that is ours and thus, awareness of the creative and destructive nature of that potential. Freedom, then, is consciousness: freedom in alignment with the constraining influence of destiny means creative consciousness, but torn away from its polar relation with destiny, means destructive consciousness. To live according to our destiny and our freedom is, for Tillich, to live a creative human life.

So what precisely does Tillich mean by destiny? It is not something imposed upon us by an alien power. Rather, it is that pole that structures our freedom.³⁰⁶ To understand destiny, we must understand freedom, for destiny is the framework within which freedom operates. Equally, to understand freedom, we must understand destiny, for freedom is the power to act within the structure that destiny provides. Destiny is the circumstance of existence in which we act in freedom. The choices I make are determined by all that has shaped my being: family background, home environment, the community in which I live, conscious memories and unconscious ones and the value system within which I operate. All the choices I make in my life are made freely, but within the constraints of such conditions as those.

However, destiny does not simply refer to the circumstance of individuals in existential terms, but also refers to the essential nature of the human being. We have already seen that the polarities of freedom and destiny represent the transcendent element of creaturely existence. In Chapter One, they were described as the ontological elemental polarities that mark the crescendo in Tillich's theology, the point at which the human being reaches out to God.³⁰⁷ Thus, destiny also refers to the creature's essential connection with the ground of being. The ontological process of self-integration, self-creation and self-transcendence, depicted in the ontological elements, is the process of reaching out to that which makes life meaningful.

³⁰⁶ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol.1, p.185.

³⁰⁷ See p.39 above.

Freedom and destiny are related, not just on the horizontal axis, but on the vertical as well.³⁰⁸ It is the destiny of the creature to be reunited with the Creator and as long as the freedom exercised in existence is in alignment with that destiny, the creature enjoys creative freedom. However, if the freedom exercised is an expression of resistance to that ultimate destiny, it becomes destructive and distorted. My freedom is the power to act in existence, and my destiny is the structure within which I act, both in terms of my personal circumstance and history, and also in terms of the essential nature of humanity as a species.

Freedom in relation to destiny implies personal responsibility because it means making choices that lead one toward a realisation of one's full humanity through the process of self-integration, self-creation and self-transcendence. The ambiguities of life mean that every decision is an anxious one, where the drive for freedom may blind us to our destiny, or where our sense of true destiny is lost through circumstantial impositions upon our freedom.

Freedom to choose, then, is a responsibility born out of consciousness and self-awareness. Innocence is the lack of awareness of possibility and choice and therefore, the lack of personal responsibility. To have the freedom to choose means necessarily to have lost innocence.

Innocence as it Relates to Personal Guilt and the State before History

In the preceding section, destiny was shown to refer to both the existential circumstance in which freedom operated, and the essential connection between the human being and the ground of being. In this section, the focus is upon the aspect of destiny that expresses the universal separation of humanity from the divine.

³⁰⁸ In Chapter 3, we learned that the logos as symbol became the correlate for the finite-infinite relation, i.e. the correlate for the vertical dimension. Freedom and destiny, as the polarities that lead to self-transcendence also find their place at that pivotal point.

According to Tillich, "the state of existence is the state of estrangement."³⁰⁹ Estrangement is the separation of the existential creature from its essential nature. Expressed in psychological terms, estrangement is the separation of consciousness from unconsciousness. Estrangement is the universal destiny of humanity. It is a fact of life.

To exist means necessarily to be estranged from one's essential state. This finds clearer expression if we use the terms potentiality and actuality. If the essential state is one of potentiality, to be actual means not to be potential. By using these terms, another notion integral to estrangement is thrown into relief. Actuality still has a relation to potentiality: out of the latter, the former emerges. Thus, estrangement means separation of those that are connected. Existential life is life separated from that to which it is fundamentally connected.

Closely akin to the notion of estrangement is that of sin. For Tillich, sin is the state of personal, as opposed to universal, estrangement from God, from one's self and from one's world.³¹⁰ In so far as sin refers to the personal aspect of existence, it is directly related to the idea of personal responsibility, outlined in the section above. Tillich asserts:

Man's predicament is estrangement, but his estrangement is sin.

It is not a state of things like the laws of nature, but a matter of both personal freedom and universal destiny.³¹¹

He goes on to argue that the disregarding of a law is not in itself sinful; however, through such disregard, the human being expresses estrangement from the three things to which s/he fundamentally belongs: God, self and fellow human beings.

It follows from the universal state of estrangement and the personal expressions of estrangement, labelled sin, that the human being experiences personal guilt. This

³⁰⁹ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol.2, p.44.

³¹⁰ Ibid., p.46.

³¹¹ Ibid.

feeling is the consequence of human freedom to choose between creatively moving toward full humanity and destructively rejecting such a movement. As guilt is the product of the universal state of estrangement and personal sin, it is the product of freedom and destiny on both the personal and the universal levels. Estrangement as a universal "fact" and sin as a personal "act"³¹² are interwoven. This means that the individual cannot be relieved of the burden of guilt. In so far as there is personal sin, one's guilt is justified. At the same time, it is important to realise the universal tragedy of estrangement, for which the individual is not responsible. As fact, estrangement is not a matter of personal guilt; however, as act, sin is.

In so far as estrangement is universal, it is a condition of existence and, as such, is a quality of history in which the human being works toward reunion. Only in history can estrangement be felt because only in and through history is consciousness expressed. To live historically is to live consciously, for history is the product of conscious reflection.

In so far as estrangement is personal, i.e. sin, it is, again, a phenomenon of history, for sin is expressed in actions and attitudes toward God, toward fellow human beings and toward self. Sin is thus, a phenomenon of society and culture and the product of human freedom in conflict with destiny.

Participating in the world means participating in history, for our sense of world is based upon involvement and reflection under the conditions of time and space, causality and substance. To be human is to be estranged on two counts: firstly, by existing, all that lives, including humanity, participates in the universal estrangement of existence. Secondly, by living reflectively with the freedom to choose and discern, the human being, as distinct from all other living creatures, has the freedom to determine its own destiny, to shape history and therefore, to carry the burden of guilt when the choice made contradicts its true destiny. Therefore, innocence is a state that lies outside the realm of historical existence.

³¹² Ibid, pp.55-58.

To conclude this section on separation, we have seen that Tillich regards the Fall as a mythological symbol expressing the transition from potentiality to actuality in ontological and psychological terms. Ontologically, it is the transition from essential being to existential being. Psychologically, it is the transition from unconsciousness, the state preceding personal responsibility and personal guilt, to consciousness, the state of awareness and discernment. The Fall marks the change in the creature's condition from one of dreaming innocence to one of separation. Ontologically, dreaming innocence is the state of potential - the essential state preceding existence and history. It does not precede in a temporal sense, for time is a condition of existence, not of essence.

For the same reason, it does not precede in a spatial, causal or substantial sense. Dreaming innocence is not a state that existed "once upon a time",³¹³ but one that differs qualitatively from that of separation. Dreaming innocence is the eternal state, out of which the existential state of separation emerges.

Ontologically, separation is the state resulting from the movement out of dreaming innocence. It is the consequence of the freedom of the human being to choose and, therefore, the consequence of the human being's ability to think and reflect. At this point, ontology meets psychology in Tillich's system. The ontological state of separation is the product of the human psyche. Now, this should not be construed as solipsistic. Tillich did not understand separation to be nothing other than a product of the mind. Here, it is important to remember the microcosmic theme underlying his theology, for then we understand that the psyche of the human creature houses the dynamic forces of the divine life itself, just as the world of the human creature houses those forces.³¹⁴ We must remember that in ontological terms, the divine dynamics of Godhead and Logos find expression in the human psyche as well as in the external world. We must also remember that the external world of meaning exists only by virtue

³¹³ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol.2, p.29.

³¹⁴ See pp.44-46 above.

of the ontological forces operating through the human psyche. Without the human power of reflection, there would be no meaningful world, simply environment. It is the logos structure of the psyche, coupled with psychic drive that makes environment meaningful and brings to consciousness that which is latent.

In psychological terms, dreaming innocence is the state of unconsciousness. Separation is the state of consciousness, in which the human psyche takes on the responsibility of freedom, makes choices in the ambiguous light of existence, and suffers the guilt associated with those choices. The choices made are free within the constraints of human destiny, the circumstances of our existence.

Destiny, like separation, has both ontological and psychological connotations: ontologically, existence means separation and, in that respect, separation is our destiny, our circumstance. Psychologically, our destiny is determined by the circumstance of our conscious lives – our environment, our family, our childhood and community - and our unconscious lives – the history into which we have been born, our individual emotional and family heritages, as well as the broader cultural heritages.³¹⁵ In creative freedom, the centred self of the whole person makes choices in spontaneous alignment with one's destiny. This contrasts with distorted freedom, in which the will to freedom has been unleashed from the structuring influence of destiny. Such freedom is not the expression of a centred psyche and a whole human being, but of one who has lost the meaning of existence and who, consequently, drives toward self-destruction.³¹⁶

The purpose of this discussion has been to understand more fully the meaning of separation as it occurs in the phrase "the urge toward the reunion of the separated."³¹⁷ This has been necessary to understand the relationship between eros and the unconscious. The question we asked earlier was whether both were fundamentally the same. Having considered separation, it is now necessary to consider eros.

³¹⁵ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol.1, p.185.

³¹⁶ See pp.142-144 above.

³¹⁷ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol.3, p.137.

Eros

In Chapter One, eros was described as a quality that drives life toward fulfillment,³¹⁸ the urge for the reunion of the divine principles of Power, Logos and Spirit, which become separated in existence. From our discussion of the notion of separation, it perhaps becomes clear that eros is the drive within existence to return to the state of union.

Earlier, it was argued that implied in separation is the sense of connection to that from which one has become separated. In this light, ontologically, eros may be seen as the drive that is activated upon the transition from essence to existence. It represents the driving principle of reason in its ontological sense. The ontological meaning of eros has already been considered in detail in Chapter One.³¹⁹ What has not yet been considered is the idea of eros in its psychological sense, and so it is to this that we must now turn our attention.

In psychological terms, eros is the drive that is activated upon the transition from unconsciousness to consciousness. As such, it is a drive toward the union of consciousness with unconsciousness. Earlier, we learned that Tillich describes eros as the "urge toward the reunion of the separated."³²⁰ Mythologically, this statement presents no problems: it expresses the desire of the human being to return to God, from whom his own free will has distanced. However, in psychological terms it does become somewhat problematic. If eros is the urge toward the reunion of the separated, in psychological terms, what precisely is being reunited with what? If it is fair to equate unconsciousness with the dreaming innocent union of Adam and God in the Garden of Eden, as has been argued, and consciousness with Adam's separation from God, then, in what way is the drive of consciousness a drive toward a reunion with the unconscious? If the unconscious is the potential that powers the actuality of consciousness, is it reunion or union that is driven towards? Reunion suggests a return

³¹⁸ See p.56 above.

³¹⁹ See pp.56-58 above.

³²⁰ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol 3, p.137.

to a previous state. In this sense, the drive toward reunion would be the drive toward a return to unconsciousness. Is this really what eros drives toward? Surely not, for a return to unconsciousness would suggest an undoing of the manifestation of consciousness. Such a return would be tantamount to admitting the folly of existence. It would be to deny the real freedom of humanity and to show that the human creature was, after all, nothing more than a puppet for the divine. Surely, the drive is not toward reunion with unconsciousness, but rather toward *union* with it. In mythological terms, Tillich's assertion is clear that eros is the drive toward reunion of the separated. However, in psychological terms, it is ambiguous.

If there is genuine purpose in the process of life, namely, to actualise what is potential through the gift of human consciousness, as Tillich asserts,³²¹ then, the state of union between consciousness and unconsciousness can never qualitatively precede creaturely life. Therefore, it is misleading to express the psychological connotation of eros as the urge toward the reunion of the separated because it suggests that the conscious process being worked out through life is already eternally present in the state of unconsciousness.

This suggestion nullifies the very purpose of human consciousness, as Tillich expresses it. The statement must be changed to the urge toward the *union* of the separated, if human freedom in relation to the divine is to be preserved. In psychological terms, eros therefore, becomes the urge toward the *union* of consciousness separated from unconsciousness. However, we are still left with a problem. If *union* replaces *reunion*, is it also necessary to replace *separated* with another term? It has already been argued that separation has integral to it the idea of connection. Reunion collocates with separation, as both imply a preceding state of connection; union, on the other hand, does not. Does the replacement of *reunion* with *union* lead to a loss of the sense of connection implied in *reunion*?

³²¹ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol.3, p.111.

Consciousness is, in fact, closely connected to unconsciousness. Tillich describes the latter as the power that fuels consciousness, and consciousness as that for which the potential of the unconscious strives. There is resonance between the two. In existential terms, the human creature strives toward consciousness by means of the power of the unconscious. Implied in the expression, *urge toward the union of consciousness separated from unconsciousness* is the conscious realisation of the power of the unconscious in that very consciousness. This is not *reunion*, because, if Tillich is correct, only the human being has the consciousness to recognise the connection.³²² To replace *reunion* with *union* and to keep the term *separation* is to make a significant statement. It is to affirm the uniqueness of the purpose of humanity and the real power of the human being to create on the one hand, and on the other, to acknowledge the eternal connection between the consciousness that is so uniquely human and the unconscious that sustains it.

Tillich would perhaps be very wary of such a suggestion, possibly regarding it as a step closer to the Boehmic view of the dependence of the divine upon the creature.³²³ Tillich's insistence upon the holiness of God is expression of his reluctance to attribute a lack of any quality to the divine. Holiness depicts God's completeness, and implicit in the term is the idea of God's separateness from the creature. If, in psychological terms, *eros* is to be understood as the urge toward union of consciousness separated from the unconscious, implied in this idea is progressive movement toward union, which does not accommodate a sense of ultimate separation. To insist upon the ultimate separation of existence from essence or of consciousness from unconsciousness is to restrict such a progression.

Tillich's response to this would perhaps be that a very dangerous course is being set if the assumption is made that consciousness and the unconscious may be united. In

³²² Ibid.

³²³ J. Dourley argues that Tillich's "orthodoxy forces him to draw back from Boehme's even more compelling religious sense of an unconscious and conflicted divinity imbuing humanity with the inescapable vocation of cooperating in the redemption of the divine in history." (J. Dourley, 'A Critical Evaluation of Paul Tillich's Appropriation of Jakob Boehme.' (European Tillich Society, May, 2000), p.18).

psychological terms, would not this imply the loss of distinction between the conscious and the unconscious? Is not Tillich's insistence upon the holy and ineffable nature of God his recognition of the importance of maintaining the distinction between the creature and the Creator?

Indeed, from a psychological perspective, Jung shared a similar view. He warned of the dangers of identifying the ego with the centre of the self, which he regarded as the divine centre in every individual. For this to happen, the ego would effectively identify with God and fall into psychosis.³²⁴

Is not Tillich's insistence upon the ineffability of the divine and the impossibility of the human being's knowing God, a theological parallel to Jung's understanding of the necessary separation of ego from the centre of self?³²⁵ Are not both men right to insist upon separation?

The answer to the last question depends upon the nature of union. If, by union of consciousness with unconsciousness, one means the falling of the former into the latter and the subsequent loss of consciousness, then the dangers outlined above would, indeed, be very real and the need for separation would have to be maintained. However, such union would mean a surrendering of consciousness to the unconscious. Effectively, this would be a *reunion* of consciousness with the unconscious and a consequent nullifying of the process of actualisation that human consciousness had effected in and through history.

What if, however, there could be another type of union, which did not involve the surrendering of consciousness to the unconscious, but, instead, involved resonance and mutual participation? What if, in such union, the full status of consciousness could be maintained in the presence of the unconscious? Would it be so necessary in that situation to insist upon separation? What if I could live life in such a way that my

³²⁴ John Dourley, *The Psyche as Sacrament: a Comparative Study of C.G. Jung and Paul Tillich* (Inner City Books, Toronto, 1981), p.57.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.54-57.

conscious existence was fully informed by, and powered from, my unconscious depths? Would I need to be kept safe from that unconscious? Would I need an unbridgeable gulf between the depth of my being and my mortal life? It is possible to suggest that the answers to these questions might be *no*.

When a person is weak and vulnerable, they feel threatened by anything more powerful than them. When a young child who has been playing in the mud, gets smacked by his mother for bringing dirt into the house, he learns not to trust his senses, for they led him to revel in the feel of the dirt on his skin and the sound of it squelching under his feet. His mother's smack taught him that he was wrong to indulge those senses. He had not thought about the consequences of his actions; if only he thought more and played less, he would not get into so much trouble. The confusion of such messages, if repeated regularly enough cause the child to become weak: he is weakened by his inability to judge. As he grows up, his inability to judge becomes amplified with every human encounter that reiterates his confusion. He sees those around him as being those able to judge because they can judge him well – they see him as naughty or stupid, and he knows that to be true because he was told that often enough as a child. Such a person lives in constant danger of being engulfed by those more powerful than he and, of course, such people are all around him for there is no one more powerless than he.

What if the same theory applied to consciousness? What if the unconscious is a threat to our consciousness because we perceive it to be a threat? What if we perceive it that way because we have been told of the overwhelming power of God the Father, God the Judge, lurking in the unconscious? What if those stories have led us to live life in fear because we know ourselves to be sinners, to be inevitably separated from the Almighty because our consciousness is nothing in the presence of God?

Tillich argues that sin is the turning of one's back upon God and the insistence of living life alone.³²⁶ He claims that God is eternally present in the midst of life and guides us, but that we, in our existential state, can only have glimpses of that presence. But

³²⁶ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol.2, p.47.

perhaps the assumption that God may only be glimpsed should be challenged. If we can have glimpses of God's presence, what stops us from seeing it in every moment of our lives? Is it because of the tragic destiny of existence, or is it because we use that tragedy as an excuse not to look harder? Is God ultimately hidden from us or do we hide from God? If the latter is the case, then is that not a sinful action, according to Tillich's definition? If we insist upon the inevitable gulf between the human being and God, are we not committing the sin of turning away from our source of sustenance?

In Tillich's system, the union of consciousness with the unconscious is not possible because of his insistence upon the estranged state of humanity. Eros may drive us toward the *Summum Bonum* but it can never fully be grasped because existence means separation. He equates consciousness and its evolution with separation. To be conscious is to make distinctions, to make choices and to live in ambiguity.

In this respect, it is possible to answer the question asked at the beginning of this chapter, namely, *are consciousness and eros, for Tillich, the same thing?* The answer can perhaps quite plainly be seen to be *no*. The unconscious is potential, that essential state that qualitatively precedes and, at the same time, fuels consciousness. Therefore, qualitatively, it precedes finite being. It does not precede in a temporal sense: just as the infinite precedes finitude in a non-temporal, non-spatial sense, so the unconscious precedes consciousness. Eros, on the other hand, is the force that drives the finite creature to respond to the unconscious presence within finitude. Eros, then, is strictly a force operating within finitude: in Tillichian terms, it is a post-Fall drive toward reunion.

Section Two: Stepping out of the Western Christian Tradition

In contrast to the distinction between the unconscious and eros, clearly delineated by Tillich's insistence upon separation, suggested in the previous section was the possibility that the two might become more integrated. Consciousness is not just the

making of distinctions, but also the recognition of the unconscious power that fuels it. Consciousness depends upon the unconscious, and the more this is acknowledged, the closer the union of the two can be made. This does not mean that consciousness must fall at the feet of unconsciousness. Rather, the growth of consciousness through the drive of eros should be commensurate with the awareness of the unconsciousness that fuels it.

This suggestion implies the abandonment of the presupposition of estrangement deeply entrenched in Tillich's Christian tradition. Is it, therefore, possible to abandon it and remain within a Christian structure? Moreover, for Tillich, it is a presupposition applicable to humanity as a species, not simply to the Christian. As such, estrangement is a fundamental statement about the state of human existence. Surely, in those terms it would be ridiculous to attempt to suggest it should be abandoned? However, it would only be ridiculous to do so if the presupposition of its ontological nature remained unchallenged.

How would it be possible to assess the validity of Tillich's Christian assumption of the ontological nature of separation? If I am a western Christian and have never ventured out of such an environment, how do I know whether or not my presuppositions are universally valid? How do I know whether the Christian assumption of human separation from God is a statement of universal truth or a product of the circumstantial destiny of the Christian tradition in which I nest?

It is the aim of the second part of this thesis to step outside the nest, so to speak, in order to attempt to reflect upon Tillich's assumption of the psychological necessity of separation between unconsciousness and consciousness, and to consider the extent to which it is possible to go beyond the necessity of separation and toward union.

Furthermore, the thesis intends to consider the implications of such a step toward union for the microcosmic theme underlying Tillich's theology. The following questions will be raised: *What impact does a stepping into the Chinese tradition have upon our appreciation of Tillichian theology?* Specifically, *what are the implications for*

Tillich's insistence upon separation and the microcosmic theme underlying his theology?

This stepping-out is consistent with Tillich's own *method of correlation*, in which questions are raised about existence that are addressed by reference to that which stands beyond existence. Employing the same principle, this thesis raises questions about Tillichian ontology by going beyond the Christian fold in which his ontology is situated. Moreover, just as Tillich uses the *beyond* to return to the fold of human existence with fresh understanding, so this thesis uses the *beyond* represented by the Chinese tradition as the means by which fresh insight can be brought back to Tillichian theology.³²⁷

This is a bold step, which carries with it many risks. The most obvious risk is that one leaves behind the tradition in which one has grown, knowing that upon return, things will not be the same. Exploring a non-Christian tradition will have inevitable consequences for the explorer upon her previously unchallenged Christian perceptions.

But is that really a risk? Is it not simply a way of broadening one's horizons? The degree of risk depends upon how one chooses to step into the other tradition. If one enters in full possession of one's Christian values with no intent to have them challenged, then there is no risk. But just as a tourist taking photos of the desert cannot claim to know what it means to live in the desert, neither can such a person claim to have an insight into another tradition. Truly to wish to encounter another tradition is to be prepared to let go of those values and presuppositions within which one has been dressed. Here lies the risk, for one stands vulnerable and exposed in the presence of that which is not one's own.

There is a further risk in such a venture: no matter how prepared one may be to undress oneself of presuppositions, it is impossible to do so fully. No matter how conscious

³²⁷ See pp.17-18 above for an in-depth discussion of Tillich's *method of correlation*.

one is of presuppositions, the unconscious that fuels that consciousness remains fully clothed.

For this reason, it is impossible for a member of another cultural or religious tradition to come to know another tradition as it is meaningful to those born into it. So the next risk is that of being unable to participate meaningfully in the tradition into which one steps.

With these two risks comes the danger of falling into a limbo, midway between two traditions, failing to find the unfamiliar tradition meaningful and, as a consequence of the journeying, finding one's own tradition no longer fully meaningful.

Jung warns of this danger. In his discussion of archetypes and the collective unconscious, he advises against the adoption of eastern symbols by the west, on the grounds that their meanings are derived from the unconscious soil of eastern, not western culture.³²⁸

Cultural expression, according to Jung, is a complex phenomenon based upon not only human consciousness, but also the the psychic forces of the personal and collective unconscious. The personal unconscious is based upon the powerful energy of archetypal forces residing in the collective unconscious, in which all members of a particular society participate.³²⁹

Jung argues that human evolution has been concerned with stepping further and further away from the brink of the collective unconscious, the power of which would overwhelm the ego of anyone who ventured too close, and that religious symbolism, myth and dogma have been the means by which the individual seeks refuge from the unconscious forces in which s/he is rooted.

³²⁸ C.G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (part of *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung* Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1959), p.14.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.22.

In an appreciation of symbol reminiscent of Tillich's own,³³⁰ Jung suggests that the power and meaning of such symbols come through the very evolution of the particular society in which they appear, deeply entrenched in its unconscious layers.³³¹ Symbols are the means by which the archetypal forces underlying human existence are made tolerable for the individual.³³²

Jung argues that the breakdown in the protective layer of dogma and religious symbolism, evidenced in the rise of interest in the unconscious and in psychotherapy in the west, exposes modernity to the draw of the unconscious forces of the psyche. He also observes that the increasing fascination with the symbolism of the east is a further reflection of the poverty of western symbolism. However, on the grounds that eastern symbolism is the product of the historical evolution of the culture deeply entrenched in the eastern psyche, Jung warns of the dangers of a symbolically impoverished west adopting the symbols of the east.³³³

Encountering the Chinese Tradition

Do the words of Jung advise against exploration into Chinese culture? Should we search for new symbolism only from the soil of home territory? Do the dangers of adopting the symbols of the east extend to venturing onto their soil? The answer to all three questions has to be no, for Jung also spoke of the value of becoming acquainted with eastern thinking in our search for new meaning. According to J.J. Clarke, for Jung, the east was the catalyst that would bring about spiritual transformation in the

³³⁰ Tillich suggests that Jung's distinction between archetypes and symbols may be a means of resolving the historical conflict between the Catholic insistence upon the rational and unchanging nature of religious symbols and the Protestant insistence upon their dynamic character. (Tillich, *The Meaning of Health*, pp.174-178).

³³¹ C.G.Jung, *Man and His Symbols* (Macmillan Publishers, Oxford, 1978), pp.97-100.

³³² Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, p.11.

³³³ *Ibid.*, p.15.

west. Jung believed that out of western interest in the east, "new spiritual forms will arise."³³⁴

There is a way of journeying that perhaps makes the stepping-out of one's own tradition into another a very meaningful exercise, indeed. If we approach the experience as a means of understanding our own tradition better, rather than as seeking to escape it or to become part of another, then we are able to return with light that might be used to guide our own tradition on to the new.

Tillich perhaps would have been sympathetic to such an approach, for through his *method of correlation* he attempted a similar thing; to search beyond existence, in order better to understand the nature of that existence.

If, in the process of the encounter with another tradition, we discover insights meaningful to us as outsiders, then we will have discovered the light of another tradition that resonates with our own.³³⁵

With this approach in mind, how do we step into the other tradition? We must tread a fine line. We must enter the tradition with openness and a willingness to have our own presuppositions exposed, but, at the same time, with knowledge that the tradition in which we have stepped is not, and can never be, our own. We must reach out to embrace as fully as we can the heart of that tradition in the full knowledge that we can only know it from the outside, never from the inside. In other words, we must be constantly aware that what we experience is not the authenticity of the tradition as it is in itself, but as it resonates with our very own tradition.

If we are able to tread such a fine line, we bring back to our own tradition something very precious indeed; we bring back a fresh light to shine on our own tradition that may well challenge previous perspectives, but will ultimately resonate with it.

³³⁴ Jung, *Jung on the East*, p.17.

³³⁵ Allinson (ed.), *Understanding the Chinese Mind*, p.3.

The Methodological Approach to the Chinese Tradition

The purpose in exploring the Chinese tradition is to assess the validity of Tillich's assertion that creaturely estrangement is ontological in nature. The researcher wishes to test whether Tillich's assertion here has truly ontological validity, or whether it is one made within the parameters of a western Christian perspective. In view of the ambiguities discussed in the present chapter with regard to the themes of eros, estrangement, consciousness and the unconscious, it is necessary to test the validity of this claim. If estrangement is shown not to be ontological in nature, then it is possible to challenge Tillich's assumption in this respect, and to examine the effect on his theological system of the removal of the theme of estrangement.

Hence, in accord with the principle of Tillich's *method of correlation*, the thesis looks out beyond the Christian tradition by examining the ontology of another tradition, in order to consider the extent to which the themes of separation or estrangement feature in it at the ontological level. Selected for this purpose is the Chinese tradition. As already outlined in the Thesis Introduction, the reasons for selecting this tradition are both academic and personal.

From the academic perspective, at the heart of the Chinese tradition is a profoundly microcosmic/macrocosmic understanding of reality. This finds particularly clear expression in philosophical writings about the *Tao* - the process of life's natural change and natural movement.³³⁶

In view of the presence of a microcosmic theme underlying Tillich's theology established in this thesis, and in view also of the inconsistency in his theology with regard to the theme of estrangement, unearthed through the microcosmic theme, a dialogue with the Chinese tradition and its microcosmic theme will be illuminating.

³³⁶ T. Cleary, *The Essential Tao* (San Francisco, Harper, 1991), p.1.

Moreover, the microcosmic theme exemplified in the principle of the *Tao* highlights a close connection between the phenomenal and noumenal aspects of life.³³⁷ Interestingly, the microcosmic theme underlying Tillich's theology also demonstrates intimacy at the ontological level between the human being and the Divine Life. However, his insistence, at the same time, upon ontological estrangement makes ambiguous the nature of that intimacy. This ambiguity would appear not to be present in the Chinese microcosmic theme.

Thus, again, the Chinese tradition becomes an interesting conversation partner in relation to Tillichian theology, for there is both resonance and dissonance between the philosophy pertaining to the *Tao* and Tillichian theology. As with any good conversation partner, differences, as well as similarities, are essential for a dynamic conversation to take place, and for these reasons, on the academic level, the *Tao* of the Chinese tradition may be seen as a suitable one into which to step.

On the personal level, the selection of the Chinese tradition was a natural choice for the researcher. Having been married to a Chinese man for twenty years and having two children who are therefore, both Chinese and European, it was natural for the researcher to opt for the Chinese tradition, when stepping out of the western Christian tradition. Through her marriage, the researcher has realised the way in which it is possible to understand one's own tradition by being exposed to that which is not one's own. Exposure of this kind does not necessarily mean either a relinquishing of one's own values in the light of those brought by one's partner, or the imposition of one's values onto the partner. Instead, it is possible to share each other's values and in so doing, to gain a deeper insight into the respective cultures and traditions of each.

In view of this understanding and experience in marriage, the researcher considered a conversation between Tillich and Chinese philosophy pertaining to the *Tao* to be fruitful and dynamic.

³³⁷ Leung, 'Tao and Logos', p.139.

For these reasons, therefore, the thesis examines the theme of the *Tao* in the context of the Chinese tradition. Specifically, it considers the *Tao* as communicated through two classical Chinese philosophical texts, the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*. The reasons for selecting the *Tao* are detailed below.

Fung asserts that two of the most influential schools in the shaping of Chinese thought are Taoism and Confucianism.³³⁸ Allinson adds Buddhism as the third most influential school,³³⁹ and Liu suggests Mohism rather than Buddhism to be the third.³⁴⁰ Although there may be debate as to whether there were two or three main schools, and if there were three, whether the Mohist or the Buddhist school took third place, there is consensus among these scholars that Confucianism and Taoism provide the bedrock of the Chinese philosophical tradition.

In view of the significant role played by both Confucianism and Taoism in the shaping of the Chinese philosophical tradition, the researcher sought a common theme that ran through both traditions, through which she could access the Chinese tradition. The theme discovered was the *Tao*, of central importance to the ontology of both schools, an ontology that only made full sense in relation to cosmology.³⁴¹

In view of the ontological significance of the *Tao* in both philosophical schools, the researcher selected the *Tao* as the instrument through which she would access the Chinese tradition. Moreover, it would be the *Tao* as expressed in the ancient texts preceding the Confucianist and Taoist schools, rather than the *Tao* as expounded in specifically Confucianist and/or Taoist terms. In view of the very different philosophical emphases of these schools, it was considered far beyond the scope of this thesis to attempt to explore the *Tao* through a Confucianist and/or Taoist perspective. As with any fundamental principle or tenet, ideas pertaining to the *Tao* evolve with the development of each school. Thus, an examination of the *Tao* from the perspective of a

³³⁸ Fung, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, p.30.

³³⁹ Allinson (ed.), *Understanding the Chinese Mind*, p.3.

³⁴⁰ Shu-Hsien Liu, *Understanding Confucian Philosophy: Classical and Sung-Ming* (Westport, Praeger, 1998), p.3.

³⁴¹ Cheng, 'Chinese Metaphysics as Non-Metaphysics', pp. 167,175.

particular school would demand the tracking of the evolution of the term, a task, again, that would lie beyond the limitations of this particular study.

For these reasons, the researcher decided to limit her examination of the *Tao* to two specific ancient classical texts that could be viewed independently of any philosophical school of thought, and which were compiled within a specific time-frame, thus, minimising the risk of anachronism in the study of the *Tao*. Upon the advice of Prof. Xinzhong Yao, the texts selected for this purpose were the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*.³⁴²

The *Lao Tzu* has been selected in view of its widely acknowledged profound influence on Chinese thought throughout the ages.³⁴³ Cheng argues that it is one of only two primary Chinese texts that pertain to the Chinese search for cosmological becoming.³⁴⁴ Moreover, central to the text, according to Ch'en, is the theme of the *Tao*.³⁴⁵ Chang argues that the *Lao Tzu* was the text in which the *Tao* was originally expounded.³⁴⁶ As the purpose of the second part of this thesis is to explore ontology through the lens of the *Tao*, the centrality of the *Lao Tzu* in the history of Chinese thought, and its focus upon the *Tao* and *becoming* make it a wholly appropriate text for consideration.

With regard to the *Chuang Tzu*, there are various reasons for its selection. Firstly, while it shares a close affinity with the *Lao Tzu*,³⁴⁷ having as central to its philosophy

³⁴² These texts were selected upon the advice of Prof. XinZhong Yao at Lampeter University. Highlighting the importance of avoiding the danger of anachronism when examining the *Tao*, he suggested that the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* would be appropriate texts for my purpose, as both were written in a similar historical period, and both are recognised as formative in the shaping of classical thought on the *Tao*.

³⁴³ *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching*, transl. Lau, p.ix

³⁴⁴ Cheng, 'Chinese Metaphysics as Non-Metaphysics' p.168.

³⁴⁵ Ch'en ku-ying, *Lao Tzu: Texts, Notes and Comments*, (San Francisco, Chinese Materials Center, 1977), p.2.

³⁴⁶ Chang Chung-Yuan, 'Tao: A New Way of Thinking,' *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* (1974), pp.137-152, at p.137.

³⁴⁷ Victor H. Blair, 'Introduction and Notes for a Complete Translation of the Chuang Tzu,' *Sino-Paltonic Papers* No.48 (Sept. 1994, Pennsylvania, University of Pennsylvania), p.xv.

the *Tao*,³⁴⁸ unlike the *Lao Tzu*, it provides the reader with a well-developed philosophy of the individual. Thus, it offers an insight into the *Tao* as it pertains to the individual, rather than as it pertains to the political forum, the theme focused upon in the *Lao Tzu*. By considering both texts, it is possible to gain an appreciation of ontology from the perspective of both the individual and the group. In view of our intention to consider Chinese ontology in the light of Tillichian ontology, the obtaining of both the individual and group perspectives in this respect is most important.³⁴⁹

An additional reason for utilising the *Chuang Tzu* is its distinctive literary style, in which much use is made of paradox and non-sequiturs. According to Watson, the purpose of such literary devices is to jolt the reader's 'mind into awareness of a truth outside the pale of ordinary logic.'³⁵⁰ As will be shown in our discussion of the *Tao*, the need to go beyond logic and beyond the limits of language are central to the communication of the *Tao* in both the *Lao Tzu* and *Chuang Tzu*. The distinctive style of the latter text, which exemplifies to extreme the effect of going beyond logic, is regarded by the researcher as a useful means of beginning to grasp the non-rational theme underlying the *Tao*.

In this thesis, the terms *Lao Tzu* and *Chuang Tzu* are used to denote texts rather than historical personages. Some of the literature on the text of the *Lao Tzu* refers also to Lao Tzu, the philosopher.³⁵¹ However, there is considerable debate as to the identity of the philosopher attributed with this name. Indeed, Lau suggests that Lao Tzu was not a

³⁴⁸ *Chuang tzu: A New Selected Translation with an Exposition of the Philosophy of Kuo Hsiang*, transl. Fung, Yu-lan (Beijing, Foreign Languages Press, 1989), p.5.

³⁴⁹ Much of the first part of this thesis has emphasised Tillich's insistence upon the resonating relationship between individual and group; self and world.

³⁵⁰ *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, transl. Burton Watson, (New York, London, Columbia University Press 1968), p.5.

³⁵¹ *Lao Tzu*, transl. Ch'en, p.1. Ch'en refers to Lao Tzu as *he* rather than *it*. W.A. Callahan, 'Discourse and Perspective in Daoism: A Linguistic Interpretation of *Ziran*', *Philosophy East & West*, 39.2 (1989), p.176 of pp.171-189): a distinction is drawn between *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)* the text, and Laozi (Lao Tzu), the author.

historical figure at all,³⁵² and that the text bearing the name of Lao Tzu should be regarded as an anthology compiled by one or a series of editors from short passages.³⁵³

In contrast, Ch'en ku-ying, although not explicitly discussing the authorship of the *Lao Tzu* text, assumes the historicity of the character bearing this name in the discussion of that text.³⁵⁴

In view of the debate with respect to the historical authenticity of the historical character of Lao Tzu, the researcher deems it sensible to refer to *Lao Tzu* as the title of a text, and to prefix it with *the* to minimise the risk of the reader assuming *Lao Tzu* to pertain to a historical character. By so doing, the researcher seeks to remain outside the debate as to the historical authenticity of the philosophical figure of *Lao Tzu*, a debate which is beyond the scope of this thesis.³⁵⁵

For reasons of clarity, the *Chuang Tzu* will also be used to refer to the text by that name, although there does appear to be a large degree of consensus among scholars that there, indeed, was a historical figure by the name of Chuang Tzu.³⁵⁶

The aim of the second part of this thesis therefore, is to examine the *Tao* as communicated through two primary Chinese texts, the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*, the purpose of which is threefold: firstly, to gain an appreciation of the *Tao* as it is expressed through those texts; secondly, to gain insight into the ontological perspective provided through the discussion of the *Tao* in those texts. Finally, to assess the extent to which the ontology communicated through those texts supports Tillich's claim that estrangement and separation are ontological in nature. Let us be reminded that the

³⁵² *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching*, transl. Lau, p.xii.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁴ *Lao Tzu*, transl.Ch'en, p.1. Ch'en refers to the humanism of *Lao-tzu* as 'his' humanism, thus alluding to *Lao Tzu* as the author, not the text.

³⁵⁵ The adopting of this position was confirmed by Chinese Philosophy scholar, Professor Xinzhong Yao, to be a sensible way of avoiding the ongoing scholarly debate with regard to authorship of this text. (N.B. *the Lao Tzu* is also commonly known as the *Tao Te Ching*.)

³⁵⁶ In view of general scholarly acceptance of the historicity of Chuang Tzu, the author, at least for the first seven chapters of the *Chuang Tzu*, occasional reference will be made to Chuang Tzu (non-italicised), the author.

broader purpose of exploring the *Tao* of the Chinese tradition is to permit the researcher to step outside the western Christian tradition in which Tillich was entrenched, in order to ascertain whether Tillich's claim for the ontological nature of creaturely estrangement holds true from a non-Christian perspective, or whether it is simply a presupposition of Tillich based upon his entrenchment in the western Christian tradition. This consideration has been made necessary in view of the ontological inconsistency in Tillich's theology, unearthed by the microcosmic theme underlying his system.

In the chapters that follow, themes emerging from our exploration of the Chinese texts will be identified by both English and Chinese terminology. English terms will be used first, with the transliteration of Chinese equivalents following in parenthesis. The prioritising in this respect reflects the focus of the thesis, which is upon an examination of primary Chinese texts translated into English. This approach also echoes the methodology fundamental to the thesis, in which the researcher seeks not to attempt to understand the *Tao* through Chinese eyes, but through her own eyes, steeped in the western Christian tradition. In other words, in accord with Tillich's *method of correlation*, the researcher seeks to go beyond her own tradition, in order to return to it. As such, inevitably, she explores the Chinese tradition with a Christian mindset.

This approach reiterates the point made in the Introduction that the thesis is *not* a comparative study of the *Tao* and Tillichian theology. For this reason, the methodological approach adopted with regard to exploration of the *Tao* has not included discussion of the substantial body of literature pertaining to comparative approaches.

Instead, the researcher seeks to use the exploration of the Chinese texts as an instrument for creating distance between her and Tillichian theology, in order that she might then return to that theology with new insight generated through exposure to the Chinese tradition. The Chinese texts, therefore, are used to generate a dynamic dialogue between Tillich and the texts themselves, the catalyst for the dialogue being the researcher.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed Tillich's understanding of the unconscious and consciousness as potential and actuality. It has also explored his notions of separation and freedom and has suggested that Tillich regards separation to be a necessity of existence. While in terms of ontology and mythology, this may be clear in his system, with regard to consciousness and unconsciousness, there would appear to be ambiguity. It has been suggested that if human freedom is authentic and not simply divine lip-service, then we cannot speak of the reunion of consciousness with unconsciousness, as that suggests a meaninglessness to the human process of evolving consciousness. Instead, we should speak in terms of movement toward union. Such a change in terminology, it has been argued, would move us some way toward narrowing, in psychological terms, the gulf between consciousness and unconsciousness, evoked by Tillich's insistence upon the inevitability of separation.

The chapter recognises the fundamental position of the notion of separation not only in Tillich's theology, but also in the western Christian tradition, in general. It then asks whether it would be possible to bridge the gap between consciousness and unconsciousness in Christian terms without losing the integrity of the Christian message.

With regard to the way in which such an issue might be broached, the chapter establishes the need to step out of the soil of the western Christian tradition, in which Tillichian theology is rooted, and to step into that of another, namely, the *Tao* of the Chinese tradition. It has been argued that by encountering a tradition that is not one's own, it is possible to unearth presuppositions in which one is entrenched, which are perhaps not as fundamental to life as one had previously assumed.

The specific aim of the engagement with the *Tao* is to examine the impact of this encounter upon Tillich's insistence upon separation from the psychological perspective, and upon the microcosmic theme underlying his theology.

Chapter 5

The *Tao*

As outlined in the previous chapter, the purpose of our consideration of the Chinese tradition is to assess the validity of Tillich's assertion that creaturely estrangement is ontological in nature. As estrangement is a theme that permeates the western Christian tradition in which Tillich was entrenched, the thesis has argued for the need to stand outside that tradition, in order to reflect more openly upon this assertion, and to make a judgment as to its validity. For reasons detailed both in the Thesis Introduction and in Chapter Four, the Chinese tradition has been that selected for this purpose. The exploration of this tradition will be limited to a consideration of the Chinese ontological perspective obtained through the exposition of the *Tao* in two primary Chinese texts: the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*.

The aim of the next two chapters therefore, is to explore the *Tao* as presented in these texts, and to consider the ontological implications of the *Tao* discovered through them. Although reference will be made to Tillichian ontology where appropriate in these chapters, as their purpose is to present an appreciation of the *Tao* and Chinese ontology through the lens of the *Tao*, detailed comparative discussion of Chinese and Tillichian ontologies will be withheld until Chapter Seven.

Chapter Five is divided into the following sections: Section One discusses the *Tao* in relation to the microcosmic/macrocosmic cosmology present in the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*. Section Two considers the use of negative terminology in the *Lao Tzu* and paradoxical language in the *Chuang Tzu* as the means of communicating the *Tao*. Attention is paid to these particular themes in view of their significance in Tillichian theology. As argued in Chapter Three, Tillich's dialectical approach to communicating the dynamic relationship between divine life and creaturely life has integral to it the element of the classical *via negativa*. By communicating the dynamic nature of the

ontological structure of being in terms of polarities, Tillich's theology hinges upon the relationship between opposites, and utilises the tension of paradoxical impasse as the point at which the transcendent breaks through. The aim of an exploration of the use of paradox and negative terminology in the two Chinese texts is to consider whether they are used to similar effect.

Section Two focuses in particular upon two negative themes: firstly, 'non-being' (*wu*) is examined in the light of the Tillichian notion of 'non-being', already explored in Chapters One and Three. Secondly, 'non-action' (*wu-wei*) is examined and demonstrated to be a pivotal concept in the understanding of the *Tao*.³⁵⁷ It is used to highlight the stark contrast between the utilisation of paradox in the Chinese texts under examination and its use in Tillichian theology.

Section One: The *Tao* and the Microcosmic Cosmology of the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*

According to Leung, the original character for the *Tao* was composed of the Chinese characters for the head and the legs.³⁵⁸ Citing Duan Yu-Cai,³⁵⁹ Leung suggests that the *Tao* can be interpreted in the following way:

The head denotes the goal that is reached by walking.³⁶⁰

Thus for Leung, the *Tao* is a 'through road' that can be walked, a process of becoming.³⁶¹ As such, the *Tao* is both dynamic and inexhaustible. That which is

³⁵⁷ Loy, David, 'Wei-wu-wei: Nondual Action,' *Philosophy East and West*, 35 (1985), pp.73-86, at p.73.

³⁵⁸ Leung, 'Tao and Logos,' p.131.

³⁵⁹ Duan Yu-Cai was the translator of the ancient Chinese etymological dictionary, *On Meaning and Word*.

³⁶⁰ Duang Yu Chai, *The Commentary of "On Meaning and Words"*, cited in Leung, 'Tao and Logos,' p.131.

inexhaustible is bottomless, limitless and eternal. Thus, the *Lao Tzu* refers to the *Tao* in the following way:

Tao is empty, like a bowl.

It may be used but its capacity is inexhaustible.

It is bottomless like an infinite abyss...³⁶²

Francois Cheng suggests that both the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* link the *Tao* with the notion of 'emptiness' (*hsu*). He asserts that 'emptiness' has both noumenal and phenomenal aspects in these texts, and that the two aspects are in a state of perpetual interaction. He argues:

It is at one and the same time the supreme state of the origin and the central element in the workings of the world of things.³⁶³

Cheng's view is shared by Leung, who suggests that in the *Chuang Tzu*, the *Tao* is beyond all things and simultaneously penetrates each living thing.³⁶⁴

It is important here to consider the reason for Cheng's use of the terms 'noumenal' and 'phenomenal' with regard to the *Tao*. To what extent does Cheng's use of this terminology accord with Tillich's use of it?

For Tillich, the noumenal character of God is communicated through the creature's sense of God's holiness – the creature's consciousness of the intangible and unapproachable nature of the divine.³⁶⁵ For him, holiness is the experiencing of the noumenal aspect of God, rendering the noumenous an existential expression of the ineffability of man's ultimate concern.³⁶⁶ For Tillich, the noumenal is the aspect of the

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² *Lao Tzu*, Ch. 4, cited in Leung, 'Tao and Logos,' p.134.

³⁶³ Cheng, Francois, *Empty and Full*, (Boston & London, Shambala Publications, 1994), p.44.

³⁶⁴ Leung, 'Tao and Logos,' p.39.

³⁶⁵ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol.1, pp.215-216.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., p.215.

divine that lies beyond the realm of time and space, which we, as creatures confined to those categories, acknowledge and experience through our sense of the holy. In this way, noumenal expresses the ineffable present within the phenomenal and through its involvement in the phenomenal, the noumenal may be experienced as the holy. Thus, phenomena become vehicles for the holy. However, that is not to say that an object may be regarded as holy. Tillich warns of the idolatrous nature of such a perception. He reminds us:

...holy objects are not holy in and of themselves. They are holy only by negating themselves in pointing to the divine of which they are the mediums.³⁶⁷

In contrast, Tillich's use of the terms 'transcendent' and 'immanent' do not include experience of the holy. Instead, these terms provide a sense of divine presence and distance that is less confessional and experiential, and more the product of reflection and abstracted thought.³⁶⁸

In terms of Tillichian understanding of the terms 'noumenal' and 'phenomenal', the Chinese quotations above would appear not to suggest a holy aspect to the *Tao*. They appear not to confirm the human acknowledgement of the quality of the *Tao* as it is in itself. Instead, they suggest a far less existential expression of the relationship between the *Tao* and the human being. In light of this, is it possible to criticise Cheng's use of the terms phenomenal and noumenal rather than transcendent and immanent?

Cheng explains his preference for the terms noumenon and phenomenon over those of transcendence and immanence by asserting that the former express better the organically linked nature of the realm of potential and non-differentiation with the realm of the concrete and differentiated. He states:

³⁶⁷ Ibid., p.216.

³⁶⁸ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol.1, p.237.

Noumenon denotes that which is of the nature of the origin, which is still undifferentiated and potential. The term *phenomenon* designates the concrete aspects of the created universe. These two are neither separate nor in simple opposition; without being on the same level, they are organically linked.³⁶⁹

Established later in this chapter is the intimate connection between the *Tao* in its transcendent and immanent aspects, which finds expression through the world of phenomena and in particular, through the life of the true man, who has found his way. Discovered is the appropriateness of Cheng's use of the terms noumenon and phenomenon to denote the *Tao*, for the *Tao* is so innate to human existence that the true man lives a life of spontaneous accord with the flow of the *Tao*.

Thus, while Tillich's noumenon finds expression through the creature's sense of the holy, the sages in the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* speak of the dynamic integration of the phenomenal with the noumenal, in which the phenomenal becomes the spontaneous expression of the dynamic flow of the noumenal *Tao*. Established later is the point that while Tillich's sense of the holy reflects his insistence upon mediation between the divine Creator and the creature, the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* direct readers to an unmediated experience of the mysterious noumenon within the phenomenal world.

The concern of both Chinese texts to promote acceptance of the *Tao*'s mystery highlights the appropriateness of Cheng's use of the terms phenomenal and noumenal, for it points to the possibility and indeed, the necessity of breaking through the bounds of causal awareness, and therefore, of breaking through the bounds of time and space to integrate with the *Tao*. In contrast, Tillich's very insistence upon the impossibility of breaking those bounds leads to the need for the mediatory role of the holy.

Further clarification of the point made above must wait until more detailed discussion of the ontological implications of the treatment of the *Tao* in the *Lao Tzu* and the

³⁶⁹ Cheng, *Empty and Full*, p.150.

Chuang Tzu has been offered. The reason for delaying further discussion at this point is that through later discussion, we will discover that the exposition of the *Tao* in these Chinese texts depicts it not so much in ontological terms, as cosmo-ontological or onto-cosmological terms. Only when this is grasped clearly is it possible to understand firstly, the appropriateness of Cheng's use of the terms noumenon and phenomenon to describe the *Tao*, and secondly, the stark contrast between those terms as they pertain to the *Tao* and as they are used by Tillich.

Returning to our consideration of the *Tao*, established thus far is the idea that it is both noumenal and phenomenal, and that central to the noumenal aspect is the theme of emptiness (*hsu*). At the same time, emptiness is present in the phenomenal world and is integral to the process of human becoming.

Leung highlights five principle meanings for the term *Tao*: as mentioned above, it means the process, the way; it means also the infinity of finiteness, the harmony in situations, and finally, the possibility of mutual understanding and interpenetration.³⁷⁰

Central to all of these meanings is a cosmology that is communicated through both the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*: the microcosmic-macrocosmic understanding of human existence in relation to the world of nature. Only when the microcosmic-macrocosmic cosmology of these early Chinese texts is understood is it possible to begin to understand the paradox that is presented when we learn that the emptiness of the *Tao* can be fully present in the human process of becoming. In light of this, it is important to explore the microcosmic-macrocosmic cosmology that finds expression in the two texts under consideration.

The cosmology of each text will be explored separately. This is necessary not because of any fundamental differences in the cosmologies of each, but because of the distinctive style and focus of each text. As indicated in Chapter Four, the value for this thesis in exploring both the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* lies in the distinctness of their

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.133.

focus. The *Lao Tzu* focuses upon the *Tao* from a political perspective. In contrast, the *Chuang Tzu* highlights the importance of the *Tao* for the individual. By considering each text separately, it is possible to situate the *Tao* within the broader microcosmic-macrocosmic frame more clearly, first, as it pertains to the individual in the *Chuang Tzu*, and then as it relates to the political forum in the *Lao Tzu*.

Microcosmic-macrocosmic Cosmology in the *Chuang Tzu*

Watson defines the *Tao* of the *Chuang Tzu* as the Way, and interprets it as:

the underlying unity that embraces man, nature and all that is in the universe.³⁷¹

The Way is ineffable and therefore, cannot be described adequately through language. Watson argues that this ineffability is demonstrated in the *Chuang Tzu* by the use of literary devices such as non-sequiturs, poetical and paradoxical language to demonstrate the impossibility of speaking about the *Tao*.³⁷² An example of such a device can be found in the *Chuang Tzu*, Ch.11:

If the gentleman finds he has no other choice than to direct and look after the world, then the best course for him is inaction.³⁷³

Fung interprets this line as an attempt to express the ineffability of the *Tao*. The *Tao* is the originator of all things but does not itself fall into the category of a thing.³⁷⁴

Elsewhere in the *Chuang Tzu*, the *Tao* is described as non-being.³⁷⁵ However, failure to communicate adequately the *Tao* does not mean that it lies beyond the realm of human experience. On the contrary, it is possible to gain real insight into the *Tao*, but

³⁷¹ *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, transl. Watson, p.6.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, p.6.

³⁷³ *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, transl. Watson, Ch.11 (p.116).

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.63.

only by going beyond the limitations of reasoned discourse. The human being can experience it because the ineffable *Tao* is present within all that lives and is manifest in the individual in the form of *te*, translated by Watson as *virtue*.³⁷⁶

According to Fung, *te* is derived from the *Tao*, and is translated as virtue or power.³⁷⁷ It is the spontaneity that an individual receives from the *Tao*.³⁷⁸ He suggests that the relationship between virtue (*te*) and the *Tao* is as that between water in a river or a lake and water in general. In this way, Fung suggests that the *Tao* in its unitary nature finds expression in the particular as virtue (*te*). Just as water in general is water that is unrestrained and unlimited, so too is the *Tao*; and just as water in a lake is a limited and restrained manifestation of water in general, so too is virtue (*te*) a limited and restrained expression of the unrestrainable and limitless *Tao*. This accords with Francois Cheng's view, mentioned earlier, that the *Tao* has both noumenal and phenomenal aspects. Fung elsewhere describes virtue (*te*) as depicted in the *Chuang Tzu* as that which is derived from the *Tao* and makes us what we are. Fung states:

Thus our *te* is what makes us what we are. We are happy when this *te* or natural ability of ours is fully and freely exercised, that is, when our nature is fully and freely developed.³⁷⁹

Here, then, is a clear expression of the microcosmic-macrocosmic cosmology that is present in the text of the *Chuang Tzu*. Through virtue (*te*), the human being is connected to the *Tao* of the Universe. Moreover, virtue (*te*) is part of our essential nature; it is that which makes us what we are. Fung suggests that the *Chuang Tzu* depicts virtue (*te*) as the source of happiness, and that pain and suffering result when there is movement away from nature. Thus, the conclusion drawn in the *Chuang Tzu* is

³⁷⁶ *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, transl. Watson, p.25.

³⁷⁷ Fung, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, p.31.

³⁷⁸ *Chuang Tzu: A New Selected Translation with an Exposition of the Philosophy of Kuo Hsiang*, transl. Fung, p.8.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.105.

that in view of the fact that rules and government draw people away from their true nature, the best way to govern is not to govern at all.³⁸⁰

In the *Chuang Tzu*, then, there is no suggestion that *te* is something to be learned. On the contrary, it is our innate ability, our natural connection with the ineffable *Tao*, the originator and sustainer of life which is beyond the phenomenal world and, paradoxically, totally present within it at all times.

The interpretation of *te* as natural, innate ability, found in the *Chuang Tzu*, was by no means universally accepted. The Confucian understanding of *te*, for example, placed great emphasis upon its cultivation through knowledge and moral and ethical learning.³⁸¹ However, as mentioned in Chapter four, discussion of *te* as it pertains to the broader forum of classical schools of thought lies beyond the scope of this thesis.³⁸²

The emphasis placed upon the unlearned element of virtue (*te*) in the *Chuang Tzu* perhaps provides an insight into the historical context in which this text appeared. Watson argues that while the majority of the ancient Chinese philosophies sought to address the political and intellectual elite, the *Chuang Tzu* focused upon the spiritual elite.³⁸³ The writings promoted a turning away from the struggles of ordinary men in their craving for success, fame, wealth and security, and a movement towards a state of spontaneous mindlessness, the effect of merging with the *Tao*.³⁸⁴

Thus, in the *Chuang Tzu*, virtue (*te*) is that innate power present in every living thing derived from the *Tao*. By connecting with our virtue (*te*), we live in, and according to, the *Tao*. In the *Chuang Tzu* we are told that knowledge and learning, rather than helping us to connect with virtue (*te*), as Confucian teachings would promote, in fact

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Liu, *Understanding Confucian Philosophy*, p.20.

³⁸² See p.185 above.

³⁸³ *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, transl. Watson, p.5.

³⁸⁴ Ibid, p.6. Watson uses the term 'merges' to express the total harmonisation of sagely action with the flow of *Tao* that occurs when the sage lives in the dynamic state of *wu-wei*.

move us further away from our connection with the *Tao*. Thus, in the *Chuang Tzu*, we read:

Right is not right; so is not so. If right were really right, it would differ so clearly from not right that there would be no need for argument. If so were really so, it would differ so clearly from not so that there would be no need for argument. Forget distinctions. Leap into the boundless and make it your home!³⁸⁵

In this passage, reasoned argument is combined with paradox to illustrate the limitation of reasoned discourse and to point to the value of going beyond the polarity and distinctions that the world of reason generates by leaping into the distinctionless unity that embraces the world of reason.³⁸⁶ This theme finds expression again later in the *Chuang Tzu*:

In all affairs, whether large or small, there are few men who reach a happy conclusion except through the Way [the *Tao*]. If you do not succeed, you are bound to suffer from the judgment of men. If you do succeed, you are bound to suffer from the yin and yang. To suffer no harm whether you succeed or not – only the man who has virtue [*te*] can do that.³⁸⁷

Once again, the text suggests that peace and happiness lie beyond the realm of aspiration and living according to distinctions and polarities such as success and failure. Rather, it is found in one's harmony with the *Tao*, a harmony that is made possible by our living according to virtue (*te*).

³⁸⁵ Cited in *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, transl. Watson, pp.48,49.

³⁸⁶ That the *Chuang Tzu* sought to go beyond the limits of reason is supported by Blair, 'Introduction and Notes for a Complete Translation of the *Chuang Tzu*,' p.xxvi.

³⁸⁷ Cited in *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, transl. Watson, p.59.

Thus, the human being not only is capable of living in the *Tao*, but also has the *Tao*, expressed as *te*, within him/her. In this respect, the human being is a microcosm of the macrocosm of the universal *Tao*. This is a view supported by Lukashevich in his structural exegesis of the *Chuang Tzu*. He argues:

[A]s the microcosm of the Way of Heaven and Earth, man's consciousness is a reduced model of the Way.³⁸⁸

Our discussion of the relationship between virtue (*te*) and the *Tao* is somewhat evocative of the Tillichian notion of logos and Logos. It has been argued in the first part of this thesis that logos is the existential expression of the Logos of the divine life; that the logos is the seed of the divine Logos, allowing the creature to reach out in search of its divine ground, and at the same time, to receive the revelation of the divine in which the creature is grounded. Our discussion of the relationship of *te* to the *Tao* so far would appear to be similar: both virtue (*te*) and logos represent the phenomenal expression of their infinite, ineffable source.

However, one should perhaps guard against making such comparisons, for there is a fundamental difference between the relationship between logos and Logos on the one hand, and that between virtue (*te*) and the *Tao* on the other, namely, the presence of a qualitative distinction between logos and Logos and the absence of any such distinction between virtue (*te*) and the *Tao*. While the logos in Tillichian theology remains qualitatively distinct from Logos, due to the limitations placed upon the former by the categories of existence, in the *Chuang Tzu*, there is no such qualitative distinction between virtue (*te*) and the *Tao*, for the text insists upon the equality of all things. The microcosmic-macrocosmic cosmology underlying the *Chuang Tzu* permits this perspective. Fung offers an interpretation of a passage in the *Chuang Tzu* which highlights the equality of all things in nature in the following terms:

³⁸⁸ S. Lukashevich, *Thus Spake Master Chuang: A structural Exegesis of Taoist Philosophy*, (New York, Paris, Peter Lang, 1987), p.17.

In the macrocosm, there is no real lord other than the variety of things. There is no God. In the microcosm, there is no real ruler other than the different parts of the body. There is no soul.³⁸⁹

Of interest here is the total equality between the macrocosm of nature and the microcosm of the human being.³⁹⁰ Unlike the microcosmic-macrocosmic themes discussed in the earlier part of this thesis, in the *Chuang Tzu*, there is no sense of hierarchical relationship between macrocosm and microcosm.

In our discussion of the medieval microcosmic motif, the sense of hierarchy was most pronounced: imperfect humanity sought to find its return to the perfect Source by elevating itself out of the base physicality of existential circumstance to commune with Nous.

Likewise, in the Renaissance microcosmic motif the sense of hierarchy, although somewhat different in character, still remained. The import of the human being in the universal hierarchy had been dramatically elevated; human beings enjoyed a sense of empowerment generated by recognition of their ability to influence nature, permitting a far more anthropocentric microcosm to emerge. Nevertheless, the qualitative gulf between creature and Creator remained.

With regard to the Tillichian microcosmic motif proffered in this thesis, the superiority of the Creator as the macrocosm remains. Tillich insists upon the qualitative distinction between Creator and creature, expressing this distinction in terms of the creature's ontological estrangement from its ground of being. The distinction is also expressed through his understanding of the function of holy objects – to mediate the noumenal to the realm of the phenomenal.

³⁸⁹ *Chuang Tzu: New Selected Translation*, transl. Fung, p.42.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p.40. Fung asserts that heaven is an alternative to nature, as the Chinese character for heaven and nature is the same.

In the equality of all things in the *Chuang Tzu* text is the absence of hierarchy in the microcosmic-macrocosmic cosmology. The *Tao* is the originator and sustainer without any hint of a necessary consequential superiority of the *Tao* to 'all things that it originates,'³⁹¹ and this perspective is reflected in the appreciation of the presence of the noumenal within the phenomenal. Thus, the text states:

A road is made by people walking on it; things are so because they are called so. What makes them so? Making them so makes them so. What makes them not so? Making them not so makes them not so... For this reason, whether you point to a little stalk or a great pillar... the way makes them all into one.³⁹²

Here, the *Chuang Tzu* highlights the different hue of 'things' when viewed from a unitary perspective. The text is written from a consciousness that transcends the normal awareness of distinction and polarity. Thus, from a unitary position, there is total equality of all things because all things express the common nature of the whole.

It would appear therefore, that a crucial distinction between the microcosmic theme in the *Chuang Tzu* and the themes explored earlier in this thesis results from the capacity for Chuang Tzu to enter a realm of consciousness in which all distinction becomes irrelevant.³⁹³ In the words of Watson,

The 'way up there' from which Chuang Tzu so often speaks, and in which he so persistently urges the reader to join him, is of course, the realm of non-dualistic thinking.³⁹⁴

Consciousness, as the term pertains to Chuang Tzu, does not simply denote a higher level of mental or cognitive functioning. His is not simply a higher form of knowledge,

³⁹¹ Ibid, p.48.

³⁹² *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, transl. Watson, pp.40, 41.

³⁹³ Chuang Tzu here refers to the author of the *Chuang Tzu* text (see p.188, footnote 356).

³⁹⁴ Burton Watson, 'Foreword to Experimental Essays on *Chuang Tzu*,' (Ed. Victor H. Mair), *Asian Studies at Hawaii*, No.29 (Hawaii, University of Hawaii Press, 1983), p.xiii.

but an integration of cognition and experience that is so complete, the need for the making of distinctions and the valuation of knowledge disappears.

At the same time, it would be wrong to assume that such consciousness indicates a dissolving of self in a mystical sense. Human function in the world remains fundamental in the unitary consciousness of the *Chuang Tzu*.

This is perhaps one area of subtle but significant difference between the understanding of consciousness communicated through the Chinese texts under study and consciousness communicated through the classical tradition in which Tillich's ideas were rooted, as explored in this thesis. This area of difference will be explored more fully later in this chapter in our discussion of the onto-cosmological/cosmo-ontological nature of the *Tao*. Argued later is that the *Tao* communicated through the Lao Tzu and the Chuang Tzu falls neither into the category of ontology nor cosmology, but rather demands an integration of both, for, unlike the classical tradition in which Tillich is rooted, there is no clear distinction between the realm of the noumenal and that of the phenomenal. As already intimated, the noumenal finds expression through the phenomenal.³⁹⁵

Returning to our present discussion of consciousness, important to acknowledge in the communication of the *Tao* in the texts under consideration is an appreciation of the human capacity to integrate experience with cognition to the point of unitary awareness. Moreover, the key to attainment of unitary awareness is the letting-go of attachment to knowledge and mental cognition.³⁹⁶

That the distinction between God and man remains in the other microcosmic themes studied in this thesis illustrates the fact that the consciousness through which such themes emerged was not of the same ilk as that of Chuang Tzu. As with the themes of phenomenon and noumenon, this observation must wait until later to be developed, for

³⁹⁵ See, for example, p.210 below.

³⁹⁶ See pp. 232-234 below.

having explored a little the microcosmic-macrocosmic cosmology of the *Chuang Tzu*, it is necessary to turn now to consider the presence of such a cosmology in the *Lao Tzu*.

As mentioned with regard to the microcosmic motif in Tillichian theology, it is the nature of such a motif that a huge number of themes pertain to it. It would be possible to continue our discussion of microcosm-macrocosm in the *Chuang Tzu*, and to incorporate into it themes such as 'non-action' (*wu wei*), 'non-being' (*wu*) and 'spontaneity' (*ziran*). However, these themes will be explored more efficiently if they are considered in the light of both texts under examination, rather than in the light of the *Chuang Tzu* alone. Therefore, as with the microcosmic theme of Tillichian theology, it is hoped that the reader has the patience to wait for the deeper development of the microcosmic theme of the *Chuang Tzu*, which will emerge after our introduction to the *Lao Tzu*.

Microcosmic-macrocosmic Cosmology in the *Lao Tzu*

In accord with the *Chuang Tzu*, central to the thought of the *Lao Tzu* is the *Tao*.³⁹⁷ Great emphasis is placed upon the impossibility of adequately expressing the *Tao*, and, in similar vein to the *Chuang Tzu*, the *Lao Tzu* communicates the inadequacy of language in depicting it:

The way that can be spoken of
Is not the constant way.³⁹⁸

However, in contrast to the use of many paradoxical anecdotes in the *Chuang Tzu*, the *Lao Tzu* prefers to use opposing terminology in a non-anecdotal way to illustrate the ineffability of the *Tao*. Hence, it states:

³⁹⁷ *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching*, transl. Lau, p.xv.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

The whole world recognises the beautiful as the beautiful, yet this is only the ugly: the whole world recognises the good as the good, yet this is only the bad.³⁹⁹

In the *Lao Tzu*, all that can be asserted of the *Tao* is that it is the source and sustenance of the universe.⁴⁰⁰ Nothing more can be positively stated. Thus, through opposing language and a preference for negative terminology such as 'empty' and 'nothing', and 'lower' terminology such as 'short' and 'weak' used as attributes of the *Tao*, the *Lao Tzu* helps the reader to recognise the ineffable nature of the *Tao*.⁴⁰¹

Lau explains the traditional interpretation of such a method of referring to the *Tao*. If the *Tao* is described in terms of attributes, then each polar attribute must also be used. For example, if we were to describe the *Tao* as 'good', then the polar attribute 'bad' would also have to be used. Hence, the polar relation between terms such as 'good' and 'bad', 'something' and 'nothing', etc, must be borne in mind when speaking of the *Tao*.

Lau suggests degrees of polarity with regard to terminology pertaining to the *Tao*, in which terms such as 'something' and 'nothing' can be classified as high and low terminology, and terms such as 'long' and 'short' (degrees of something and nothing) may be classified as higher and lower terms respectively. In other words, in so far as 'something' is an assertion which stands in polar relation to its negative, 'nothing', then 'something' represents high terminology and 'nothing', low terminology. In so far as 'short' is a diminution of 'long', then it is akin to the low/absolutely diminutive status attributed to 'nothing'. However, as 'short' is more assertive than 'nothing', it is not low in its absolute sense, simply of lower status than 'long'. Therefore, 'short' becomes a term that is relatively lower than 'long'. Thus, explains Lau, negative terminology, such as 'nothing' or 'emptiness', would be that which stands in polar relation to positive statements, such as something or 'fullness', while lower terminology, such as

³⁹⁹ Ibid, 2.4, (p.5).

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid, p.xvi.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid, p.xix.

'short' or 'weak', would stand in less antithetical relation to its counterpart, such as 'long' or 'strong'.⁴⁰²

Lau emphasises the impossibility of depicting the *Tao* adequately by means of positive attributes. He argues that by using negative attributes and lower terminology, the *Lao Tzu* steers its readers away from the assumption that the *Tao* can be understood through the making of assertive statements.⁴⁰³ The use of lower terms is free from the limitations that positive terms impose upon the reader. As the *Tao* in the *Lao Tzu* (and in the *Chuang Tzu*) is the source and sustainer of the 'myriad creatures',⁴⁰⁴ it transcends all language and therefore, any positive statement or quality attributed to it inevitably fails to encapsulate it. To say what the *Tao* is not therefore, is more helpful to the reader than to say what it is.

At first sight, there would appear to be parallels between the *Lao Tzu's* use of lower and negative terms for depicting the *Tao* and Nicholas Cusanus' *De Docta Ignorantia*, discussed in the first part of this thesis. It is useful briefly to explore this literary device used in the *Lao Tzu* in the light of Cusanus' doctrine, as it helps to shed light upon a the microcosmic cosmology present in the *Tao* as communicated in the *Lao Tzu*.

In Chapter Two of this thesis, we learned that central to Cusanus' *De Docta Ignorantia* was the tenet that the finite creature could not comprehend the true nature of the infinite because the infinite was absolute and the finite mind could only conceive in comparative, non-absolute terms.⁴⁰⁵ In his *Coincidentia Oppositorum*, all that could be said of God was that in Him opposition coincided. For greater insight into God, the realm of language had to be transcended.

⁴⁰² One way to understand the relation between 'high' and 'low', and 'higher' and 'lower' is to substitute the hours on a clock-face with positive and negative terminology. Thus, the assertiveness of 'something' would render it at the 12 o'clock position, and hence, its polar counterpart, 'nothing' at the 6 o'clock position. Proceeding clockwise, language pertaining to the high would lie to the right of 'something', placing 'long' at the 1 o'clock position, and hence 'short', its counterpart, in the polar position of 7 o'clock.

⁴⁰³ Ibid, p.xvii.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid, 1.2, (p.57).

⁴⁰⁵ See p. 90 above.

The *Lao Tzu* would appear to present a similar view with regard to the limitation of language, a view we have seen is shared in the *Chuang Tzu*. Because language is limited to notions of opposition and duality, the *Lao Tzu* declines to make assertions about the *Tao*, for it, like Cusanus's God, transcends duality and opposition.

Thus, Cusanus' *Coincidentia Oppositorum* is used as a metaphor for, rather than as a definition of God. It is a symbolic expression of that which cannot be expressed through the finite mind. This perception, we have learned, is based upon two ancient world-views presupposed in Cusanus' thinking: firstly, that the visible world is a reflection of the invisible; secondly, that God is ultimately hidden from humanity and is accessible only through riddles and paradox.

We have already seen that the *Chuang Tzu* uses the literary devices of paradox and non-sequiturs extensively to communicate the inadequacy of reason and language in the communication of the *Tao*. The *Lao Tzu*'s preference for lower and negative language is used to similar effect.

Doeringer suggests that the presence of such devices in the early Taoist writings such as the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* reveals the use of a symbol theory that began in Chinese thinking as early as the 3rd Century BCE. Underlying the need for the symbol theory, according to Doeringer, was the assumption of such thinkers that reality by nature was paradoxical and therefore, enigmatic.⁴⁰⁶

Thus, there would seem to be further parallel between the ideas of Cusanus and those found in the *Lao Tzu* (and, indeed, the *Chuang Tzu*): the work of both would appear to be based upon the presupposition that reality is paradoxical. Moreover, both appear to use symbol as the means for going beyond the limitation of language and therefore, as the vehicle for navigating the paradox of reality.

⁴⁰⁶ F.M. Doeringer, 'Imaging the Imageless: Symbol and perception in Early Chinese Thought,' *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* No.20 (1993), pp.5-28, at p.6.

Doeringer goes on to draw parallels between symbolism in the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* and Tillich's use of symbol. He suggests that just as Tillich understands that symbolic language alone can express the ultimate,⁴⁰⁷ so too, the early Taoist writings, including the *Lao Tzu* used words symbolically to 'point beyond' their particular definitions to the inexpressible and unperceived in reality.⁴⁰⁸

Certainly, Tillich's understanding of the role of symbol as examined in this thesis would seem, so far, to concur with Doeringer's assessment of the function of symbol in the early Taoist texts, including the *Lao Tzu*.

It would appear therefore, that the ideas in the *Lao Tzu* and in the writings of Cusanus were based upon a similar presupposition with regard to the paradoxical nature of reality and the need therefore, to go beyond the parameters of language.

However, it is at this precise point of close similarity that a significant and fundamental point of departure between the two can be found. For Cusanus, the paradox is the product of the assumption firstly, that God is ultimately hidden from humanity, and secondly, that the visible world is a reflection of the invisible. In other words, God is ultimately separate from humanity. Symbolic language can point beyond itself toward that which is ultimately hidden, and by accessing the realm beyond language, the human being moves closer to God through the mediation of the figure of Christ. Nevertheless, mediation between God and humanity is necessary, even after the bounds of dualistic language have been broken.

In contrast, in the *Lao Tzu*, the truth of reality is paradoxical and enigmatic and is therefore, present in the 'darkness'.⁴⁰⁹ In this text, darkness is illuminating, in polar contrast to the 'light' of Christ that is needed to illuminate reality in Cusanus' work. Doeringer suggests that in terms of literary style in the *Lao Tzu* (and indeed, in the

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., p.14.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., p.15.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., p.6.

Chuang Tzu as well), this means the use of a paradoxical language that reflects the 'full ambiguity of things' rather than attempts to break through the ambiguity.

Thus, the symbols used in the *Lao Tzu* and other early Taoist thinkers are not logical. The function of such symbols, then, intentionally fails to satisfy the intellect because it serves to shock the mind into acceptance of the ineffability and dark obscurity of the *Tao*. Realisation of the *Tao* requires the relinquishing of the controlling faculty of the mind of reason.

Making reference to the Ricoeurian symbol system, Doeringer suggests that the Chinese symbolism of texts such as the *Lao Tzu* point the reader to the latent meaning lying behind the primary meaning of language. Its latency cannot be assimilated intellectually; rather, the association between the primary and latent meanings is made unconsciously.⁴¹⁰

When the necessary associations have been made, the way (the *Tao*) is recognised spontaneously, without intellectual reflection and without the need for any form of mediation. The symbol system in the *Lao Tzu* and the early Chinese thinkers therefore, should be regarded not so much as a tool of mediation, as a key that opens the door to a world of spontaneity.⁴¹¹ Furthermore, the enigmatic quality of reality renders it dynamic and fluid. Thus, the early Chinese philosophers regarded an interpretation of reality in dynamic, fluid and holistic terms a far more effective way of communicating reality than the use of descriptive language.⁴¹²

In support of this view, Doeringer reminds his readers of Tu Wei-Ming's observation that the early Chinese world is shaped by three basic motifs: 'continuity, wholeness and dynamism'.⁴¹³ Acceptance of these assumptions led to the preference for early Chinese

⁴¹⁰ Ibid, p.7.

⁴¹¹ See pp.229-231 below for further discussion of spontaneity (*ziran*).

⁴¹² Doeringer, 'Imaging the Imageless,' p.8.

⁴¹³ Doeringer, 'Imaging the Imageless,' p.9, citing Tu Wei-Ming *Confucian Thought: Selfhood a creative transformation*, (New York, Albany State University Press), p.38.

texts, including the *Lao Tzu*, to direct readers to that which lay behind language and was inaccessible to the intellect.

Here, then, we find a stark contrast with Cusanus' *De Docta Ignorantia*, for in that doctrine, reason is transcended by means of the intellect. The perimeter fence of the rational faculty is acknowledged and the symbol system activated, in order to elevate the human intellect beyond reason into the realm in which it may fulfil its function in the universal hierarchy as the mediator of God's message to the universe, a message mediated through Christ. The medieval hierarchical order of the universe remains in Cusanus' thinking, and along with it the need for mediation between the human being and God. Thus, Cusanus' symbolism plays a mediating role between the accessible world of man and the ultimately inaccessible realm of God.

It becomes clear that although there is an apparent similarity between the writings of Cusanus and the *Lao Tzu* in so far as both can be seen to employ a symbol system as the result of recognition of the paradoxical nature of reality, that is where the similarity ends. While Cusanus seeks to make sense of the paradox by means of symbolism, demonstrating his concern to seek the 'light' of understanding, in the *Lao Tzu*, symbolism is used to communicate the darkness of reality, in this way accepting and recognising the enigmatic quality of the *Tao*. This view of the *Lao Tzu* is supported by Lau, who asserts that the use of 'Nothing' in the text as an indication of the nature of the *Tao* is indicative of the Taoist's acceptance that what exists cannot be real, for all that exists is subject to the limitations of the specific.⁴¹⁴

With regard to the Tillichian understanding of symbol, although a superficial reading of his writings on symbol suggests an affinity with the symbolism of the *Lao Tzu*, this thesis has demonstrated his symbolism to play very much a mediating role and therefore, is more closely aligned to the symbolism of Cusanus than that of the *Lao Tzu*.

⁴¹⁴ *Tao Te Ching*, transl. Lau, p.xix.

In terms of the microcosmic-macrocosmic cosmology of the Chinese text, this discussion reveals that the *Lao Tzu* shares the cosmology of the *Chuang Tzu*; the *Tao* is a dynamic unitary principle which is wholly present, although unrecognisable in the particularity of existence. It is unrecognisable because the apparent fixedness of particular things betrays the fluid and dynamic reality underlying them. Thus, the *Tao* is the dynamic Way of the universe, in which every living thing participates.

At the same time however, there are certain points of departure between the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* in terms of cosmology. While the latter attributes the term heaven (*t'ien*) to the creator of the universe, and retains the concept of heaven alongside that of the *Tao*, the *Lao Tzu* replaces heaven (*t'ien*) with *Tao*, and therefore, attributes the creation of the universe to the *Tao*.⁴¹⁵ As a consequence, Lau argues that in the *Lao Tzu*, the *Tao* becomes not just the Way of something, but also an entity.⁴¹⁶

As a consequence of this, the *Lao Tzu* highlights the importance of human beings modelling their behaviour on heaven (i.e. on the *Tao*).⁴¹⁷ Unlike the *Chuang Tzu*'s emphasis upon the presence of the *Tao* within the particularity of existence in the form of virtue (*te*), the emphasis in the *Lao Tzu* is upon the need for humanity to model itself upon the pattern of the universe emanating from the heavenly *Tao* in order to survive. As Ch'en points out, the naturalistic heaven labelled in the *Lao Tzu* as the *Tao* is utterly indifferent to the realm of the human being. Therefore, to survive the problems that beset us, it is wise to follow the pattern of the universe, the *Tao*, so that we do not interfere with the harmony of the universe, and so also that we come to realise our full potential as human beings.⁴¹⁸

Thus, while both the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* share a microcosmic-macrocosmic cosmology, there is a subtle difference in emphasis between both. In the *Lao Tzu*, the

⁴¹⁵ *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching*, transl. Lau, p.xx.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁸ *Lao Tzu*, transl. Ch'en, p.45.

emphasis is upon the importance of the human being functioning as part of the macrocosm. In the words of Ch'en, the *Lao Tzu*:

...views human life not as something independent and self-contained, but rather as an integral part of the cosmos ...[its] approach is macrocosmic.⁴¹⁹

In the *Chuang Tzu*, on the other hand, emphasis is placed upon the presence of the *Tao* within the human being, displayed in the text's concern for human happiness and the promotion of virtue (*te*) as the vehicle to happiness. This renders the focus of the text more upon the microcosm, than the macrocosm.

This distinction is illustrated in the far more politically focused themes of the *Lao Tzu*,⁴²⁰ compared with the *Chuang Tzu*'s disinterest in politics and promotion of personal virtue (*te*). Lau argues that although the idea of virtue (*te*) is present in the *Lao Tzu*, it is not a particularly important concept in the text.⁴²¹

Having established the subtle difference in emphasis in the microcosmic-macrocosmic cosmologies of the *Chuang Tzu* and the *Lao Tzu*, they should not be emphasised to the detriment of the more striking similarities. Both texts regard the human being as part of an integrated universe, which runs according to the natural laws established by and through the *Tao*. Both recognise the innateness of those laws in the human being, manifest in virtue (*te*), the particular expression of the unitary *Tao*, and both acknowledge the importance of the human being living in harmony with the greater cosmos. Both understand the inadequacy of reasoned discourse to communicate the dynamic and spontaneous nature of reality, and both utilise particular literary devices in attempts to move their readers away from the primary meaning of language toward the intangible dynamic reality behind the words. When this is achieved, the dynamic spontaneity of reality finds expression not only in the universe, but also in the human

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., p.1.

⁴²⁰ *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching*, transl. Lau, p.xxvii.

⁴²¹ Ibid., p.xxxiv.

being itself because the human being is a microcosm of that universe, and because *te* is the microcosmic manifestation of the macrocosmic *Tao*. This is the cosmology that is communicated in the texts of the *Chuang Tzu* and the *Lao Tzu*.

In our discussion of the microcosmic-macrocosmic cosmology underlying the Chinese texts, a significant distinction between the microcosmic motif of these texts and the microcosmic theme of Nicholas Cusanus has been unearthed. In the process, the importance of the use of negative terminology to communicate the *Tao* has been explored in general terms.

The aim of the next section is to go deeper into our examination of the *Tao* in these texts, and to facilitate this, we will return to the theme of negative terminology. In particular, four themes central to the understanding of the *Tao* will be examined: 'non-being' (*wu*), 'non-action' (*wu wei*), 'emptiness' (*hsu*) and 'heart-mind' (*hsin*).

Section Two: Negative Terminology in the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*

In our earlier discussion of the *Lao Tzu*, the text's preference for the use of negative or lower terminology to depict the *Tao* was discussed. It was suggested that the reason for this lay in the presupposition underlying the text that reality was enigmatic. Thus, the best way to approach the *Tao* was through enigmatic, mysterious language, which led the reader away from a sense of knowledge about the *Tao*, and helped them towards a realisation of its mystery.

Enigma necessarily implies dynamism, for the term suggests that which cannot be named or identified. As such, it necessarily has no form, for to have form would be to be capable of being named. As Doeringer points out, name (*ming*) "is the quest of

reality (*shih*),⁴²² but to attempt to describe reality and to attribute it with names is to give reality separate qualities. This is misguided because reality is dynamic, not static.⁴²³

Doeringer suggests that the *Chuang Tzu* regards reality as having to be “grasped holistically as a dynamic process”.⁴²⁴ Likewise, Lau suggests that the *Lao Tzu* depicts the Tao as “shadowy and indistinct”.⁴²⁵ To promote a holistic appreciation of reality, which communicates its dynamic, unfathomable essence, negative terms such as ‘nameless’ (*wu-ming*),⁴²⁶ ‘formless’ (*wu-hsing*),⁴²⁷ ‘emptiness’/‘void’ (*hsu*)⁴²⁸ are ascribed to the *Tao* in these texts.

The aim of this section is to embark upon a deeper examination of the significance for our understanding of the *Tao* of the use of such negative terminology. This will be done by focusing upon two terms: ‘non-being’ (*wu*) and ‘non-action’ (*wu-wei*).⁴²⁹ Although focusing upon these terms in particular, the section will inevitably make reference to the other lower terms of ‘nameless’ (*wu-ming*), ‘formless’ (*wu-hsing*) and ‘emptiness’ (*hsu*), mentioned in the previous chapter. To seek to offer a discrete account of each would be to miss the real essence of the literary style that renders the use of such terminology necessary; the subject of our study is the *Tao*, the dynamic enigma of reality that is best grasped ‘holistically’.⁴³⁰ It is therefore, necessary to consider the language used to communicate the *Tao* as holistically as possible. As with our exploration of Tillichian theology in the first part of this thesis, the interrelated nature of our subject requires an interrelated approach in our analysis.

⁴²² F.M. Doeringer, *Imaging the Imageless*, p.8, citing *Chuang Tzu*, transl. Doeringer, 1 (1.6a).

⁴²³ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.9.

⁴²⁵ *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching*, transl. Lau, p.xvii.

⁴²⁶ *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching*, transl. Lau, 32 (p.317.)

⁴²⁷ *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, transl. Watson, ch.22 (p.238).

⁴²⁸ *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching*, transl. Lau, 16 (p.23).

⁴²⁹ *Wu-wei* is a term that is open to a variety of interpretations. In view of the limitations of this thesis, *wu-wei* will be examined in terms of its paradoxical nature: ‘the action of non-action’, more accurately expressed as *wei-wu-wei*.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*

Non-being (*Wu*)

In Chapter 1 of the *Lao Tzu*, we learn that the *Tao* is nameless (*wu-ming*).⁴³¹ In this way, the *Lao Tzu* points to the eternal and unchanging nature of the *Tao*. However, the *Tao* is not unchanging in the sense of being fixed, but in the sense that its change and dynamism are perpetual.⁴³² The reality of the *Tao* is its perpetual dynamism, such dynamism rendering it formless.

This is reiterated in the *Chuang Tzu*, where, according to Doeringer, reality is depicted in terms of the perpetual shaping and losing shape of matter.⁴³³ Hence, in the *Chuang Tzu*, we read:

The formless moves to the realm of form; the formed moves back to the realm of formlessness [*wu-hsing*].⁴³⁴

Further highlighting the enigmatic dynamism of reality, the first chapter of the *Lao Tzu* goes on to state not only that the *Tao* is real, but that what can be named and shaped is not, in fact, reality:

The way that can be spoken of is not the constant way;
The name that can be named is not the constant name.⁴³⁵

What can be named is the product of the dynamics of the *Tao*. Thus, for the *Lao Tzu*, the *Tao* is the dynamic that underlies being (*you*).⁴³⁶ As such, the most adequate term

⁴³¹ *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching*, transl. Lau, 1.2 (p.3).

⁴³² *Lao Tzu*, transl. Ch'en, p.5.

⁴³³ Doeringer, 'Imaging the Imageless,' p.10.

⁴³⁴ The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu, transl. Watson, Ch.22 (p.240).

⁴³⁵ *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching*, transl. Lau, 1.1 (p.3).

⁴³⁶ The *Chuang Tzu* presents a similar understanding of the *Tao*, e.g. "The ordered is born out of formlessness; pure spirit is born out of the Way. The body is born originally from this purity, and the ten thousand things give bodily form to one another through the process of birth." (*The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, transl. Watson, Ch.22 (p.238)).

for the *Tao* is non-being, as being cannot produce itself. Hence, Chapter 1 continues by stating:

Non-being names the beginning of Heaven and earth;
Being names the mother of the myriad things.⁴³⁷

Important to note here is the reality that is attributed to non-being (*wu*) in this context. In contrast to the Tillichian understanding of non-being, which represents the perpetual threat to the being of the creature, generating the anxiety that characterises human life,⁴³⁸ in the *Lao Tzu*, non-being (*wu*) complements, rather than challenges being (*you*). Non-being (*wu*) is the driving force behind being (*you*). In this regard, the *Lao Tzu's* non-being shares a greater affinity with the Tillichian notion of dynamis, essential being or potential.⁴³⁹ However, the parallel between the *Lao Tzu's* non-being and Tillich's potential is limited. While Tillich insists upon the role of consciousness in turning the ambiguous nature of potential into creative power,⁴⁴⁰ in the *Lao Tzu*, there is no similar role played by consciousness. The *Tao* is spontaneously creative and has no need of the creative structure that Logos provides potential in the Tillichian system.⁴⁴¹

For Ch'en, the terms non-being (*wu*) and being (*you*) 'depict the process of the metaphysical *Tao* as it descends and actualises, producing all things...'.⁴⁴² Thus, non-being (*wu*) in the *Lao Tzu* is not a negation of being (*you*), but a statement of the ineffable presence of the formless within the realm of form. Non-being (*wu*) as the

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ See p.146 above.

⁴³⁹ See p. 161 above.

⁴⁴⁰ See p. 161 above.

⁴⁴¹ According to W.A. Callahan ("Discourse and perspective in Doasim: a Linguistic interpretation of *ziran*," in *Philosophy East & West* 39.2 (1989), pp.171-189, at p. 182, the term spontaneity (*ziran*), is one of the central motifs in Chinese philosophical literature, including the *Chuang-tzu* and the *Lao-tzu*. Spontaneity (*ziran*) communicates the natural reality of things, a reality which does not require human intervention.

⁴⁴² *Lao Tzu*, transl. Ch'en, p.7.

creative source of heaven and earth, and being (*you*) as the 'mother of the myriad creatures' together provide the unity of reality.⁴⁴³ This is reiterated in the *Chuang Tzu*:

He [the enlightened king] takes his stand on what cannot be fathomed
and wanders where there is nothing at all.⁴⁴⁴

Thus far, it becomes apparent that existence is rooted in non-being (*wu*) in the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*. This would appear to contrast starkly with the Tillichian view that existence is rooted in being itself.⁴⁴⁵

For Tillich, God, as being itself, is the creative source of all that has being. Non-being is present in existence, but only as a perpetual threat, rendering existence ambiguous. For Tillich, non-being is dependent upon being, and is swallowed up in the total unity of being that is God. How is it possible, then, to explain this apparently stark contrast between the understanding and function of being and non-being in Tillich and in these early Taoist texts?

Cheng asserts that the *Lao Tzu* is one of two primary Chinese texts that deal with the Chinese search for cosmological becoming (the other text being *Yi Jing*).⁴⁴⁶ He argues that cosmology and ontology are intimately interrelated in Chinese philosophy in a way that is not evidenced in the ancient Greek quest for ontological being, the root of the western philosophical tradition.⁴⁴⁷

Cheng suggests that one possible reason for this lies in a crucial difference between the nature of the Greek and Chinese language systems, the former being phonetic and the latter being image-based. In the image-based system of Chinese, abstraction is communicated through a sensory image.⁴⁴⁸ We learned at the beginning of this chapter

⁴⁴³ *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching* transl. D.C.Lau, 1.2 (p.3).

⁴⁴⁴ *The Complete works of Chuang Tzu*, transl. Watson, p.94.

⁴⁴⁵ See p. 21 above.

⁴⁴⁶ Cheng, 'Chinese Metaphysics as Non-metaphysics,' p.168.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.167.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

for example, that the original Chinese character for the *Tao* comprised of two images: head, denoting a goal, and legs, denoting the action of walking.⁴⁴⁹ Thus, the abstraction of the *Tao* is communicated through sensible objects and images. In contrast, argues Cheng, a phonetic language is comprised of symbols, i.e. letters which individually, have no inherent relationship to the sensory world.⁴⁵⁰ This renders such a language far more open to a separation between abstract concepts and sensory objects. He goes on to suggest that the abstract nature of the concept of being in a phonetic language system such as Greek is much more likely to be explored through other abstract notions, rather than through sensory images. Thus, separation between the sensible and non-sensible realms is far more likely in a language system that is phonetically based. Following from this, he argues, Chinese metaphysics is not metaphysical in western terms because in the former there is no separation of the sensible from the non-sensible, or the transcendental from the physical.⁴⁵¹

This is a most interesting theory for our discussion of the *Tao*, for it helps us to begin to understand the apparently stark contrast between the Tillichian and Chinese notions of non-being as communicated through the texts of the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*. It helps us to appreciate the necessity for the early Chinese writers to express the noumenal through the phenomenal. Moreover, it helps us to appreciate how that was possible, for the Chinese image-based system from the earliest times had the capacity to point to both the immediate and phenomenal and to the transcendent and noumenal at the same time.

Established so far is the understanding that from the earliest times, the noumenal and transcendent could be communicated through the phenomenal and sensible. However, in our earlier discussion, it was established that both the *Chuang Tzu* and the *Lao Tzu* communicated the inadequacy of language. If the Chinese image-based language

⁴⁴⁹ Duang Yu Chai, 'The Commentary of "On Meaning and Words",' cited in Leung, 'Tao and Logos', p.131.

⁴⁵⁰ A similar observation is made by Chad Hansen, 'Language in the Heart-Mind,' R.E. Allinson (ed), *Understanding the Chinese Mind* (Hong Kong, Oxford University Press), pp.75-123, at p.79.

⁴⁵¹ Cheng, 'Chinese Metaphysics as Non-Metaphysics,' p.167.

system has the capacity to communicate both the noumenal and phenomenal, why do the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* highlight the inadequacy of language to communicate the *Tao*?

The answer to the above question relates to the nature of the *Tao* communicated through the image of the character for the *Tao*. As we have already learned, the character is represented by the two images of head, denoting goal, and legs, denoting the action of walking. As such, the *Tao* is a dynamic process in which action and goal are integrated. In other words, the character for the *Tao* conveys a process that is action-based, thus it conveys knowledge of a process, not of a tenet or a belief.

In emphasising the inadequacy of language, the Chinese texts highlight the impossibility of knowing the *Tao* without living the process, or walking the Path. We cannot know the *Tao* without experiencing it. Thus, the *Tao* represents a process in life, a concept of becoming, not a concept of being.⁴⁵² For this reason, Leung suggests that the study of the *Tao* should be called 'Taology', rather than ontology, because it is not a study of the concept of 'being', but rather the study of a process.⁴⁵³

When the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* refer to the *Tao* as non-being (*wu*), they inform their readers that the *Tao* cannot be known in the way an object that is named can be known, for the *Tao* can only be known through direct experience. Thus, when both texts refer to the *Tao* as nameless (*wu-ming*), formless (*wu-hsing*) and empty (*hsu*), readers are directed to look beyond the world of the immediate and the physical for their experience of the *Tao*. They are directed to consider the process that lies behind being (*you*), a process which therefore, cannot be called being (*you*), but can only be that which complements being (*you*): non-being (*wu*).

Returning to Tillich's notion of non-being, we see that his concern is with ontology, i.e. with the knowledge of being. Non-being is fitted into the broader ontological framework of his theology. As God is the ground of being for existence, Tillich's

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, p.131.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.132.

concern in his theology is to explain the way in which God, the creative source of existence, interacts with the existential world through the human being, that bearer of spirit who becomes the bearer of Spirit through the symbol Jesus as the Christ. For Tillich, his ontology demands mediation between Being itself and existence because of the perpetual threat of non-being, the rational negation of Being.

At this point, we need to consider more closely why the Chinese texts' presentation of the *Tao* is not ontological in nature. Why does Tillich classify non-being within an ontological framework, and why do the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* to go one step further and place non-being (*wu*) and being (*you*) on a far more equal footing, having as their principle focus the unity of non-being (*wu*) and being (*you*)?

Cheng argues that the study of the *Tao* is not exclusively ontological because the *Tao* is always simultaneously cosmological and ontological. As established earlier, the *Tao* is not a tenet, but a process that is both macrocosmic and microcosmic, noumenal and phenomenal, unitary and particular. In other words, the process that happens at the universal level happens in exactly the same way at the particular level. Thus, for Cheng, the *Tao* is best described in cosmo-ontological or onto-cosmological terms.⁴⁵⁴

Tu Wei-Ming's observation that the early Chinese world is shaped by the motifs of 'continuity, wholeness and dynamism' is an observation about the holistic and integrated perspective of those early Chinese thinkers;⁴⁵⁵ so too, is Cheng's observation about the cosmo-ontological nature of the *Tao*. Such a perspective is microcosmic-macrocosmic in nature.

Holism may well be promoted through the capacity of the image-based language system of Chinese to integrate the sensible with the non-sensible and the noumenal with the phenomenal. Is the language system the root cause of this holistic perspective or does the holistic perspective provide the environment for the development of such a

⁴⁵⁴ Cheng, 'Chinese Metaphysics as Non-metaphysics,' p.174.

⁴⁵⁵ Doeringer, *Imaging the Imageless*, citing Tu Wei-Ming *Confucian Thought: Selfhood: a Creative Transformation*, Albany State University Press of New York, p.38.

language system? Or perhaps holism is the manifestation of the dialogue between Chinese consciousness and the image-based language system? These are questions which lie beyond the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, although further discussion of the role of the image-based language system in the Chinese understanding and communication of the *Tao* also lies beyond the scope of this thesis, it is perhaps important simply to be aware of Cheng's very interesting observations about the image-based nature of the Chinese language system as we consider the differences between Tillichian ontology and the cosmo-ontology of the *Tao*. To be aware that Tillich's thinking and language are rooted in the Greek philosophical tradition and that the early Taoist philosophers' understanding of the *Tao* is expressed through a very different system may help us later to move toward a far more realistic comparative consideration of Tillichian ontology and the early Chinese cosmo-ontological understanding of the *Tao*.

At this point in our discussion, it is perhaps adequate to suggest that the reason for Tillich's placing of non-being within the framework of his ontology is that his conscious focus is purely ontological. Non-being as the antithesis of being in a rational and in an ontological sense has to be regarded as a threat, for non-being in his system means the negation of being. Tillich's theology is dualistic in nature. In contrast, the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* do not use non-being as the antithesis of being, but as the complement to being. This is possible because their frame of reference is cosmo-ontological and unitary.

The unitary nature of the *Tao* is central to both the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*, and finds particularly powerful expression in the notion of non-action (*wu-wei*). It is necessary to consider this notion in depth at this point, to help us understand the essential difference between the dualistic approach adopted by Tillich in his theology and the unitary approach of these early Chinese writers.

Non-action (*Wu-wei*)

Loy suggests that non-action (*wu-wei*) is a central concept in the Taoist tradition, second only to the concept of the *Tao*.⁴⁵⁶ According to Loy, the term occurs repeatedly in both the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*,⁴⁵⁷ and can be defined in a variety of ways. Its simplest definition is 'doing nothing',⁴⁵⁸ which, in Loy's view, is an interpretation more appropriate for the *Lao Tzu* than the *Chuang Tzu*. For example, the *Lao Tzu* states:

Hence the sage, because he does nothing, never ruins anything; and because he does not keep his hold, loses nothing.⁴⁵⁹

Here is highlighted the importance of allowing the myriad things to run their natural course, for therein resides the process that is the *Tao*. Ch'en uses this quotation as an example of the way in which the *Lao Tzu* promotes a policy of non-interference for those in government. The natural development of the people is incompatible with governmental interference.⁴⁶⁰

To understand this position, it is important to recall the onto-cosmological perspective of the *Lao Tzu* with regard to the *Tao*. The process of the macrocosm is reiterated in the microcosm; hence, a leader who harmonises with the macrocosm will recognise that there is no need to interfere in the lives of the individuals he governs, for the process is present in each and every one of them. In fact, interference can lead to a distortion of the process, which in turn, will lead to unrest and disharmony. Thus, the *Lao Tzu* asserts:

Hence the myriad creatures all revere the way and honour virtue. The

⁴⁵⁶ Loy, 'Wei-wu-wei: Nondual Action' p.73.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid, pp.75,77.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid, p.74.

⁴⁵⁹ *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching*, transl. Lau, 64 (p.235).

⁴⁶⁰ *Lao Tzu*, transl. Ch'en, p.19.

Way in being revered, and virtue in being honoured are constantly so of themselves without anyone bestowing nobility on them.⁴⁶¹

Ch'en suggests that rather than being understood as doing nothing, 'non-action' (*wu-wei*) should be understood as acting in accord with nature.⁴⁶² Hence, non-action (*wu-wei*) is the action of non-action (*wei-wu-wei*).⁴⁶³

Another interpretation of 'non-action' (*wu-wei*) is 'yielding, not forceful action'.⁴⁶⁴

For Loy, this is the action of passivity, and is illustrated with great humour in the *Chuang Tzu*, when it is observed that a drunk man who is not killed when falling out of his carriage owes his good fortune to the fact that he puts up no resistance to the fall. In the same way, good fortune comes to he who has no resistance to the way of heaven.⁴⁶⁵

Loy suggests that the *Lao Tzu* uses water as a metaphor for the yielding action of non-action (*wei-wu-wei*) in this respect.⁴⁶⁶ For example, the *Lao Tzu* states:

Highest good is like water. Because water excels in benefiting the myriad creatures without contending with them and settles where none would like to be, it comes close to the way.⁴⁶⁷

Thus, 'non-action' (*wu-wei*) is interpreted in a variety of ways in the texts of the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*. How then, are we to make sense of the term? How are we to understand how the natural process of the *Tao* is made manifest in the workings of life without apparently the requirement for human effort?

⁴⁶¹ *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching*, transl. Lau, 51 (p.209).

⁴⁶² *Lao Tzu*, transl. Ch'en, pp.23-24.

⁴⁶³ Loy, 'Wei-wu wei: Nondual Action', p.73.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 75.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p.75, citing Waley, *The Way and its Power*, (London, Allen and Unwin, 1968).

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid*.

⁴⁶⁷ *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching*, transl. Lau, 8.20 (p.11).

Loy observes that 'the action of non-action' (*wei-wu-wei*) is a genuine paradox,⁴⁶⁸ for it unites the two opposing concepts of action (*wei*) and non-action (*wu-wei*). As a paradox, it cannot be resolved rationally.

With regard to the paradoxes present in the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*, we have learnt that they serve to point the reader away from a desire to understand the *Tao* conceptually, and toward the need to experience it. Is it possible therefore, that the paradox presented in the notion of 'the action of non-action' (*wei-wu-wei*) also needs to be resolved through experience?

Loy suggests that any interpretation of the action of non-action (*wei-wu-wei*) which does not include the concept of non-dual action is inadequate. He explains non-dual action as one in which:

.... there is no bifurcation between subject and object: no awareness of an agent that is believed to *do* the action as being distinct from an action that is *done*.⁴⁶⁹

In this way, Loy suggests that the resolution of the paradox does, indeed, lie in the realm of experience. Although not the words used by Loy, it is perhaps possible to suggest that it is an experience in which self-consciousness must be abandoned for a return to *Tao*-consciousness. In Loy's words:

If consciousness of self is the ultimate source of unnatural action, then natural action must be that in which there is no such self-consciousness – in which there is no awareness of the agent as being distinct from 'his' act.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁸ Loy, *Wei-wu-wei: Nondual Action*, p.76.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.73.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.76.

In other words, the action of non-action (*wei-wu-wei*) involves the presence of that which does not change in the action.⁴⁷¹ An action that is centred in stillness (non-action) would therefore, be illustrative of *wei-wu-wei*.

Loy argues that an intentional action is one in which duality is present. An action as the effect of a thought would be a dual action, for there is a clear distinction between the agent and the action.⁴⁷² For example, if I pick up a pen with the intention of writing, then my action is dual; I first have the intention to write and as a consequence, I pick up the pen. Thus, causal thinking can be said to be dualistic, for there is a clear sense of a sequence in such thinking, the sequence being that of cause and effect.

In contrast, non-dual action is that in which there is no sequence and therefore, no cause and effect. Consequently, non-dual action requires the absence of intention. Thus, if I pick up the pen and begin to write without any intent to do so, then my action is non-dual. It is empty in that it is devoid of intent; it is spontaneous.

The *Lao Tzu* asserts that the original state of the myriad things was one of emptiness (*hsu*) and advocates that we should return to such a state.⁴⁷³

Thus, it would appear that the action of non-action (*wei-wu-wei*) requires a return to the original state of emptiness. Before proceeding further with our discussion of the action of non-action (*wei-wu-wei*) therefore, it is necessary to consider in a little more detail the concept of emptiness (*hsu*).⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.77.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, p.79.

⁴⁷³ *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching*, transl. Lau, 16.37 (p.23).

⁴⁷⁴ Discussed here will be the concept of emptiness denoted by the Chinese term *hsu*, which is the corollary of *shih* (fullness), rather than *k'ung*, the term for emptiness highlighted in Buddhism (Cheng, Francois, *Empty and Full*, p.43).

Emptiness (*Hsu*)

Cheng asserts that Taoist emptiness (*hsu*) is fundamental to the Taoist understanding of being (*you*) and is closely akin to the notion of non-being (*wu*). He suggests that the best way to distinguish the two is by reference to their corollaries; hence, the corollary of emptiness (*hsu*) is fullness (*shih*), while the corollary of non-being (*wu*), as we have already seen, is being (*you*).⁴⁷⁵ Emptiness (*hsu*) is ontological in nature,⁴⁷⁶ while non-being (*wu*), as previously demonstrated, is cosmo-ontological.⁴⁷⁷ For this reason, in the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*, non-being (*wu*) is used for cosmo-ontological concerns such as the origin of the universe, while emptiness (*hsu*) is used with regard to the original state toward which all in existence should move.⁴⁷⁸ For example, the *Lao Tzu* states:

The myriad creatures in the world are born from
Something, and Something from Nothing [*wu*].⁴⁷⁹

In contrast, in an earlier chapter, it is stated:

I do my best to attain emptiness [*hsu*];
I hold firmly to stillness.
The myriad creatures all rise together
And I watch their return.⁴⁸⁰

Through these quotations, it is apparent that emptiness (*hsu*) is closely connected to the *Tao*.⁴⁸¹ We have already established that the *Tao* is both ontological and cosmological in nature, that it is simultaneously noumenal and phenomenal. From our discussion

⁴⁷⁵ Cheng, Francois, *Empty and Full*, p.43.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷ See pp. 217-221 above.

⁴⁷⁸ Cheng, Francois, *Empty and Full*, p.43.

⁴⁷⁹ *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching*, transl. Lau, 40.89 (p.61).

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid, 16.37 (p.23).

⁴⁸¹ Cheng, Francois, *Empty and Full*, p.44.

above, it would seem that non-being (*wu*) pertains to the noumenal nature of the *Tao*, and emptiness (*hsu*) to its phenomenal nature.⁴⁸²

However, in view of our recent exploration into non-dualistic and dualistic language, it is necessary to remain alert to the danger of making such a clear distinction between the two terms. In drawing the distinction, we are possibly making clear our own dualistic position more than clarifying the subtle nature of the *Tao*. Nevertheless, this is perhaps a limitation that has to be accepted in an academic study of the *Tao* communicated through the medium of English. Let us be reminded of the facility open to the Chinese language system that, for Cheng, is absent from a phonetic language system such as English, namely, the far greater capacity to integrate the noumenal with the phenomenal without losing the essence of either.⁴⁸³

It is therefore, perhaps wise to accept that only in conceptual terms can a distinction be made between emptiness (*hsu*) and non-being (*wu*), and that in experiential terms, all distinctions dissolve. This then, is to accept the teaching of the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*, both of which promote the ineffability of the *Tao* and the impossibility of knowing the *Tao* through language and conceptual thought.

That limitation having been accepted, let us proceed to seek to understand a little better the meaning of the term emptiness (*hsu*).

In his translation of a passage in Ch.VI of the *Chuang Tzu*, Fung links the notion of emptiness (*hsu*) with that of spontaneity (*ziran*):

The appearance of the true man of old was like something that is lofty, but with no danger of a downfall, something that seems to be insufficient but has no need of addition..... His emptiness was manifest, yet there was no displayHe responded spontaneously, as if there were no choice ... Thus he acts spontaneously, yet people

⁴⁸² Ibid.

⁴⁸³ Cheng, 'Chinese Metaphysics as Non-metaphysics,' p.167.

think it was with special effort ... Neither nature nor man should overthrow the other. This is the true man.⁴⁸⁴

Fung cites the interpretation of this text made by Kuo Hsiang.⁴⁸⁵ According to Fung, Kuo Hsiang states:

The true man unifies nature and man and equalises all things. To him, there is no mutual opposition in all things. There is no mutual conquest of nature and man. Therefore, he is empty and is everything. He is unconscious and is everywhere. He thus mysteriously unifies his own self with its other.⁴⁸⁶

Here then, the true man is one who falls into unitary awareness of all things. That is to say, all dualistic awareness has disappeared so that all things no longer appear in their distinction, but rather in their equality. This renders the true man empty; empty of consciousness and of intent. To remind ourselves of the words of Loy, the true man in the *Chuang Tzu* is one in whom 'there is no bifurcation between subject and object: no awareness of an agent that is believed to *do* the action as being distinct from an action that is *done*.'⁴⁸⁷

Thus, in the *Chuang Tzu*, the true man is one who acts through non-action (*wei-wu-wei*). This he is able to do because by transcending consciousness of self, he has become empty. Consciousness of self means consciousness of that which is not self, and so is a dualistic state of awareness. The true man then, is one who has transcended dualistic awareness to unitary awareness, the consciousness of the unitary nature of all

⁴⁸⁴ *Chuang Tzu: A New Selected Translation*, transl. Fung, pp.93,94. Although in Watson's translation (Watson, *Chuang Tzu*, p.80), there is no explicit connection between emptiness (*hsu*) and spontaneity (*ziran*), the general tone of his translation accords with the commentary below by Kuo Hsiang, to which Fung makes reference.

⁴⁸⁵ A 3rd Century A.D. commentator on the *Chuang Tzu*, who wrote the *Commentary on the Chuang Tzu*. In Fung's view, this is one of the greatest philosophical works of this period. (Fung, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, p.220.)

⁴⁸⁶ *Chuang Tzu: A New Selected Translation*, transl. Fung, p.94.

⁴⁸⁷ Loy, 'Wei-wu-wei: Nondual Action', p.73.

that is. As such, holistic consciousness permits the true man to live in the unity of emptiness (*hsu*) and non-being (*wu*). The man who has attained such awareness has united with the *Tao* in its macrocosmic nature so that the microcosm of the man can then be said to become "empty and everything".⁴⁸⁸ All tension between opposites and all distinction between nature and man have been overcome in such awareness, enabling the true man to live spontaneously, without intent and without effort. Moreover, this is not so much a state as a dynamic awareness, for we have already learned that the *Tao* is a dynamic process rather than an entity. To harmonise with the *Tao* therefore, means to fall in line with the flow of the *Tao*. This harmonisation effectively is the integration of the phenomenal with the noumenal, achieved through the relinquishing of dualistic awareness and entry into holistic, unitary consciousness.

The human capacity for such integration is not only ignored in Tillichian theology, but effectively denied. Tillich's insistence upon the realm of the holy as the medium through which the noumenal finds expression in the phenomenal is a blatant contradiction of the human capacity for the type of unitary consciousness proffered in the texts of the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*. From the perspective of the Chinese texts under examination, Tillichian theology remains firmly situated within the confines of dualistic consciousness. Tillich's holiness remains within the bounds imposed by the categories of time, space, causality and substance, while the Chinese texts' holism breaks through those bounds.

As mentioned earlier, the true man, according to the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*, lives in the flow of the *Tao*. This point is significant because it highlights the active nature, rather than a mystical state of the true man. The true man is not removed from the action of life. On the contrary, by virtue of the presence of the *Tao* as dynamic process in life, the true man lives totally within the flow of life. What differentiates him from the normal man is the former's effortlessness in his actions and the efficacy of his spontaneous actions. His spontaneity is effective because his action is fully synchronised with the action of the *Tao*. He acts at absolutely the right time and in the

⁴⁸⁸ *Chuang Tzu: A New Selected Translation*, transl. Fung, pp.93,94.

right way because he instinctively knows when and how to act through his emptiness (*hsu*) and simultaneous harmony with the *Tao*. He acts without pre-meditation.

Mair describes the true man depicted in the *Chuang Tzu* in the following way:

The man who reacts with pure spontaneity can do so only at one moment and in one way; by attending to the situation until it moves him, he discovers the move which is 'inevitable' (*pu te yi* – the one in which he 'has no alternative') like a physical reflex. But he hits on it only if he perceives with perfect clarity, as though in a mirror.⁴⁸⁹

Spontaneity (*ziran*) is itself a dynamic state that should not be understood as a passively mindless action. Rather, it is a dynamic mindlessness, in which the true man is able to respond instinctively to any situation through total awareness. The mindlessness of spontaneity (*ziran*) is the effect of expansion of the mind beyond the awareness of distinction.

The *Chuang Tzu* cites as an example of such awareness the story of a master cook, who was so skilled at his trade that he had used the same knife for nineteen years. The cook explained that the knife had lasted so long because he had mastered the art of meat cutting so well that he no longer hacked the meat as an average cook would do; neither did he cut the meat as a good cook would do; instead, he was able to divide up the flesh of an animal by going beyond the functions of his senses and working through his mind. The cook stated:

When I first began cutting up oxen, all I could see was the ox itself. After three years, I no longer saw the whole ox. And now – now I go at it by spirit and do not look with my eyes. Perception and understanding have come to a stop and spirit moves where it wants. I

⁴⁸⁹ A.C. Graham, 'Taoist Spontaneity and the Dichotomy of "is" and "ought",' in *Experimental Essays on Chuang Tzu, Asian Studies at Hawaii No. 29*, ed. V.H. Mair, (Hawaii, University of Hawaii Press, 1983), pp. 1-11, at p. 9.

go along with the natural makeup, strike in the big hollows, guide the knife through the big openings, and follow things as they are.⁴⁹⁰

Here, we have an excellent illustration of the way in which a craftsman's merging with emptiness (*hsu*) allows him to perform his craft with a degree of perfection impossible to attain through normal awareness. By being empty, the craftsman simply follows the flow of emptiness (*hsu*) through the bullock he is dissecting. Rather than attempting to cut through mass and bone, he seeks out the empty parts of the body – the cavities, and the spaces between muscles and sinews, etc. Hence, he takes the line of least resistance to achieve his task.

This particular anecdote gives a very clear insight into the meaning of the action of non-action (*wei-wu-wei*); the action of non-action is the ability to harmonise with the *Tao* that flows through the object of a particular task. By opening his mind to the *Tao* of the universe and entering into a unitary awareness, the cook was able not only to harmonise his bodily movements perfectly with the movements of the knife, but also to harmonise with the *Tao* of the bullock. This illustrates the appropriateness of the use by Cheng of the terms noumenal and phenomenal with reference to the *Tao*. In his meditative state, the cook is able to execute his skill with a degree of perfection that transcends normal human capacity. While Tillich highlights the importance of the realm of the holy as the means by which the human being can transcend himself and experience the noumenal presence of the divine, transcendence is possible, according to the *Chuang Tzu*, by an unmediated direct experience of the dynamic presence of the noumenal *Tao* in the phenomenal world.

How, then, is it possible to transcend dualistic awareness and achieve unitary consciousness? For the *Chuang Tzu*, it is achieved through the emptying of one's 'heart mind' (*hsin*) and entry into the dynamic state of 'sagely forgetfulness'.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁹⁰ *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, transl. Watson, Ch.3 (pp.50-51).

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*, Ch.19 (p.207).

Heart-mind (*Hsin*)

Oshima suggests that the Chinese term *hsin* used in the *Chuang Tzu* is, to a large degree, untranslatable into English.⁴⁹² He explains that the pictogram for *hsin* is a heart, reflecting its original meaning. However, as *hsin* in Chinese communicates the idea of thought, it is often translated as 'mind'. Oshima points out however, that *hsin* communicates much more than is communicated in the English term 'mind',⁴⁹³ a view supported by Hansen.⁴⁹⁴ For this reason, *hsin* tends to be translated as 'heart-mind'.⁴⁹⁵

According to Oshima, 'heart-mind' is used in the *Chuang Tzu* both literally, to mean the physical heart, and metaphorically, to denote the vehicle through which the *Tao* flows.⁴⁹⁶ Therefore, in accord also with Cheng's claims about the capacity for the Chinese language to accommodate both sensible and non-sensible themes, *hsin* operates both as the physical organ of the human body and as the connection between the microcosm of the man and the macrocosm of the universe.⁴⁹⁷

In the *Chuang Tzu*, heart-mind (*hsin*) is the crucial organ in the quest for perfection, and what differentiates a sage from an ordinary man is the condition of this organ.⁴⁹⁸ The heart-mind (*hsin*) of the sage is clear and free-flowing, unlike that of the ordinary man, whose heart-mind (*hsin*) will be clogged and blocked. The *Chuang Tzu* emphasises the importance of keeping the heart-mind (*hsin*) clear. It suggests that heaven opens up the passages in a man's body, and goes on:

But man on the contrary blocks up the holes. The cavity of the body is a many storeyed vault; the *hsin* has its heavenly wanderings. But if its

⁴⁹² Oshima, 'A Metaphysical Analysis of the Concept of Mind in the *Chuang Tzu*,' *Experimental Essays on Chuang Tzu*, ed. Mair (Hawaii, University of Hawaii Press, 1983), p.63.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.65.

⁴⁹⁴ Hansen Chad, 'Language of the Heart-Mind', *Understanding the Chinese Mind*, p. 95.

⁴⁹⁵ Oshima, 'A Metaphysical Analysis of the Concept of Mind', p.65.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.69.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.64.

chambers are not empty, then wife and mother-in-law will fall into quarrelling.⁴⁹⁹

The *Chuang Tzu* advocates the importance therefore, of emptying one's *hsin* in order to keep it clear of blockages that would impede the flow of the *Tao*.⁵⁰⁰ Thus, the *Chuang Tzu* states:

It is the nature of water that if it is not mixed with other things, it will be clear, and if nothing stirs it, it will be level. But if it is dammed and hemmed in and not allowed to flow, then, too, it cannot be clear.⁵⁰¹

Here, the *Chuang Tzu* illustrates the close connection between clarity of heart-mind (*hsin*), emptiness (*hsu*) and the flow of the *Tao*. Indeed, as the *Tao* is emptiness (*hsu*), we can say that it is the dynamic nature of emptiness (*hsu*) that clears the heart-mind (*hsin*). Thus, the emptying of the heart-mind (*hsin*) is a dynamic process of letting go of that which contaminates the *Tao*. The quotation above illustrates that contamination is the result of a blocked and opaque heart-mind (*hsin*). Oshima points out that the blockages are caused by the distractions of the sensory world, such as likes and dislikes, sounds, colours, smells, etc.⁵⁰²

The sage is the man who has let go of his attachment to the sensory world, and is able to live his life "going after nothing, welcoming nothing, responding but not storing..."⁵⁰³ By so doing, the void of the heart-mind (*hsin*) accommodates the *Tao*, for the "*Tao* gathers in emptiness alone..."⁵⁰⁴ This process of letting-go is expressed in the *Chuang Tzu* as the process of 'sagely forgetfulness', described in detail in Chapter 6 of the text.⁵⁰⁵ This process requires the letting-go of attachment to knowledge as well as to the senses, for knowledge, as with sensory awareness, is based upon the capacity

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid., citing *Chuang-tzu*, transl. Watson, pp.300-301.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., p.70.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., p. 71, citing *Chuang-tzu*, transl. Watson, p.169.

⁵⁰² Ibid., p.71.

⁵⁰³ Ibid., p.74, citing *Chuang-tzu*, transl. Watson, p.97.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., citing *Chuang-tzu*, transl. Watson, p.58.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid., p.69.

for discrimination. In the *Chuang Tzu*, discrimination destroys the flow of the *Tao*.⁵⁰⁶ When all discrimination has been eliminated, there is pure experience; that is, experience as we feel it, not as we reflect upon it.⁵⁰⁷

Thus, for the Chinese texts, the life of the true man - the sage - is one of cultivated naturalness, of sagely forgetfulness, which is not the same as the naturalness of a child, for example.⁵⁰⁸ The difference is that the latter lives naturally with attachment to the sensory world. Through that attachment, the child gradually learns to discriminate and to move away from naturalness toward a more dualistic awareness of life. Thus, the young child is far closer to what the *Chuang Tzu* terms original ignorance than to sagely forgetfulness. In contrast, the sage has made a return to naturalness, and as such, has the wisdom accumulated through the process of letting-go that the child lacks. Thus, the *Chuang Tzu* asserts that pure experience and freedom "...are not the gift from the hand of nature", but are the fruits of the process of letting-go.⁵⁰⁹ In the words of Fung, human beings have two harmonies: the harmony of the innocence of childhood, and the harmony of pure experience resulting from the "labour and culture of the spirit".⁵¹⁰

There is a paradox here however, for although we observe the distinction between original innocence and sagely forgetfulness, once sagely forgetfulness has been attained, there is no distinction between it and original innocence. The paradox, of course, presents itself as the consequence of our dualistic, analytical discussion of the subject. Thus, we must be aware that the subtleties of the distinction between original innocence and sagely forgetfulness exist only in a dualistic mind. For the sage who has forgotten all distinctions, his freedom is exactly the same as that of a child. This paradox therefore, serves an important function; to shock the dualistic thinker into recognising the limitation of such a frame of mind and of language with regard to understanding of the *Tao*.

⁵⁰⁶ *Chuang Tzu: A New Selected Translation*, Fung, p.15.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.14.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.20.

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.20.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Returning to the story of the master cook, we can see that his skill was the physical manifestation of a quality of heart-mind (*hsin*) that differed fundamentally from that of a good or an average cook. While the latter two cooks still operated within a dualistic frame of reference, the master cook had transcended such a framework to operate at a level where there was no distinction between he as the cutter of the meat, and the action of cutting. In other words, he was working intuitively, at the level of unitary awareness. This he was able to achieve by having let go of his attachment to knowledge and discrimination, which permitted the merging of his heart-mind (*hsin*) with the emptiness (*hsu*) of the *Tao*; that is, with the unitary nature of the *Tao*, labelled both emptiness (*hsu*) and non-being (*wu*). His identification with emptiness (*hsu*) however, did not mean a mystical withdrawal from the world, but a dynamic expansion of awareness in which the cook practised his skill through spontaneity and intuitive wisdom.

If we return to the notion of the action of non-action (*wei-wu-wei*), we can begin to see how the paradox of the action of non-action (*wei-wu-wei*) is resolved by the experiential realisation of the unitary nature of reality. As a concept to be reflected upon, the action of non-action (*wei-wu-wei*) is paradoxical. The paradox points beyond the limits of knowledge and language – expressions of dualistic awareness – towards pure experience, an awareness of the dynamic unitary nature of reality. Unitary awareness is communicated in the *Chuang Tzu* and the *Lao Tzu* through the term ‘emptiness’ (*hsu*), which, from a dualistic perspective, is the ontological expression of the *Tao*. When one no longer perceives reality to be dualistic, then all things, including emptiness (*hsu*) and non-being (*wu*), are equal. Thus, the sage who has transcended dualistic awareness connects through the emptiness (*hsu*) of the *Tao* with the non-being (*wu*) of the *Tao*, and lives in a dynamic state of spontaneity (*ziran*), in which the microcosm of his particular existence is so fully harmonised with the macrocosm of the universe that the flow of the *Tao* of the universe is expressed through his spontaneous actions.

Our discussion of the action of non-action (*wei-wu-wei*) highlights the stark contrast between the use of paradox in the Chinese texts under examination, and its use in

Tillichian theology. Discussion of the action of non-action (*wei-wu-wei*) has revealed that paradox is resolved through the human spiritual cultivation that takes place firmly within the realm of the phenomenal. The sage has cleared the blockages of his heart-mind (*hsin*) in both its physical and spiritual senses, leading to a dynamic state of conscious awareness that exceeds the limitations of dualistic consciousness. Thus, the sage lives in spontaneous accord with the dynamic flow of the *Tao*.

In stark contrast, Tillich uses paradox as the point of human impasse in our search for the divine. It represents the point at which the divine reaches out to the human being as the human being reaches out for the divine. Paradox signals the point at which the symbol mediates the unbridgeable gulf between finite and divine life. In similar vein to symbol, the realm of the holy mediates between noumenon and phenomenon. Thus, in the Tillichian system, the spontaneous harmonisation with the dynamic flow of reality enjoyed by the Taoist sage is unattainable because Tillich insists upon the mediating third party of the symbol and of the holy object. This he does because, unlike the Taoist sage, his theology is a reflection upon the nature of reality, and as such, is intellectual and dualistic in approach. The systematic rigour of his theology requires him to stay within the limitations of conceptual awareness, of which paradox represents the perimeter fence.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an in-depth discussion of the notion of the *Tao* as communicated through the early Taoist texts of the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*. It has demonstrated that present in those texts is a powerful microcosmic-macrocosmic perception of the *Tao*, which is the means by which its simultaneous ineffability and presence is expressed. In the words of Francois Cheng, the *Tao* is both noumenal and phenomenal.⁵¹¹

We have learned that virtue (*te*) is the term used for the *Tao* as it is present in the human being. Virtue (*te*) is one's innate nature, which accords with the *Tao*. To live through *te* is to live in peace and happiness. Movement away from virtue (*te*) leads to pain and suffering, for it means a shift away from one's natural affinities and abilities, and therefore, movement against the *Tao*.

Thus, for both the *Chuang Tzu* and the *Lao Tzu*, to live according to one's *te* means to live a natural life, in which spontaneity is more highly valued than knowledge. However, a natural life does not mean a primitive existence. We have learned of the distinction between simple and primitive living; the true man lives a simple, natural life of sagely forgetfulness, in contrast to the naturalness of a child, who lives in a state of innocence, a more primitive form of existence than that of the sage. The sage's return to naturalness is the product of the wisdom accumulated through the process of letting-go, which is lacking in the child.

There is a paradox here however, for although we observe the distinction between original innocence and sagely forgetfulness, once sagely forgetfulness has been attained, there is no distinction between it and original innocence. This paradox presents itself as the consequence of our dualistic, analytical discussion of the subject. Thus, we must be aware that the subtleties of the distinction between original innocence and sagely forgetfulness exist only in a dualistic mind. For the sage who has

⁵¹¹ Cheng, Francois, *Empty and Full*, p.44.

forgotten all distinctions, his freedom is exactly the same as that of a child. This paradox therefore, serves an important function; to shock the dualistic thinker into recognising the limitation of such a frame of mind and of language with regard to understanding of the *Tao*.

This use of paradox has been demonstrated to contrast starkly with Tillich's use of the device. If the Chinese texts use paradox to shock the reader into an altered state of consciousness, Tillich uses it to confirm the inevitability of human limitation. This limitation is highlighted by the function of symbols to mediate between the Creator and the creature, and the function of holy objects to mediate between the noumenal and the phenomenal. By using it in this way, Tillich acknowledges conceptual thought as the supreme mode of human consciousness, a status which conceptualisation does not have in the Chinese texts under examination.

We have learned in this chapter that the capacity for paradox to highlight the limitations of reason and language explains its presence in both the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*. Their use of it is deliberate, for the centrality of the *Tao* in both texts renders it necessary for a means to be found of leading the reader out of a dualistic state of awareness. In the *Chuang Tzu*, this is achieved by use of various literary devices, including non-sequiturs, humour and paradox; in the *Lao Tzu*, paradox and negative or lower terminology to denote the *Tao* are used.

Although different techniques are used, the effect is the same – the affirmation that the *Tao* resides not in the light of knowledge and reason, but in the darkness of enigma and mystery, which becomes light only when the striving for knowledge and understanding has been relinquished.

Any apparent similarities between the use of paradox and negative terminology in the Chinese texts and in the philosophy of Nicholas Cusanus end here, for Cusanus, as an important foundation for Tillichian thinking, retains the need for the mediation of the figure of Christ to provide the light that reason alone cannot provide. Thus, Cusanus's

De Docta Ignorantia upholds the qualitative distinction between God and humanity, a distinction that has no place in the Chinese texts under consideration.

In these Chinese texts, reason is portrayed as an expression of a consciousness that cannot approach the wisdom of the *Tao*. The intuitive wisdom of the sage in his state of forgetfulness should not be construed as knowledge. We have learned in this chapter that the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* both maintain that knowledge clutters and blocks the heart-mind (*hsin*), which should be clear to allow the free-flow of the *Tao*. Rather, wisdom in this sense is better understood as instinct or intuition.

In light of this, we can argue that the spontaneity (*ziran*) that is possible for the sage represents, from our inevitably dualistic perspective, a form of conscious awareness that might appear to be the same as that evident in a child, but in fact, is a mature awareness that has evolved beyond dualistic awareness. It is unitary awareness, a state that permeates not just the mind of the sage, but his body as well as his actions. Thus, unitary awareness is an integrative consciousness, in which the sage is able to harmonise his entire being with the dynamic flow of the *Tao* to such an extent that his actions are spontaneous and effortless. This, we have learned, is expressed in both the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* as acting through non-action (*wei-wu-wei*), a way of acting which expresses the unmediated presence of the noumenal in the phenomenal, and the phenomenal in the noumenal. Unitary awareness is a form of consciousness in which the sage has freedom – freedom in terms of effortlessness; freedom in terms of harmony between his being and doing; and freedom from the pain and suffering that results from attachment to one's senses. The sage is free because he is empty; that is, he is empty of intent and devoid of self-consciousness, for he has merged with the dynamic flow of life that is termed the *Tao*.

Chapter 6

Ontological Implications of the *Tao*, as presented in the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*

Having explored in depth the principal themes contained in the concept of the *Tao* as communicated through the texts of the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*, it is time now to reflect upon what has been learned. The purpose in exploring the concept of the *Tao* in Chapter Five was to expose the ontology present in the two Chinese texts under consideration. The present chapter sets out to highlight the ontological themes in this respect, and to consider the extent to which the theme of estrangement is present in the texts' treatment of the *Tao*. This will then prepare us to address, in Chapter Seven, the broader purpose of exploring the *Tao*, namely, to ascertain the extent to which Tillich's claim that estrangement is ontological in nature holds true for the philosophy of a tradition not steeped in Christian presuppositions.

The present chapter examines the ontological perspective emerging from the Chinese texts, with particular attention being paid to the theme of return and the interrelationship between ontology, and the cosmology that this theme proffers. It will then consider the extent to which there is present in the ontology of these texts the theme of estrangement.

Section One: Cosmo-ontology and Unitary Awareness

In our exploration of the *Tao* in Chapter Five, we learned of the microcosmic/macrocsmic understanding of the relationship between the human being and the universe. We learned that the noumenal *Tao* is present in the phenomenal world as virtue (*te*). The *Tao* was established as the term used to denote the ineffable

dynamic upon which the world of phenomena is based. Virtue (*te*) is the term used to denote the essential nature of each and every thing in the phenomenal world. As virtue (*te*) is the phenomenal expression of the *Tao*, and as the *Tao* is the term used to denote the dynamic reality that underlies phenomenal existence, the chapter established that *virtue (te)* denotes the dynamic reality that is the essence of everything in the world of sense and knowledge.

We also learned that the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* direct their readers away from phenomenal and discriminatory awareness towards unitary awareness. This they do by employing literary devices that highlight the inadequacy of language to communicate the *Tao*. In these texts, the letting-go of discriminatory awareness, reason and knowledge is the key to discovering the *Tao*, for by letting go of them, the heart-mind (*hsin*) is cleared of the blockages that impede the flow of the *Tao*. By letting go, one is able to merge with emptiness (*hsu*); that is, to free oneself from all intent and self-consciousness, and to reside in pure experience, which is to understand with one's whole being the equality of all things.

Thus, in these early Taoist texts is a powerful awareness of the intimate presence of the ineffable *Tao* in the midst of the phenomenal world, which cannot be grasped until the dualistic perceptions of that phenomenal world are relinquished. The noumenal nature of the *Tao* is not superior to the nature of phenomena;⁵¹² unlike Tillichian theology, there is no qualitative distinction between the noumenal and the phenomenal.⁵¹³ Instead, the distinction between the noumenal and the phenomenal is the distinction necessary on the dualistic level to point toward a changed state of conscious awareness, in which communion with the *Tao* can be experienced in its purity. Hence, as Cheng pointed out, the *Tao* is the term used to denote a process of becoming, rather than a state of being.⁵¹⁴ That is to say, the term *Tao* is a symbol that points to an altered awareness of reality. It is not a symbol that points to another realm removed from the world of phenomena and discrimination, for such a symbol would function to reiterate

⁵¹² *Chuang Tzu: A New Selected Translation*, transl. Fung, p.42.

⁵¹³ See pp.23,24 above.

⁵¹⁴ Cheng, 'Chinese Metaphysics as Non-metaphysics', p.167.

a dualistic awareness – this world in contrast to that world. It is of the utmost importance that this point is grasped fully. To suggest that the *Tao* is a state of being removed from normal phenomenal existence is entirely to miss its symbolism. The *Tao* is not an entity, for entities are elements of a dualistic awareness of reality. An entity can be named and identified; the *Tao* cannot because the term functions as the Path that leads toward, and at the same time, expresses the unitary nature of all things. There is no distinction between the term *Tao* and the mystery that it expresses, for it represents the bridge between dualistic and unitary awareness, the gateway between self-conscious discrimination and *Tao*-conscious flow.⁵¹⁵

The terms ‘bridge’ and ‘gateway’ are themselves symbols of the writer’s dualistic attempts to communicate that which is beyond duality. Only from a dualistic perspective can one regard the *Tao* as a bridge or as a gateway between dualistic and unitary awareness, for such language, as with all language, discriminates between one point and another, one side of the bridge and the other. The *Tao* is the term used to locate, from the vantage point of dualistic perception, the point at which one lets go of discrimination and swims in the dynamic flow of reality. Again, the limitation of language generates frustration, for once one has let go, the particular point at which one lets go disappears. In the letting-go, all is forgotten, as in the dynamic state of sagely forgetfulness.⁵¹⁶ This is the paradox of the *Tao*, and the reason that language fails us.⁵¹⁷ This is the point at which language and knowledge are shed, and intuitive wisdom and spontaneity take over.

Thus, the *Tao* is the dynamic flow of life into which we fall when we relinquish dualistic awareness. But at the same time, the letting-go does not lead to a removal from life. It does not mean ascending or retreating from life, but rather, functioning within life in an altered state of awareness, in which one harmonises fully with the flow

⁵¹⁵ *Tao-consciousness* is a term created by the researcher and used in Chapter Five to express Loy’s explanation of natural action as that in which self-consciousness has dissolved, allowing the sage to act through non-action (*wei-wu-wei*). (Loy, ‘Wei-wu-wei: Non-dual Action’, p.76).

⁵¹⁶ ‘If there is no other, there will be no I. If there is no I, there will be none to make distinctions.’ (*Chuang Tzu: A New Selected Translation*, transl. Fung, p.42.)

⁵¹⁷ *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching*, transl. Lau, p.xv.

of *Tao* and acts spontaneously in accord with it. Thus, to describe the *Tao* in static terms is equally to misunderstand it. If we are to understand it ontologically, it is crucial that when we do so, we fully acknowledge its dynamic flow and do not fall into the trap of depicting it in static terms. This was a trap of which the Chinese texts were acutely aware, and which led them to favour the use of lower and negative terminology in their treatment of the *Tao*.⁵¹⁸ Equally, we should not be tempted to think in terms of a western metaphysical ontology, in which the noumenal is separated from the phenomenal. As Cheng points out, Chinese metaphysics does not require the separation of the sensible from the non-sensible.⁵¹⁹

Thus, it becomes clear that any discussion of the *Tao* in ontological terms must be one that embraces the cosmological, for the *Tao* is to be perceived holistically rather than discriminatorily. This was established as a valid approach in Chapter Five, where we learned of Cheng's suggestion that discussion of the *Tao* should be seen in an onto-cosmological, or indeed, a cosmo-ontological light.⁵²⁰ Cheng illuminates the subtle distinction between both terms in the following way. In cosmo-ontological terms, the *Tao* is the dynamic force of the macrocosm, the process of things as they return to their origin. In onto-cosmological terms, the *Tao* is the force of the universe as it works toward the differentiation of reality.⁵²¹

Of interest in this distinction is Cheng's allusion to the process of return with regard to the dynamics of the *Tao*. As this thesis has already discussed at length the theme of divine return both in Tillichian theology and in the classical thinking in which his theology is rooted, it is important to explore this idea in greater depth to consider where our earlier discussions lie in relation to the *Tao* in this respect.

⁵¹⁸ See Chapter 5 above.

⁵¹⁹ Cheng, 'Chinese Metaphysics as Non-metaphysics', pp.167 & 168.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.175.

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*

Tao and the Theme of Return

We learned in Chapter Five that in the *Lao Tzu*, the term *Tao* replaces the term *t'ien* (heaven),⁵²² and that this replacement is reflected in the text's emphasis upon the importance of the human being modelling his behaviour on the way of heaven, i.e. on the *Tao*. In order to do this, it is necessary for the *Lao Tzu* to explain how heaven or the *Tao* functions, which it does in the following verse:

Reversal is the movement of the way;
Weakness is the use of the way.⁵²³

Lau explains the traditional understanding of the expression 'reversal' or 'turning back' as the cyclical process of change generated by the *Tao*.⁵²⁴ Ch'en expands upon this traditional interpretation of 'turning back', stating that in the *Lao Tzu*, underlying all natural growth is the principle of circularity, a 'process of development',⁵²⁵ which leads all things back to their originating point. Thus, the natural world is in constant flux, in which a cyclical pattern of movement is followed, which leads to an extreme. Upon reaching the extreme, the pattern of movement leads in the opposite direction until reaching the polar extreme. Ch'en asserts:

This principle of antithetical rotation is central to Lao Tzu's philosophical system and central to his understanding of the cosmos.⁵²⁶

Thus, the principle of return is the way the *Tao* functions and is the dynamic basis upon which all processes are grounded. The cosmos and all that is contained within it have as their essential nature the principle of circular development, which always leads back

⁵²² *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching*, Transl. Lau, p.xxi.

⁵²³ *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching* Transl. Lau Ch.40 (p.195).

⁵²⁴ *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching*, Transl. Lau, p.xxii. Here, Lau translates Ch.40 differently from above, as "Turning back is how the way moves; Weakness is the means the way employs".

⁵²⁵ *Lao Tzu*, transl. Ch'en, p.13.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.9.

to the originating point. This is the principle of constancy in the early Taoist writings; constancy in terms of perpetual dynamism, rather than in terms of being unchanging.⁵²⁷

In this way, the *Lao Tzu* alludes to an understanding of reality as a network of processes, all of which harmonise with the ultimate process. Harmonisation is possible because through virtue (*te*), the individual elements of the cosmos have a dynamic path to follow, which is an expression of the ultimate *Tao*. Thus, the principle of return is central to the microcosmic-macrocosmic understanding of reality in the *Lao Tzu*.

Resonance and Synchronicity

Central also to the *Chuang Tzu*'s philosophy is a similar understanding of the process of the *Tao*. In that text, we learn that all things follow the *Tao* and unify into 'one great process'.⁵²⁸ Of import here is the understanding that the unification into 'one great process' does not mean the ruling of the *Tao* over the elements that make up the cosmos; there is no sense of a cloning principle here, for the process of each individual element in the cosmos is particular and unique because of the virtue (*te*) of each element. Instead, it is more appropriate to think in terms of the interdependence and resonance of all of the elements as they follow their particular and individual expressions of the ultimate process.

In his consideration of *spontaneity* (*ziran*), Callahan argues that the *Tao* cannot rule because it:

... constitutes the process in which there is interdependence and mutuality among particulars.... The capacity of each of us as part to distinguish ourselves is de [*te*].⁵²⁹

Emerging from our discussion of return is the sense of a dynamic process in which the *Tao* finds particular expression through the virtue (*te*) of individual elements of the

⁵²⁷ Leung, 'Tao and Logos', p.135.

⁵²⁸ Ibid., p.139.

⁵²⁹ Callahan, 'Discourse and Perspective in Daoism', p.180.

cosmos, and the virtue (*te*) of the individual elements leads each element back to its point of origin. Thus, for the sage, the process has led both to an emptying of heart-mind (*hsin*) and to emptiness (*hsu*). This means at the same time being led back to non-being (*wu*), for the process is that of movement from dualistic awareness to unitary awareness, a consciousness in which there is no discrimination, and therefore, no distinction between emptiness (*hsu*) and non-being (*wu*).⁵³⁰

Important to highlight here is the point that emptiness (*hsu*) and the process of emptying the heart-mind (*hsin*) are the same, for as with the *Tao*, we should not understand emptiness as a state, but as a dynamic process of unitary realisation. Let us be reminded of the inadequacy of language to communicate the *Tao*. Linguistically, 'emptiness' is a noun and 'emptying' a verb. As the function of the latter is to denote action or process, and the function of the former is to denote an entity or a state, it is tempting to assume that the action of emptying leads to the state of emptiness. This, however, is to think in causal terms.

As noted in Chapter Five in our discussion of non-action (*wu-wei*), causal thinking is dualistic in nature.⁵³¹ It denotes a distinction between the agent of an action and the action of an agent. Instead, it is necessary to move away from dualistic thinking toward a unitary appreciation if we are to begin to grasp the absence of distinction between emptying and emptiness (*hsu*).

As already established, language does not permit a total movement into unitary awareness, for such awareness is experiential, not simply conceptual. Perhaps the nearest we can approach such awareness conceptually is to speak in terms of the synchronicity between emptying and emptiness (*hsu*). That is to say, the emptying of the sage's heart-mind (*hsin*), i.e. the internal microcosmic process of opening up to the *Tao*, is at the same time, a merging with the emptiness (*hsu*) of the *Tao* on the macrocosmic level. In other words, the synchronicity between emptying and emptiness

⁵³⁰ Chapter Five established that the distinction between emptiness (*hsu*) and non-being (*wu*) was necessary from a dualistic perspective only.

⁵³¹ See p.225 above.

is the symbolic expression of the harmonisation that takes place between the internal and external process of the *Tao*, i.e. between the phenomenal and noumenal process of the *Tao*.

In view of the discussion in Chapter Five, where it was explained that the understanding of the term the action of non-action (*wei-wu-wei*) requires a non-causal approach, it is perhaps illuminating briefly to consider Carl Jung's position with regard to synchronicity, a term he suggests helps us to move away from total dependence upon the law of causality.⁵³² In this way, it may be possible to clarify the significance of synchronicity as it is used in the context of emptiness (*hsu*) and emptying, discussed above. In view of Jung's strong interest in Taoist philosophy,⁵³³ as well as his fascination for the European Medieval alchemical tradition,⁵³⁴ Jung has provided a powerful guide to the present researcher in her attempt to communicate in dualistic terms the unitary level of consciousness necessary to understand the *Tao*.

Carl Jung's understanding of synchronicity, which he expresses as the coincidence between an external event and an internal psychic event, and the meaning of the coincidence, would appear to approximate the meaning of synchronicity as it pertains to the harmonisation between the internal/phenomenal and external/noumenal process of the *Tao*.⁵³⁵

However, this is, indeed, an approximation rather than a perfect match, as Jung's discussion of synchronicity would appear to highlight the role of the psyche over the physical, in contrast to the emphasis in the *Chuang Tzu*, for example, upon the equality between psyche and soma.⁵³⁶ We have seen that the sage who falls into emptiness

⁵³² Jung, *synchronicity*, p.7.

⁵³³ Jung had a profound interest in the Chinese Taoism, as evidenced in his writing of the foreword to Willhelm's translation of *I Ching*.

⁵³⁴ His fascination for alchemy is demonstrated in his writings on psychology and alchemy (C.G. Jung, 'Psychology and Alchemy', in *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, vo.12, Transl. R.F.C. Hull (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968).

⁵³⁵ C.G. Jung, *On Synchronicity and the Paranormal*, p.89.

⁵³⁶ *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, transl. Watson, Ch.2 (p.38). Any suggestion that the psyche is superior to the physical would contradict the text's attempt to lead its readers towards

(*hsu*) is one who lives spontaneously, free from intent and purpose, and therefore, free from meaning. He lives in a state of meaninglessness - the complement of meaning, just as non-being (*wu*) is the complement of being (*you*), and noumenon is the complement of phenomenon. In other words, meaninglessness depicts the unitary nature of reality in which discrimination is surpassed.

Meaning is an assertive statement, which stands against that which has no meaning. It is, therefore, an expression of dualistic awareness, and not expression of the awareness of the sage who lives in spontaneous accord with the *Tao*. In view of this, it is perhaps necessary to highlight the disparity between Jung's notion of synchronicity, and synchronicity as it pertains to the process of emptying and falling into emptiness (*hsu*). As the process of emptying is characterised by the gradual falling into meaninglessness, Synchronicity, in terms of sagely forgetfulness, sheds the sense of meaning that Jung attributes to the term.

Nevertheless, Jung comes very close to an understanding of the synchronistic nature of the sagely process of emptying. His appreciation of the alchemical 'Unus Mundus' as awareness in which one's individuality is 'at one' with the totality would seem to match very closely the Taoist understanding of the way in which the virtue (*te*) of the sage harmonises with the *Tao*.⁵³⁷ Moreover, in his exploration of synchronicity, he argues that the term expresses the:

...parallelism and analogy between events in so far as they are non-causal.... the parallelism of time and meaning between psychic and psychophysical events.⁵³⁸

unitary awareness, in which discrimination becomes irrelevant. As all things are equal, discussion about preferences is irrelevant.

⁵³⁷ 'Unus Mundus' is interpreted by Jung as referring to the psychic state in which one's individuality is experienced as 'at one' with the totality. For Jung, it implies the underlying unity between matter and spirit.

⁵³⁸ Jung, *On Synchronicity and the Paranormal*, p.89.

From the above quotation, it is evident that Jung acknowledges a non-causal state of awareness with regard to synchronicity. However, in light of our earlier observations with regard to the role of meaning in his understanding of synchronicity, whether he goes all the way to full understanding of the unitary awareness proffered in the *Chuang Tzu* and the *Lao Tzu*, is perhaps doubtful. Unitary awareness renders the significance of the meaningful element of synchronicity unnecessary. By retaining the notion of meaning, Jung's definition of synchronicity perhaps illustrates the boundary of Jung's movement toward unitary awareness.

Further discussion of Jung in this respect falls beyond the scope of this thesis. Our consideration of Jung has been simply to expand upon the idea of synchronicity as a means of moving out of a strictly dualistic state of awareness, and in the direction of unitary awareness. As mentioned earlier, the notion of synchronicity, precisely because it is a notion, inevitably leads us short of full unitary awareness, as in such consciousness, the need for conceptualisation and discrimination disappears. What the term synchronicity does achieve however, is the early stage of the formulation of a frame of thought in which we move beyond the extremes of discrimination and causal awareness, and begin a return to a holistic appreciation of events and inner experiences. As such, it is perhaps a term that helps human consciousness to follow the circular process of the *Tao*.

Ontological Implications of the Theme of Return

So, what does our discussion of return with regard to the *Tao* tell us about the ontological perspective of the *Lao Tzu* and *Chuang Tzu*? Firstly, it highlights the thoroughly dynamic nature of the *Tao*: it is a process, not an entity or a state.

Secondly, it communicates the microcosmic/macrocosmic understanding of the *Tao*, in which its noumenal aspect finds expression in the phenomenal as the virtue (*te*) of each and everything. Virtue (*te*) symbolises the process of the *Tao* in onto-cosmological terms, i.e. the dynamic force of the macrocosm as it works toward the differentiation of

reality. The *Tao* as the complement of the *te* symbolises the cosmo-ontological process, i.e, the dynamic process of things as they return to their origin.⁵³⁹

Next, the onto-cosmological and cosmo-ontological process is synchronistic in the sense that the sage's process of emptying of heart-mind (*hsin*) is at the same time, the merging with the emptiness (*hsu*) of the noumenal *Tao*. However, this process is not meaningful to the sage, for in the process of letting-go, all meaning is surrendered. This is necessarily so because the process symbolised by the term *Tao* is an expansion of consciousness from dualistic to unitary awareness.

Medieval and Tillichian Return in the Light of Return Pertaining to the *Tao*

Let us consider this notion of return in the light of the Medieval and Tillichian notions discussed earlier in the thesis.

In Chapter Two, we discovered that central to the philosophy of thinkers such as Plotinus and Pseudo-Dionysius was the understanding of a microcosmic-macrocosmic relation between the phenomenal world and the World Soul. The entire universe owed its existence to the continual process of emanation and return generated by the unity and perfection of the One, the World Soul.⁵⁴⁰ This notion was presupposed in the work of the alchemists, who perceived their purpose in terms of a synchronistic assisting of God in the process of perfecting nature, and the making of their own ascent back to God. The unearthing of the hidden divine symbols on earth was possible for those whose souls were returning to the Source.

We learned also that the Medieval understanding of emanation and return was present in the ideas of Cusanus, although he moved from the strictly hierarchical perception of

⁵³⁹ Cheng, 'Chinese Metaphysics as Non-metaphysics,' p.175.

⁵⁴⁰ Russell, *A history of Western Philosophy*, p.86.

emanation and return to one that was more immanent.⁵⁴¹ Nevertheless, he was not able to shed completely the hierarchical mindset of Medieval philosophy because he still adhered to the necessity for mediation between man and God through the figure of Christ.

Likewise, Paracelsus echoed the views of Plotinus and Pseudo-Dionysius with his emphasis upon the importance of a doctor's using his intellect in the light of faith and piety to be guided by God toward the discovery of the divine secrets present in nature. However, he expressed the return to God in terms of introspection and the searching of the depths of the physical world, rather than seeking to leave behind the realm of the physical. Thus, the divine emanation and return became centred more upon the intellectual capacity of the human being as part of the physical world. However, at the same time, God remained the Being of Perfection and therefore, qualitatively different from the phenomenal world.⁵⁴²

Finally, we learned that the work of Boehme also communicated the idea of divine return, although, unlike the Neoplatonic emphasis upon creaturely hierarchical ascension to the unchanging Source, Boehme spoke of the simultaneous creaturely ascension and divine return, leading ultimately to the total harmonisation of human consciousness and divine self-consciousness, expressed as mystical union.

At first sight, this might appear to echo the theme of return discussed in the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*, for, as with these Chinese texts, the writings of Boehme emphasised the noumenal both in dynamic terms and in terms of process.⁵⁴³ Furthermore, more than any of his predecessors, Boehme highlighted the equality between creature and the noumenal, in so far as noumenal self-knowledge was facilitated through human consciousness.

⁵⁴¹ See p.94 above.

⁵⁴² See p.101-102 above.

⁵⁴³ The term noumenal rather than divine is used here to avoid the risk of the reader associating the *Tao* with divinity. Although Taoist religion consists of divine images, our concern is with the philosophical *Tao* presented in the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*. In this limited context, the noumenal aspect of the *Tao* is not depicted as God, but as the enigmatic dynamic process that underlies and permeates life.

However, there is a significant point of departure between the two Chinese philosophies and that of Boehme; unlike the former, Boehme established the accessibility of the noumenal to the human being through the intellect, i.e. through conceptual reasoning (*vernunft*) and mystical understanding (*verstand*).⁵⁴⁴

As mystical understanding is accessed through conceptual reasoning, Boehme's mystical understanding can be seen to be very different from the sagely wisdom of the Chinese texts. Although acknowledging the limitations of conceptual reasoning, Boehme advocates ascension to mystical understanding through the vehicle of conceptual reasoning.

In contrast, the Chinese texts speak of letting go of the intellectual grasp of life and living a life of harmony with nature, which means the spontaneous harmonisation with the dynamics of the *Tao*.⁵⁴⁵ Unlike Boehme, in the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*, no human effort is required to harmonise with the *Tao*, for it is innate to us. In contrast, Boehme advocates a process in which self-consciousness becomes so fully developed that it merges with divine consciousness. Hence, while Boehme speaks in terms of mystical communion with God, the Chinese texts speak of spontaneous action in the world and mindless existence as the effect of harmonising with the *Tao*.

In short, despite both the Chinese texts on the one hand, and Boehme on the other, having many points of contact, such as their understanding of the dynamic process of reality, the equality of the human being with the noumenal in terms of that process, and the ultimately harmonious and microcosmic/macrocosmic nature of reality, Boehme's connecting the microcosm with the macrocosm by means of the intellect leads to the ultimate harmonisation between the human being and the divine being a state of mystical union removed from the world of phenomena. In contrast, the unitary awareness proffered in the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* is not mystical and removed from life, but rooted wholly within the dynamics of life.

⁵⁴⁴ See p.107-108 above.

⁵⁴⁵ *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, transl. Watson, Ch.3 (pp.50-53).

Turning to Tillichian notions of emanation and return highlighted in this thesis, we have learned that they are deeply influenced by classical understanding of divine emanation and return, as outlined above. However, Tillich speaks in terms of correlation rather than emanation and return as the way in which the eternal moves into the temporal and the temporal into the eternal.⁵⁴⁶ We have also discovered that in this way, Tillich denotes this movement in terms of resonance and reciprocity between Creator and creature.

However, Tillichian resonance is not based upon a Boehmian sense of equality between creature and Creator, but retains the classical presupposition of qualitative distinction between Creator and creature. The creature participates in the Creator on the basis of being firmly grounded in the Divine life itself. The Divine life embraces and transcends creaturely life, while creaturely life is the expression of the outward movement of that Divine life.⁵⁴⁷ Thus, Tillich presents a picture of a Creator that is both transcendent and immanent for the creature. In so far as the creature is grounded in the Divine life itself, then the Divine is wholly present for the creature.

The presence however, has to be mediated through the symbol Jesus as the Christ, for creaturely existence fails to recognise its grounding in the Divine because of the limitations imposed upon it by the categories of existence, which shape the way in which we think and perceive. Thus, the limitations imposed upon existence by the categories of time, space, causality and substance create an existential barrier between the Creator and the creature, and render the former wholly transcendent, despite the creature's grounding in the Divine life.

With regard to the theme of return found in the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*, there are some striking points of connection with Tillichian thought. Both the Chinese texts and Tillich establish the noumenal as the ground of phenomenal reality. For Tillich, this is expressed as the ground of being; in the Chinese texts, this is referred to as non-being

⁵⁴⁶ See pp.154-155 above.

⁵⁴⁷ See p.155 above.

(*wu*), or the *Tao*.⁵⁴⁸ Both perceive the presence of the noumenal in dynamic terms; for Tillich, the dynamic of the Divine life pulsates through the ontological structure of being and thus, provides the very dynamic that characterises existential life and communicates the microcosmic-macrocosmic motif in Tillich's system.⁵⁴⁹ In the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*, the dynamic of the *Tao* is expressed in virtue (*te*), and this link establishes the microcosmic-macrocosmic understanding of the universe in these texts.

However, at the same time, there is a fundamental difference between the understanding of return in Tillich and in the Chinese texts under consideration. Once again, the difference lies in Tillich's focus upon the intellectual connection between the Creator and the creature and the Chinese texts' disregard for the intellectual. For Tillich, it is reason, logos, that provides the vital connection between the human being and God. The reasoning faculty provides the human being with the capacity to function as the bearer of spirit for all that lives.

In Chapter Three of this thesis, we discovered that the logos functions as a pivot for the dialectical relationship between self and world on the one hand, and finitude and the infinite on the other. Through logos, the human being not only makes sense of its inner and external worlds, but also reaches out to that which transcends existence and at the same time, provides the ground for that existence.⁵⁵⁰ In contrast, as we have already established, in the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*, the connection with the *Tao* lies in our naturalness rather than our intellect.

Moreover, Tillich's focus upon logos and the faculty of reason leads him to highlight the ambiguities of life, which can only be transcended by means of symbols that have a mediatory function.

⁵⁴⁸ See p. 219 above.

⁵⁴⁹ See Chapter 3 for an in-depth discussion of this.

⁵⁵⁰ See p. 133 above.

Focusing upon the intellect, Tillich's theology employs mediating symbols to scale the barriers of paradox and causal thinking, both of which are penned in by the categories of time, space, causality and substance. The effect is to maintain a gulf between God and the human being, which can only be bridged through the mediation of the symbol, Jesus as the Christ.

In contrast, we have seen that in the Chinese texts, paradox serves as the key that unlocks the enigma of the *Tao*. This it does by shocking the reader into realisation of the limits of conceptual thought, and by highlighting the importance of letting go of the intellect as the means of progressing from dualistic to unitary awareness. Thus, we may suggest that Tillichian insistence upon the role of logos in his theological system demonstrates his entrenchment in dualistic awareness, in contrast to the unitary consciousness communicated in the Chinese texts under examination.

Through our survey of the theme of return, what begins to emerge is a significant contrast between that theme as presented in the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* on the one hand, and on the other, the theme as it pertains to Tillichian theology and to the classical tradition in which Tillich was rooted. The sense of separation that predominates in the classical tradition and Tillichian theology is absent from the Chinese principle of return.

The dualistic approach of Tillich and the classical tradition promotes a powerful sense of the static nature of reality; of It and us. Consequently, Tillich's ontology, although in many ways focusing upon the dynamic structure of reality underlying creaturely existence, impedes the flow of the dynamic by insisting upon the constructing of concepts to communicate the dynamic nature of reality. This leads him inevitably to approach reality from a dualistic perspective, thus, rendering the theme of separation integral to his perspective.

We have already learned that in dualistic awareness, distinctions are drawn. Tillich's insistence upon the ambiguous nature of existence betrays the dualistic limit of his

understanding. For him, the tension between the poles of existence is insurmountable without mediating intervention from the realm of the noumenal and transcendent.

In contrast, in the Chinese texts the conceptual impasse of paradox is used to break into an altered consciousness in which distinctions disappear. This is achieved by relinquishing the need to conceptualise about reality and instead, to experience reality through the process of letting-go. This effectively is a process of integration of the microcosm of the individual with the macrocosm of the universe, for the letting-go of conceptual and sensory dependence is synchronous with the merging with the dynamic flow of the *Tao*.

In terms of ontology then, the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* perceive reality as a dynamic process of integration rather than a state of being; integration between the microcosm of an individual and the macrocosm of the universe, which is achieved through the integration of virtue (*te*), the microcosmic expression of the *Tao*, and *Tao* in its macrocosmic aspect; hence, ontology is utterly integrated with cosmology, as illustrated in the terms used by Cheng, cosmo-ontology and onto-cosmology.⁵⁵¹

Not only is it necessary to refer to ontology in the light of cosmology, it is also necessary to understand onto-cosmology in the light of cosmo-ontology, for the two terms together express the dynamic process of return referred to in the Chinese texts. Onto-cosmologically, the *Tao* symbolises the process of non-differentiated origin moving toward the differentiation of reality.

Cosmo-ontologically, the *Tao* is the process of differentiation returning to non-differentiated origin and source. Hence, the *Tao* symbolises process; the process toward differentiation, and the process back toward non-differentiation. The human being is simply an expression of this dynamic process, and to achieve true wisdom, it is necessary to move in harmony with the dynamics of that reality. This requires the

⁵⁵¹ Cheng, 'Chinese Metaphysics as Non-metaphysics', pp. 173-174.

letting-go of those aspects of life which create blockages for the *Tao* as it emanates and returns through the human being.

Hence, in the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*, there is no universal need for the human being to harmonise with the dynamic flow of reality. In contrast to Boehme, there is no sense of the noumenal's dependence upon the human being for its expression. Again, in contrast to Tillich's claim that the human being is the bearer of spirit,⁵⁵² there is no unique role for the human being to play in the fulfilment of the universal order of things. Instead, the *Chuang Tzu* highlights the benefits to the human being of realigning with the *Tao*; to do so is to escape the pain and suffering that occurs as the result of not living a natural life.

Equally, the *Lao Tzu* promotes the living according to the *Tao* as the way to minimise the risk of disorder in the world; by following the way of heaven, one harmonises rather than works against the natural order of things.⁵⁵³

Admittedly, the *Lao Tzu* does promote a political harmonisation with the *Tao* as a means of maintaining the delicate dynamic equilibrium of empires,⁵⁵⁴ and acknowledges that empires are as much a part of the natural order as the world of inanimate objects.⁵⁵⁵ By this token, the role of the sage king is to adhere to the *Tao* in his political affairs so that the delicate balance of the empire is not disturbed, therefore, by inference, preserving the delicate balance of the entire natural order.

However, there is no suggestion that those political leaders who rule according to the *Tao* perform a function beyond the parameters of their particular realms or empires; there is no hint of the elevated functions attributed to the human being by Boehme and Tillich. Whilst these thinkers speak of the human being as having a special, unique function by virtue of its possession of the gift of understanding, the *Lao Tzu's* concern

⁵⁵² See p.60 above.

⁵⁵³ *Lao Tzu*, transl. Ch'en, p.14. See also *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching*, transl. Lau, pp.xxv & xxvii.

⁵⁵⁴ *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching*, transl.Lau, p.xxviii.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.xxviii.

is more focused upon the destructive capacity of the human being within the political domain when operating through the intellect, and therefore, operating out of synch with the *Tao*.⁵⁵⁶ As the microcosm of the empire resonates with the macrocosm, any disorder in the empire will be echoed in the universe.⁵⁵⁷

Section Two: Estrangement

Before we conclude our exploration of the *Tao* and its ontological implications, it is necessary to ascertain the extent to which there is present in the ontology of the *Tao* the theme of estrangement. Let us be reminded of the broader purpose in exploring the ontological implications of the *Tao*, namely, to seek to ascertain the extent to which Tillich's claim that estrangement is ontological in nature holds true for the philosophical discourse on the *Tao*.

We have already established that it is inappropriate to consider the *Tao* in exclusively ontological terms because it should be approached holistically. In light of this, it perhaps becomes clear that the theme of estrangement in Tillichian terms of creaturely alienation from the divine ground of being is also inappropriate with regard to the *Tao*. Firstly, the *Tao* is not expressed in the Chinese texts as an entity or as a supreme being, but as the noumenal dynamic that is wholly present in the phenomenal world.

Secondly, as the *Tao* should be perceived holistically, the movement from, and return to, the source cannot be regarded as two separate expressions of the *Tao*, but rather as synchronistic expressions. Holism demands the awareness of the interrelation between outward movement and return, and unitary awareness of this interrelation renders language such as estrangement or alienation irrelevant. In short, holism demands that we see the whole movement at one and the same time.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

In contrast, the dualistic nature of the Tillichian approach, where discriminating language is the sole medium for communicating the dynamic nature of the structure of reality, renders it impossible to see the integrated nature of divine emanation and return. In dualistic terms, if the human creature is part of the divine emanation, then it is logical to suppose that it must be distinct from the divine return. Verbal conceptualisation, which is inevitably rational, prevents us from seeing the whole picture, for the interrelationship of that whole picture is not based upon causal connection, but non-causal, synchronistic connection.

Thus, the use of paradox and negative terminology in the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* is the method by which both texts lead the reader away from dependence upon verbal conceptualisation towards a direct experience of the mystery of the *Tao*, attained through the synchronistic process of emptying and merging with emptiness (*hsu*). There is no estrangement to be overcome, except perhaps the estrangement generated by dependence upon knowledge and desire. It may be possible to argue that dependence upon such phenomena renders the individual estranged from one's virtue (*te*). As the *Chuang Tzu* points out, movement away from one's true nature, one's virtue (*te*) leads to pain and suffering.⁵⁵⁸

However, this is hardly the same form of estrangement as that proffered by Tillich in his theological system. One may choose to move away from one's true nature, but one could equally return to it at any time, for it is intrinsic to us.⁵⁵⁹ In contrast, for Tillich, the human being is ontologically and tragically estranged from God. Hence, the human being cannot escape his suffering, except through the mediation of the symbol Jesus as the Christ.

Furthermore, the judgment on humanity made through the Tillichian assumption of ontological estrangement is simply not present in the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*. We learned in Chapter Four of this thesis that Tillich links the Fall of Adam and Eve with the notion of creaturely estrangement and sin. As such, he perpetuates the judgment

⁵⁵⁸ *Chuang Tzu: A New Selected Translation*, transl. Fung, p.9.

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

that humanity is ontologically estranged from its ground of being as the consequence of wilful rejection of that to which we essentially belong: God, self and fellow human beings.⁵⁶⁰ By speaking of the consequence of this rejection in terms of guilt, Tillich paints the picture of a rebellious humanity that has done wrong.

In contrast, in the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*, there is no sense in which the individual should let go out of moral duty or responsibility, but rather because it is simply natural to do so. Thus, even if it can successfully be argued that clinging to the world of knowledge and sensory attachment leads to estrangement from one's innate nature, this estrangement does not have the gravitas associated with the Tillichian notion.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have sought to explore the ontological implications of the *Tao* that emerged from our examination of the *Tao* in Chapter Five. What has been discovered is that to speak purely in ontological terms with regard to the *Tao* is inappropriate. The *Tao* is a symbol used to communicate a dynamic process underlying existence that is holistic, and is as cosmological as it is ontological. To speak in exclusively ontological terms is to lose the essence of the holistic nature of the process. The ontology of the *Tao* must be discussed in relation to its cosmology, for the process that the term symbolises is not simply one that can be seen in exclusively ontological or cosmological terms, but is one that when viewed from the ontological perspective, is fully understood only when the cosmological aspect is brought into focus, and vice versa. In other words, the process is one of dynamic resonance and interrelation between the microcosm and the macrocosm.

⁵⁶⁰ See p.169 above.

We have learned that from the perspective of the human being, the *Tao* is the process of letting-go; the individual who has managed to let go of sensory and intellectual attachment to the world of phenomena and knowledge is the sage who lives a life of forgetfulness. However, by virtue of the fact that the ineffability of the *Tao* lies in the heart of existence and not in a realm wholly removed from the phenomenal world, sagely forgetfulness is not a mystical state. On the contrary, the sage is able to function freely and spontaneously in life, for his non-attachment allows him to flow with the dynamic process that the term *Tao* symbolises. Thus, letting go is the synchronistic process of emptying and merging with emptiness (*hsu*).

This is where we begin to understand the interrelation between ontology and cosmology. Emptiness (*hsu*) denotes the ineffable nature of the *Tao* as the source or origin of all things, the *Tao* as non-being (*wu*), for merging with emptiness (*hsu*) symbolises the sage's altered state of awareness from dualistic consciousness, in which emptiness (*hsu*) and non-being (*wu*) are distinct, to unitary consciousness, where they are the same. Thus, the merging with emptiness (*hsu*) is the sage's harmonisation with the dynamic process of the cosmos, and is therefore, his return to the source. That he is able to function freely and spontaneously in the phenomenal world having merged with emptiness highlights the interrelation of cosmology and ontology. If ontology is the study of being, then to study the sage who exists and functions spontaneously by virtue of his harmonisation with the cosmos means to study his being in the light of his cosmological connection.

Following from the process of integration illustrated in the sage's emptying of heart-mind (*hsin*), and the total interrelation between ontology and cosmology, the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* communicate no sense of ontological estrangement for the human being in relation either to the *Tao* or to the Universe. The integration of the sage occurs by virtue of his essential nature, his virtue (*te*), which is the phenomenal expression of the noumenal *Tao*. Let us remind ourselves once again of a very important point, the *Tao* is not an entity or a state, but the term used to symbolise the dynamic reality of the universe in both its noumenal and phenomenal aspects. Unlike Tillichian notions of the Divine life, the Chinese texts do not depict the *Tao* as in a realm qualitatively separate

from that of existence. The *Tao* is the process of life, the Path, the Way.⁵⁶¹ At the same time, it is the enigmatic dynamic that is present, although mysteriously hidden, in the physical and manifest aspects of existence. The *Tao* is the dynamic mystery and source of life; not the Perfect Source of the Neoplatonists, which is qualitatively superior to the physical realm, nor the Tillichian Divine life, which is shrouded from existence through the veil imposed by the categories of existence. The dynamism of the *Tao* is holistic and all-pervading, its holism providing the network of interrelationships that characterises the universe and all that reside in it.

Recognition of this dynamic reality requires a fundamental mindshift, or perhaps we should say heart-mind shift, away from dualistic awareness - dependence upon knowledge, reason and causal thinking - into unitary awareness, in which all distinctions, be they between actions and agents, or between polar concepts, disappear, and are replaced by the recognition of the equality of all things. In unitary consciousness, action becomes non-causal, for the agent of an action and the action of an agent become so utterly integrated that the agent acts in a state of non-action (*wu-wei*). Such action is spontaneous and synchronous with the dynamic of the *Tao*, allowing the actor total freedom from intent, attachment and discrimination. The sage lives and acts with no thought, no premeditation. Instead, he acts through the intuitive wisdom flowing freely through his clear heart-mind (*hsin*). He lives in synchronistic alignment with the *Tao* of the macrocosm because his intuitive wisdom *is* the *Tao*. In this dynamic state, there is a total absence of estrangement between the sage and his action, the sage and his environment, the sage and his universe, and the sage and the *Tao*. In short, the action of non-action (*wei-wu-wei*) expresses the dynamic unity of the sage and the *Tao*. This is the clearest illustration of the importance of speaking cosmologically when discussing the ontology of the *Tao*, and of speaking ontologically when discussing the cosmology of the *Tao*.

Cosmology and ontology are expressions of discriminatory awareness, as are terms such as separation and estrangement. As such, they are symbols of dualistic awareness.

⁵⁶¹ Leung, 'Tao and Logos', p.131.

The *Tao* has to be understood holistically in a state of unitary awareness. Thus, recognition of the need to speak cosmologically about ontology in relation to the *Tao* is recognition of our inability to proceed any further through discrimination and reasoned argument. Recognition of the cosmological nature of ontology and the ontological nature of cosmology with reference to the *Tao* is recognition of the need to let go of reason and fall into experience, for, as Leung observes, the *Tao* is a process of actions.⁵⁶² It is thus, to be lived and intuited, not discussed and rationalised.

⁵⁶² Ibid., p.131.

Part Three

Assessing the Value of Ontological Estrangement for Tillich's System in Light of Microcosm and *Tao*

Chapter 7

Tillich's Theological System in the Light of the Exploration into the Chinese Tradition of *Tao*

Having explored in depth the theme of the *Tao* as communicated through the the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*, it is time now to assess the impact of our exploration in terms of Tillichian theology. Let us be reminded of the purpose in exploring the *Tao*, namely, to assess the validity of Tillich's assertion that creaturely estrangement is ontological in nature. However, before discussing our findings in this respect, it is useful briefly to remind ourselves of the need to assess the validity of this assertion.

Highlighted in Chapter Four was an inconsistency in Tillich's system with regard to the theme of creaturely freedom and estrangement, exposed by consideration of the psychological implications of his definition of eros as the "urge toward reunion of the separated".⁵⁶³ By establishing the close connection between ontology and psychology in Tillich's theology, the chapter established that the Fall symbolised the ontological separation between essential and existential being, and the psychological separation between unconsciousness (the state of dreaming innocence) and consciousness (the post-Fall state of humanity in existence). The chapter considered Tillich's definition of eros as "the urge toward the reunion of the separated".⁵⁶⁴ Although from an ontological perspective, this definition was unproblematic, from a psychological viewpoint, it raised a serious question: if eros is the urge toward the reunion of the separated, and if, in psychological terms, that which is separated pertains to consciousness and

⁵⁶³ See p.172 above.

⁵⁶⁴ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol.3, p.137.

unconsciousness, then what precisely does Tillich mean by suggesting that eros is the urge toward the reunion of consciousness with unconsciousness?

It was argued that if taken literally, such a reunion would be tantamount to a denial of the role of human consciousness, and a refutation of the freedom of the human being in relation to the divine. If the function of consciousness were simply to return to unconsciousness, then implicit in this would be the sense that the actualising function attributed to human consciousness had, for Tillich, no real value. It would suggest one of two things: that the conscious process being worked out through life is already eternally present in the state of unconsciousness, thus nullifying the freedom of the human being creatively to move toward actualisation of the potential of unconsciousness. Alternatively, it would suggest that there was no ultimate purpose in the process of conscious actualisation executed by the human being in existence.⁵⁶⁵

In view of the fact that such an interpretation of human consciousness was clearly not what Tillich intended in his system, the chapter went on to suggest a subtle revision of Tillich's definition of eros from the psychological perspective. Rather than defining eros as the urge toward reunion of the separated, there would be less ambiguity from the psychological aspect of Tillich's system if it were redefined as the urge toward the *union* of the separated. By so doing, eros would denote the conscious realisation of the power of the unconscious in that very consciousness – the role unique to the human being as bearer of spirit in and for the world.⁵⁶⁶

Highlighted in the chapter was the implication of such a change; the progressive movement toward union of consciousness with unconsciousness, which would necessarily have no sense of ultimate separation. Also highlighted was the important point that progression toward union would not mean a dissolving of consciousness into unconsciousness, but instead, a resonating mutual participation between the two. If this

⁵⁶⁵ See pp.173-174 above.

⁵⁶⁶ See p.174 above.

were the case, the question as to the necessity of an unbridgeable gulf between one's depth of being and one's mortal existence was raised.⁵⁶⁷

Finally, in light of this argument, the chapter established that Tillich's insistence upon the ontological nature of existential separation from its ultimate concern, reflected in his system in the vital mediatory role of the realm of the holy, rendered his claims about creaturely freedom ambiguous. Moreover, the presence of a microcosmic theme implicit in his system, established in Chapter Three, accentuated the disparity between the implicit sense of wholeness and unity in his system and his explicit insistence upon ultimate separation and estrangement between finite existence and its ultimate concern.

For these reasons, the question as to the ontological necessity of estrangement and separation was raised in Chapter Four⁵⁶⁸ Would not Tillich's system be less ambiguous if the theme of ontological estrangement were removed from his system, as it appeared that adherence to this notion became somewhat of a sticking point for his theology? This, then, was the reason for seeking to assess the validity of Tillich's assertion about the ontological nature of creaturely estrangement, a claim, which if valid, would be applicable to humanity universally, not simply to those within the Christian tradition.

The aim of this chapter therefore, is to assess the validity of Tillich's assertion that estrangement is ontological in nature in light of the microcosmic theme established as implicit in his theology, and in light of our in-depth consideration of the *Tao* as communicated through the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*.

The chapter sets out to achieve two things: firstly, to expose an inconsistency at the ontological level in Tillich's theology pertaining to the themes of estrangement and freedom, revealed by the microcosmic theme underlying his system. Secondly, to consider the impact on his system of our consideration of the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* with regard to the themes of freedom and estrangement.

⁵⁶⁷ See pp.176-178 above.

⁵⁶⁸ See pp. 178-179 above.

It will be argued that consideration of the *Tao* highlights the exclusively dualistic approach of Tillich in his theological system, an approach which forces him to accept as inevitable the ontological separation between humanity and its ultimate concern.

Moreover, it will be argued that the unitary consciousness promoted in the Chinese texts demonstrates the way in which Tillich's claims with regard to the ontological nature of separation may be rendered invalid.

Finally, the chapter considers the possible impact of removing the theme of ontological estrangement from Tillich's system, and suggests that by so doing, the microcosmic theme will be brought to the fore, allowing much of the ambiguity of Tillichian ideas to dissolve into a far more holistic, unitary consciousness of the Creator/creature relationship.

Tillichian Estrangement in the Light of the Microcosmic Theme Underlying his Theology

As mentioned above, Chapter Four summarised Tillich's understanding of the mythological Fall of humanity as a symbol of the separation that permeates life. It symbolises the transition from unconsciousness to consciousness, from potential to actual life, from unity to plurality and thus, from union to separation. Separation is therefore, an integral and inescapable part of being human.⁵⁶⁹

We also learned of the close association in his system between the state of existential estrangement and that of creaturely freedom. At every moment, the creature in existence is free to make choices – that is what the symbol of the Fall depicts: the transition from unconsciousness to consciousness marks a transition from innocence to personal responsibility. The transition from ignorance to knowledge enables the creature to make choices. To choose means to be free and, at the same time, to be

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid., p.10.

responsible for the choices made. The ontological nature of creaturely freedom means that it has total freedom, freedom even, according to Tillich, to decide between creative living in alignment with one's destiny, and surrendering one's humanity.⁵⁷⁰ Thus, Tillich maintains that the creature is free to choose between being and non-being at every moment and to every degree.

However, In Chapter Three, we learned that for Tillich, human freedom is gained through the ability to make environment meaningful.⁵⁷¹ This is possible because of the logos structure of the human psyche. In this light, human freedom is not chaotic and wild, but creative and based upon the divine gift of logos. To be free in this context means to be fully human, which means to live through the ambiguities of life in the creative ground of being itself, in which existence is rooted.⁵⁷²

Now, there would appear to be a contradiction at a fundamental level in Tillich's use of the term *freedom*. On the one hand, he argues for the creature's freedom to choose between creative living and the surrendering of one's humanity. On the other hand, he argues that true freedom is living creatively through the logos. If finite life is, as Tillich asserts, rooted in being itself, then the definition of finitude must include being itself as its root. To be finite *is* to be rooted in the creative ground out of which finitude is born. Earlier chapters demonstrated the way Tillich depicts this through the content of his theology and the structure of his system.⁵⁷³ However, to suggest that the creature has the freedom to choose between creative living and the surrendering of one's humanity would appear to suggest that the finite creature is rooted in something other than the creative ground of being. It would appear to suggest that the definition of finitude does not, in fact, include its root in being itself.

If this root is part of my identity as a human being, how is it possible for me to stand apart from it? How is it possible for me to reject the source of my being at the

⁵⁷⁰ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol.2, p.32.

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.31.

⁵⁷² See pp.143-145 above.

⁵⁷³ See pp.25,26 & 116,117 above.

ontological level? When speaking of true freedom as living creatively in the ground of being itself, he asserts that to know how to be free means to know what it means to be fully human, and to be fully human means creatively to transcend the ambiguities of life. Now, if one chooses to surrender one's humanity, surely, according to Tillich's definition, one is not living a fully human life? Surely, the so-called freedom to choose the path of surrender is not the freedom he defines in terms of creative transcendence? It is rather more of the quality of chaos and wildness, which he dismisses as not true creaturely freedom at all.⁵⁷⁴

It would appear that Tillich knows two kinds of freedom: the freedom to choose to be rooted or not in the creative ground of being itself, and the freedom to live a fully human life in the light of the divine gift of logos. How is it possible for these two understandings of creaturely freedom to co-exist in his system?

The first idea is derived from the symbol of the Fall and from the notion of the ontological estrangement of the creature from its creative source. Tillich argues that finitude, by definition, means estrangement.⁵⁷⁵ However, finitude also means, according to his own system, being rooted in the Creator.⁵⁷⁶ Thus, the Fall symbolises not so much the inescapable ontological fact of creaturely separation, as Tillich asserts, as the freedom for the creature to ignore its ontologically rooted connection with the Creator. The creature is equipped by the divine, through the gift of logos, to choose to look away from its Creator. Thus, at the ontological level, the creature is not inevitably estranged from God. Rather, it remains rooted in God, despite the creature's freedom to refuse to accept it.

Tillich's assertion that creaturely estrangement is ontological in nature suggests that the creature at the ontological level has no connection with the creative source from which it was born. It attributes to the creature an autonomy that contradicts Tillich's whole

⁵⁷⁴ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol.1, pp.182 – 185.

⁵⁷⁵ See pp. 162 – 163 above.

⁵⁷⁶ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 p.236: "God ... is the power of being in everything and above everything, the infinite power of being."

system, in which he repeatedly points to the creature's grounding in being itself. To suggest that the creature is in a state of estrangement from which it cannot escape, no matter how much it may wish to, is tantamount to announcing that the creature is not rooted in the ground of being. Thus, Tillich's suggestion that the creature is estranged at the ontological level contradicts his system as a whole.

The contradiction would disappear, however, if we were to abandon the notion of ontological estrangement and redefine the Fall as symbolising the freedom, given to the creature from the Creator through the gift of Logos, to choose not to accept and acknowledge its grounding in being itself. Such rewording makes a subtle but significant shift in Tillich's argument, for it affirms the ontological connection between Creator and creature and maintains creaturely freedom to sin,⁵⁷⁷ but it does not accommodate the view that the creature is inescapably estranged from the Creator. Thus, Tillich's reference to the creature's freedom to choose between creative transcendence of the ambiguities of existence and self-destruction would be re-expressed as the creature's freedom not to accept the creative capacity to transcend the ambiguities of existence present in each and every finite creature. Such creativity is present by virtue of the creature's grounding in the creative source of life itself.

With regard to his second appreciation of creaturely freedom, Tillich presents a view that is more aligned with the general tone of the system as a whole. The creature creatively transcends the ambiguities of existence through the dimension of spirit in life. Spirit is present in existence by virtue of the divine presence through logos in the human being, making humanity the bearer of spirit in the world, for the world. He then happily acknowledges the connection between humanity and being itself.

The contradiction in his system with regard to creaturely freedom and ontological estrangement illustrates the extent to which he remained unconscious of the microcosmic theme underlying his system. If he had fully recognised the microcosmic

⁵⁷⁷ Chapter 4 established Tillich's definition of sin as focusing upon personal acts of estrangement from God, from oneself and from one's world. (p.169).

hue of his theology, he would have realised the impossibility of the creature being free to choose to surrender its humanity. As a microcosm of the macrocosm, the creature is simply what it is. In his system, the human creature resonates with the rhythm of the divine life and that relationship is what defines the creature's humanity. How, then, would it be possible for the creature to decide that it was not in relation to the divine? One may wish to be separated, but wishing and asserting such separation as an ontological fact are two very different things. The microcosmic theme underlying his system reveals the ambiguity of the language he employs to depict creaturely freedom and estrangement.

The creature does not have the freedom to take the path that leads to surrender. Rather, it has the freedom to refuse to acknowledge the creative ground of its very being, and such refusal leads to the loss of one's humanity. This is the inevitable consequence because failure to recognise what we truly are, i.e. grounded in being itself, means the inability to become fully integrated human beings. In this light, our connection with God, not our estrangement, is ontological. In this light, the creature sees the presence of God within itself, not across the abyss that Tillich's emphasis upon separation creates.

The suggested shift in emphasis from ontological estrangement to ontological connection brings Tillichian ontology closer to the cosmo-ontology of the *Chuang Tzu*. Just as this Chinese text emphasises the innate connection between the innate nature or virtue (*te*) of the human microcosm and the *Tao* of the macrocosm,⁵⁷⁸ so too, by shifting the focus of Tillichian ontology toward the connection between the creature and its creative ground and away from the separation between the two, sin becomes the distortion that arises through one's refusal or inability to recognise what one essentially is, i.e. innately connected to the macrocosm of the divine life.⁵⁷⁹ This idea will be

⁵⁷⁸ *Chuang Tzu: A New Selected Translation*, transl. Fung, pp.8, 9, 105.

⁵⁷⁹ Tillich distinguishes between the tragic inevitability of human estrangement and the personal responsibility of sin, described as personal estrangement from God, from one's self and from one's world. In removing the idea of estrangement, the separation between the microcosm and macrocosm is no longer regarded as tragic, but is shown to be the consequence of our inability/refusal to recognise our essential nature.

developed further later in this chapter, but it is important to introduce it here, as it indicates the extent to which our sojourn in the microcosmic/macrocosmic ideas contained in the Chinese texts helps us to see the potential of the microcosmic theme implicit in Tillichian theology to overcome the ambiguities explicit in his system. As argued later, the Chinese texts allow us to dare to challenge the presupposition in Tillich's theology that estrangement is ontological in nature, and therefore, an inevitable, inescapable fact of life.

Tillich's insistence upon the *state* of estrangement paints a static picture, in which God remains in the Garden of Eden and the creature falls into existence. This static approach supports the view that there is a contradiction in his system with regard to freedom and estrangement, for we have seen his system as a whole to portray the dynamic nature of life and of the correlation between the Creator and the creature. The microcosmic theme reveals the pulsating rhythm of divine life as it interacts with that of the creature, and the circular, horizontal and vertical dynamics of the ontological structure of being.⁵⁸⁰ Through the microcosmic theme, we can feel the energy of the resonance between creature and Creator - God interacts with humanity every step of the way.

However, when dealing with the symbol of the Fall, all energy seems to fade from his writing; God is on one side of the fence and humanity is on the other. The claim that estrangement is inevitable and inescapable drains his system of the energy that can be felt elsewhere. Estrangement becomes somewhat of a brick wall for his system as a whole and an impasse for the human being, which contradicts the sense of empowerment that is discerned in his presentation of human freedom as creative transcendence.⁵⁸¹

It is the microcosmic theme underlying the system that has highlighted both the presence of powerful dynamics in his thinking and the inconsistency between his

⁵⁸⁰ See pp.32,41-44 above.

⁵⁸¹ See p.136 above.

notion of creaturely freedom and estrangement on the one hand, and his system as a whole, on the other.

Why did Tillich not recognise such a serious contradiction in his system? After all, his theology is highly sophisticated and rigorous. Could it be that the rigour of his logic failed him? That is not what the present chapter wishes to argue. Instead, it intends to suggest that the flaw was not in his reasoning, but in his exclusively dualistic approach, an approach that accentuated the lack of integration between the rational argument that produced his system and the intuition that fuelled his thinking. Rather than suggesting that his system was lacking in rational rigour, it is argued that his rational argument was so logically rigorous that the intuition of the microcosmic/macrocosmic relation between the creature and Creator remained largely unconscious for him and therefore, unrecognised in his system. In short, there was a lack of integration between his unconscious and conscious being because of his entrenchment in conceptual thinking, a mode of consciousness established in the two preceding chapters as dualistic in nature. As a result, the inconsistency between the tone of the system as a whole and his handling of creaturely freedom and estrangement went unnoticed.

Tillich's insistence upon the truly free nature of the human being was the product of his determination to show that freedom in life was real and not merely divine lip-service. He wished to portray the Creator/creature relationship as a resonating and participatory one, but was only too well aware of the pitfalls of so doing. One such pitfall arose with regard to the omnipotence and omniscience of the Creator. To guard against the creature being overpowered by such a Creator, Tillich emphasised creaturely freedom, to the extent that it was free even to surrender its humanity. At the same time, his desire not to suggest that the Creator was in any way in need of the creature led him to be wary of going too far in the direction of creaturely influence over the Creator, a direction taken by Jacob Boehme.⁵⁸² His solution to the problem of divine omnipotence and creaturely freedom was a strictly dualistic one; to keep the two utterly distinct by preserving the notion of creaturely Fall as ontological separation from God.

⁵⁸² See p.108 above.

The dichotomy he faced with regard to this issue gives an insight into the degree to which he himself was integrated. Divine omnipotence challenges creaturely freedom only when the two are seen as distinct. If the power of the divine is both external to, and removed from me, and if that power is regarded as utterly superior to what little I may have myself, then of course, my reaction is to be anxious about such a power. If I were to assert my own freedom in relation to such a being, I would have to say that the divine itself granted me the freedom to live alone and to seek Him out when I wished. The relationship would not be one of equality, but one based upon divine grace.

However, what if divine omnipotence and creaturely freedom were not seen as distinct? What would be the relationship between Creator and creature then? Indeed, how would it be possible not to see them as distinct without losing the essential nature of both? These questions both pertain to a more fundamental question, namely, to one regarding the *perception* of the relationship between Creator and creature. As such, the question pertains to the nature of creaturely consciousness in relation to the Creator. If the understanding of the ultimate separation between creature and Creator is expression of a dualistic perception, then expression of the absence of distinction between the two is clearly one that approaches unitary awareness.

In light of this, and in view of our extensive discussion of unitary awareness in the two preceding chapters, it is useful to make reference back to the Chinese texts already examined to help us begin to address this issue. Thus, the question that underlies the two questions raised above may be expressed in the following way: *in what way must consciousness of the Creator/creature relationship in Tillichian theology change, in order to overcome the sense of distinction between divine omnipotence and creaturely freedom without losing the essential nature of both?*

The Microcosmic Theme in the Chinese Tradition of *Tao*

In Chapters Five and Six, we learned that the depiction of the *Tao* in the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* was onto-cosmological and simultaneously cosmo-ontological. In onto-cosmological terms, the *Tao* is the force of the universe as it works toward the differentiation of reality. In cosmo-ontological terms, it is the dynamic force of the macrocosm, the process of things as they return to their origin.⁵⁸³ In other words, the *Tao* expresses the dynamic relationship between the macrocosm of the noumenal and the microcosm of the phenomenal. The *Tao* is not an entity or a state, but a dynamic process of differentiation and return to non-differentiation that is both macrocosmic and microcosmic in nature.

We learned also that the human being flows with the same dynamic of differentiation and return as that of the universe, for the former is a microcosm of the latter.⁵⁸⁴ As such, the *Tao* is innate to the human being, and finds expression through the innate nature or virtue (*te*) of every individual. In the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*, the true man - the sage - is one who has cultivated himself from the original ignorance of the child to the dynamic state of sagely forgetfulness. This is a process of spiritual cultivation in which the childhood dynamic of evolving differentiation gradually and ultimately turns into the dynamic process of spiritual maturity, in which differentiation returns to its source, non-differentiated unity. Thus, the true man falls into sagely forgetfulness, the dynamic state of non-action (*wu-wei*). In this state, self-consciousness and differentiation have been returned to their source, unitary consciousness and mindlessness, allowing the sage to act spontaneously and effortlessly. His actions are effortless because he has relinquished all responsibility for them and allows himself to flow with the dynamic of the *Tao*. Thus, the actions of the sage are no longer his actions, but expression of the dynamic *Tao*. In short, the sage lives in total integration; his being and doing are utterly harmonised with the flow of the *Tao*. Thus, the sage has no conscious awareness of distinction between he as actor and the act he performs;

⁵⁸³ See p.243 above.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid.

neither is he aware of any distinction between he as microcosm and the macrocosm of the universe, within which the sage acts spontaneously. Thus, in the state of sagely forgetfulness, the noumenal expression of the *Tao* is fully integrated with its phenomenal expression of the sage's virtue (*te*).

Moreover, we have learned in Chapters Five and Six that sagely forgetfulness is not a mystical state in which the sage is removed from life. On the contrary, through the story of the master cook presented in Chapter Five, we have seen that acting through non-action (*wei-wu-wei*) affords the actor skills and abilities that far exceed the capacity of an individual operating through a normal, dualistic mode of awareness.⁵⁸⁵

In terms of the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*, then, it is clear that a total integration of the noumenal with the phenomenal is possible without the individual losing the ability to act in the phenomenal world. Rather, by relinquishing control of one's actions and awareness of self, it is possible to act in a far more effective way than is possible in a self-conscious state. Thus, unitary awareness should not be regarded as a condition in which the differentiated reality of the phenomenal dissolves, but rather is the condition in which *consciousness* of the differentiated reality of the phenomenal dissolves. This is a most significant distinction for it highlights the crucial point that in the texts of the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*, reality is not characterised by humanly perceived distinctions between phenomena, but by the dynamic mystery of the *Tao*. In other words, reality does not change as the result of changes in human perception, but as the result of the enigma of the *Tao*.

We learned earlier that the enigma of the *Tao*, by definition, renders the *Tao* perpetually changing. That human beings attach themselves to knowledge and statements of truth, as well as to the senses, highlights the mistaken nature of their understanding of reality, according to the Chinese texts. Reality is the dynamic and enigmatic quality of the *Tao*, which is therefore, ineffable precisely because it is dynamic and enigmatic. Thus, unitary awareness represents the relinquishing of the

⁵⁸⁵ See pp. 221-225 above.

confusion generated by the false assumption that the human being can know reality through perception. Reality cannot be known, just experienced. It therefore, cannot be reflected upon, but lived spontaneously with mindlessness.

In light of this discussion, it is perhaps apparent that the Chinese texts have a powerful sense not simply of the possibility of the noumenal being integrated with the phenomenal, but the absolute necessity of this for the true freedom of the human being.

In the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*, true freedom is the consequence of the letting-go of attachment to the phenomenal world, which includes the letting-go of conceptual awareness and knowledge. As highlighted above, this letting-go does *not* equate to the realisation of the unreality of the phenomenal world; rather it pertains specifically to one's *consciousness* of the phenomenal world. By letting go of the distorted consciousness of conceptualisation, one is able to flow within the reality of the phenomenal world without living and operating through misconception.⁵⁸⁶ The allusion in the texts to the cleaning of one's mirror with regard to the purifying of the heart-mind provides an important insight into the reality of the phenomenal world, which stands independent of the human being's perception of its reality.⁵⁸⁷ The true man's heart-mind is so clear of blemish and transparent that it simply reflects reality as it is without projecting distorted images of it that arise through the conceptualisation of dualistic awareness. This reiterates the point made in Chapter Six that the *Lao Tzu* denotes no sense in which the human being plays a significant role in the workings of the universe. The text promotes the falling in line with the flow of the *Tao*, not so that

⁵⁸⁶ Hence, in the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*, a common metaphor for the heart-mind (*hsin*) of the sage is a mirror, for a mirror simply reflects what is without distortion. *The complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, transl. Watson, p.97: "The Perfect Man uses his mind like a mirror – going after nothing, welcoming nothing, responding but not storing."

⁵⁸⁷ Doeringer explains the significance of the mirror metaphor in the *Chuang Tzu* in the following way: "The enlightened mind is one in which the process of self-aware thought has stopped, 'so that consciousness is not discriminatory nor focused upon individualised forms. For only then can it mirror the formless, the ground out of which the formed emerges' (*Chuang-tzu*, 4:2.7a) and into which it passes" F.M. Doeringer: 'Imaging the Imageless', pp. 1-28, at 13).

the human being can fulfil a universal role, but rather to avoid the pain to the individual of trying to live and work against the natural flow of life.⁵⁸⁸

This contrasts starkly with Tillichian theology. Tillich's entire system is based upon the premise that humanity is the instrument of the divine, the bearer of spirit in the world, for the world. This is the consequence of the presence of the logos in the essential and existential composition of humanity. Moreover, in utter opposition to the view presented in the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*, for Tillich, reality *is* shaped by the perception of the human being. There is an intimate connection between the world and self, and the way in which the self reflects upon the world and acts within the world that determines the nature of the world itself. We have seen that this is so because the principles of the Divine life pulsate through the structure of finitude, and find expression through the logos structure of reality present in both the external world and the internal being of humanity.⁵⁸⁹

In view of this, to claim that reality is shaped by human perception is not to make a solipsistic statement. As established in Chapter Four and reiterated in our present discussion, the microcosmic hue of the relation between creaturely and divine life renders the human being the vehicle for divine actualisation, and human perception the means by which the potential of the divine life is realised.⁵⁹⁰

Thus, in antithesis to the Chinese texts considered above, for Tillich, human consciousness does, indeed, shape the reality of the phenomenal world, and history provides the context for, as well as the record of, the way in which it has been shaped. Time and space provide the circumstance and context within which the human being acts. These conditions of existence, along with causality and substance, are those which facilitate the process of actualisation of that which is potential. It is humanity, with the gift of logos – the power of reason - firmly rooted in its psyche, which is charged with

⁵⁸⁸ See p.256 above.

⁵⁸⁹ The idea of the Divine pulse providing the dynamic for the ontological structure of being was established in Chapter One (see pp. 17 – 27).

⁵⁹⁰ See p. 173-175 above.

the responsibility of making actual that which would otherwise remain potential. In short, the human being is the instrument of the divine, and the task of the former is to overcome the ambiguities of existence so that it may become an effective instrument. The symbol Jesus as the Christ is the means by which the human being is empowered to fulfil its responsibilities.

The contrast between the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* on the one hand, and Tillichian theology on the other in this respect appears to be so stark that it would seem to be impossible to utilise the theme of integration between the noumenal and phenomenal in the Chinese texts to help us to address the question currently being considered, namely: *in what way must consciousness of the Creator/creature relationship in Tillichian theology change, in order to overcome the sense of distinction between divine omnipotence and creaturely freedom without losing the essential nature of both?* To attempt to adopt the type of unitary awareness that is promoted in the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* with regard to the Tillichian understanding of the Creator/creature relationship would be to relinquish the essential nature of the creature as bearer of spirit. The creature would, therefore, cease to operate as the vehicle of divine actualisation in the world. This then, would not be a possible answer to the question under consideration.

However, perhaps the contrast is not as stark as it seems at first sight. Although the Chinese texts dismiss conceptualisation as the means to grasping the reality of the enigma of the *Tao*, they maintain an intimate connection between the phenomenal and the noumenal in so far as the macrocosmic *Tao* finds expression in the innate virtue (*te*) of every living thing, including the human being.⁵⁹¹

Likewise, as alluded to earlier in this chapter, Tillich maintains the intimate connection between the divine life and finite life through the logos, a connection that not only runs through the human being, but also every living thing. Life is described by Tillich as a multi-dimensional unity, in which the realms and dimensions that compose the universe

⁵⁹¹ *Chuang Tzu: A New Selected Translation*, Transl. Fung, p.9.

are dynamically interrelated. Key to their interrelatedness is the logos principle present in the world. Tillich argues that each realm is distinguished from others by the particular dimension that predominates, but that all dimensions are potentially present in each realm. Hence, the realm of the inorganic has the dimension of the spirit potentially present, although the spiritual dimension requires the realm of history to become actualised.⁵⁹² As established earlier in this thesis, the dimension of spirit requires the logos principle to find expression.⁵⁹³ It follows, therefore, that if the dimension of spirit is present as potential in every realm, then so is the logos principle. In short, the logos principle is innate to every realm of reality, just as the virtue (*te*) of the Chinese texts is present in every living thing in the universe.

There is therefore, a point of contact between Tillichian theology and the philosophies of the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* in this respect. The connection is the microcosmic/macrocosmic understanding of the interrelatedness of reality. Moreover, all three recognise the utterly dynamic nature of that reality.

However, the Chinese texts and Tillich part company in their understanding of the precise nature of that reality. While the Chinese texts denote the dynamic nature of reality in terms of enigma, and the consequential inability to grasp that reality through the wisdom of knowledge, Tillich describes the dynamism as one that is structured upon the logos principle, a dynamism therefore, that is not only accessible to the human being, whose psyche is structured by the same principle, but is also grasped and shaped by the human being.

In short, what distinguishes the position of the Chinese texts from that of Tillich with regard to reality is the former's willingness to adopt a far more macrocosmic centred vision of reality, and the latter's far more microcosmic vision. That is to say, the Chinese texts adopt a far more holistic approach, which places primary focus upon the reality of the macrocosmic *Tao*, rather than the human being. Thus, the *Lao Tzu* and the

⁵⁹² See p. 65 above.

⁵⁹³ See p. 66 above.

Chuang Tzu speak of the sage as one who lets go of self to harmonise with the flow of reality.

In contrast, Tillich promotes a far more critically reflective, self-conscious vision of reality, in which the starting point of his theology is the human situation and circumstance in time and space, and the macrocosm represents a projection out beyond the human being.

Both the Chinese texts and Tillich uphold the mystery of the macrocosm, but while the former embrace the mystery as part of the reality of human existence, Tillich insists upon detaching the mystery from human reality by placing it in a realm that is inaccessible to the finite creature, except through the mediation of symbols. In other words, while the Chinese texts promote the capacity for the human being to merge with the mystery of the macrocosm, Tillich denies this capacity as innate to the human being and upholds the need for mediation between the reality of human existence and the mystery of the divine. Thus, the Chinese texts promote an ontology that is integrated with cosmology,⁵⁹⁴ while Tillich promotes an ontology that is qualitatively distinct from cosmology.

While both the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* on the one hand, and Tillich on the other speak of the importance of integration, there is a subtle distinction between their respective perspectives on the nature of such integration. For the Chinese texts, the human being falls in line with the flow of the dynamic reality of the enigmatic *Tao*, and to do so, requires the relinquishing of the quest for knowledge in preference for the spontaneity of intuitive wisdom, attained through the process of letting-go of attachment to the phenomenal world. Due to the intimate connection between ontology and cosmology in the Chinese texts, letting go of the phenomenal affords access to the noumenal. Hence, integration in terms of these Chinese texts means harmonisation between one's heart-mind (*hsin*) and the *Tao* to permit the enigmatic flow of the *Tao* to travel unimpaired through one's entire being. Such integration requires a clearing of

⁵⁹⁴ See, for example, p.217 above.

blockages that are physical, emotional, mental and spiritual, so that one's being becomes a clear channel for the flow of the *Tao*. The effect is an integration of being and doing that is so total, there is no distinction between the actor and the action that is being performed;⁵⁹⁵ this is the attainment of *wei-wu-wei*.⁵⁹⁶

Tillich promotes the responsibility of humanity for the universe in which it is situated, a responsibility given through its role as bearer of spirit in and for the world. Thus, for Tillich, integration pertains to the presence of the dimension of spirit in the human being, afforded through the logos structure of the human psyche. Integration pertains to the coming together of the drive of eros with the structure of reason,⁵⁹⁷ which is achieved through the unifying function of the dimension of spirit. However, in stark contrast to the Chinese texts, although the integrative process takes place in the phenomenal world, for Tillich, total integration is not directly achievable for the human being because the phenomenal realm in which the human being is situated is ontologically separated from the noumenal realm. Thus, the integration of which Tillich speaks is necessarily mediated through the symbol of Jesus as the Christ, which links the phenomenal with the noumenal and the microcosm with the macrocosm.⁵⁹⁸

What can be concluded is that the holistic focus of the Chinese texts accommodates a total and unmediated integration of the human being. In contrast, Tillich's focus upon the human situation promotes an integration that is based more upon human incompleteness than innate capacity. Although Tillich explicitly alludes to a holistic understanding of reality in his discussion of the multi-dimensional unity of life, and has implicit in his system a microcosmic-macrocosmic cosmology,⁵⁹⁹ his insistence upon the ontological separation between the realms of the phenomenal and noumenal inhibits this holistic vision and prevents his cosmology from finding full expression.

⁵⁹⁵ Loy, 'Wei-Wu-Wei: Non-dual Action,' p.73.

⁵⁹⁶ See discussion of *wei-wu-wei* in Ch.5, pp.221-225 above.

⁵⁹⁷ See p.67 above.

⁵⁹⁸ See pp.140, 141 above.

⁵⁹⁹ Cosmology of this nature is inevitably holistic, for central to it is the understanding of the presence of the whole, i.e. the macrocosm, within the part, i.e. the microcosm.

In light of this discussion, then, how can the Chinese texts under consideration help us to seek the answer to the question raised earlier, namely: *in what way must consciousness of the Creator/creature relationship in Tillichian theology change, in order to overcome the sense of distinction between divine omnipotence and creaturely freedom, without losing the essential nature of both?*

The texts bring into relief a microcosmic world-view in which there is no sense of anxiety between the microcosm and the macrocosm, and no sense of ontological distinction between the two. Moreover, the absence of distinction is so profound that they speak in cosmo-ontological and onto-cosmological terms, rather than in exclusively ontological terms with regard to the *Tao* and the human being.⁶⁰⁰ This is the novelty of their perspective, which has not been evident in our discussions of the previous microcosmic themes. From the medieval microcosmic perspective, although the wholly connected nature of the relation between man and God was upheld, there was also present the understanding that God was qualitatively different: God was perfection. Man as the microcosm was hampered by his corporeal body in his return to the Source, which tied him to the realms of time and space.⁶⁰¹ In the Renaissance perspective, the connection between God as macrocosm and man as microcosm remained, but the focus shifted more toward the possibility of human achievement and power to discover truths than had been previously the case.⁶⁰² In Tillichian theology, the microcosmic theme is further developed by highlighting the participatory and resonating relationship between the creature as sustained and the Creator as Sustainer. However, as with the microcosmic themes of the Renaissance and Middle Ages, Tillich preserves the qualitative distinction between the Creator and the creature. This he defines in terms of the ontological estrangement of the latter from the former and the gift of grace from the former to the latter.⁶⁰³

⁶⁰⁰ See p.220 above.

⁶⁰¹ See pp. 76 & 80 above.

⁶⁰² See p.110 above.

⁶⁰³ See p.158 above.

In the the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* however, for the first time, we see no sense of qualitative separation between the macrocosm and the microcosm. Rather, there is the possibility of harmonious accord between the two, in which the microcosm can connect up to the macrocosm. The result of this is the empowerment of the microcosm to perform acts to degrees of perfection that are not obtainable in a normal dualistic state of awareness. The Chinese texts show us that it is possible to live without a sense of separation from the macrocosm and the consequent anxiety and ambiguity that is generated by such a sense.

Tillich's microcosmic theme remains implicit because his theology lacks the sense of harmony that permeates the microcosmic/macrocosmic onto-cosmology of the Chinese texts. This is due to Tillich's insistence upon the inevitable separation between humanity and God. His insistence upon separation impedes the dynamism that permeates his system as a whole. For Tillich, the presence of the dimension of spirit in the human being affords creative resolution of the ambiguities of life, and drives the process of spiritual consciousness throughout history. However, part of the ambiguity in life is, for Tillich, the difficulty in living according to the Spirit. His argument for ontological separation between Creator and creature is the reason he gives for this difficulty. He suggests that the divine can only be glimpsed in life because of the existential state of estrangement.⁶⁰⁴

The logical necessity for ambiguity and estrangement is derived from the pride of place given in his system to reflective consciousness. For him, consciousness of self and world results from one's ability to stand apart from the world on the one hand, and from one's self on the other. This is a strictly dualistic awareness of reality, which produces a system that hinges upon the dynamic tension between polarities.

To reflect upon something means to stand apart from it. Thus, integral to reflective consciousness is the notion of distance and separation. As Tillich's system hinges upon

⁶⁰⁴ See p.177 above.

the reasoning faculty of the creature to bring to consciousness the dimension of spirit in the world, the notion of separation must remain integral to his system.

The emphasis in the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* upon non-reflective, unitary consciousness eliminates the need for separation. It establishes much more easily the resonance between the macrocosm and the microcosm as a consequence. Thus, it may be argued that examination of the microcosmic theme in the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* has shown Tillich's claim for the ontological nature of estrangement to be a false claim, or at least a claim not shared by all philosophical traditions standing outside that of Christianity. As such, Tillich has no authority for arguing the ontological nature of estrangement, for to give estrangement such a status is to establish it as a fact of life that is universal in nature and not limited to the perceptions of a particular tradition.

Now, our argument must proceed with great care at this point. Acknowledged earlier in this chapter is the profound difference between Tillich on the one hand, and the Chinese texts on the other with regard to the relationship between the noumenal and phenomenal. This difference hinges upon a fundamental difference in the recognition of the position of the human being in the world in which it lives. In the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*, the human being has no significant role to play in the world or in history, for reality is not a perception, but the dynamic enigma of the *Tao*. For this reason, the integrated nature of cosmology with ontology is far more easily established in these texts than it would be in the Tillichian system. If there is no universal purpose in the human conceptual faculty, but instead, a recognition of the reality of enigmatic dynamism as that which drives life, then, the relinquishing of the power and hold of conceptualisation in the normal world of sensory and dualistic perception is perhaps not only desirable, but also necessary, to allow the dynamic flow of reality to take its natural course, unimpeded by human misconception. Thus, the relinquishing of the potent status of the human being in history and in existence in general leads to an ontology that naturally integrates with cosmology and dismisses the value of epistemology.

In stark contrast however, as we have already demonstrated, is Tillich's high valuation of the human being in existence. There *is* purpose in human life, and that results from the logos structure of the human psyche, which correlates with the logos structure of existence itself, and in turn, correlates with the Logos principle of the Divine life. For Tillich, the gift of the logos structure of the human psyche renders humanity the instrument of the divine, and as such, it *must* be used if the potential of the Creator is to be made actual in creation. The gift of logos is also the gift of creaturely freedom. Surely, then, in light of this, ontology - the *knowledge* of being - is absolutely pivotal in the process of actualisation that is existence? Surely, also, as a vital instrument in the knowledge of being, critical reflection, i.e. epistemology, which is not only absent from the texts of the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*, but also somewhat demeaned, is key in that process?

Tillich's insistence upon critical reflection and his high valuation of epistemology however, leads him in a direction that blinkers him from the powerful presence of the Divine pulse within creaturely life. His focus upon the existential responsibility of the human being blinds him to the presence of the power of the divine in existence. His sense of human freedom and responsibility overshadows the larger presence of the divine. To express this in the terminology used in this thesis, the sense of microcosmic/macrocosmic relation between creature and Creator is overshadowed by the sense of creaturely autonomy.

There is no suggestion here that Tillichian theology should move toward a Taoist sense of microcosm/macrocosm. To do so would be to ignore the profundity of the differences between the two perspectives. The former is based upon a powerful understanding of the role of human consciousness in the evolution of history, which is absent from the latter.

Instead, the suggestion is that to overcome the ambiguities and inconsistencies with regard to creaturely freedom and estrangement, it is necessary for Tillich to acknowledge far more explicitly than he does the creaturely connection with the Creator, so that the divine life, shown by the microcosmic theme implicit in his

theology to pulsate through the life of the creature, may do so far more strongly than it does in his system as it stands.

Consideration of the Chinese texts has shown that Tillich's claim for the ontological nature of estrangement should not necessarily be accepted as the irrefutable fact of life that Tillich wishes us to believe.

Let us return to the question currently under consideration, i.e. *in what way must consciousness of the Creator/creature relationship in Tillichian theology change, in order to overcome the sense of distinction between divine omnipotence and creaturely freedom, without losing the essential nature of both?* It is perhaps increasingly clear that the key to the answer lies in the presence of the microcosmic theme underlying Tillich's system. For that theme to find full voice in Tillich's system, it is necessary to find a way of resolving his insistence upon the theme of separation. From what has been argued above, it would appear that in order to do this, it is necessary to find a way of going beyond reflective consciousness, which is strictly dualistic in nature.

Separation: the Cause of Tillichian Ambiguity

According to the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*, harmony is achieved when the being and doing of an individual fall into alignment both with each other, and with the external environment of the macrocosm. This is the dynamic state expressed in the term, the action of non-action (*wei-wu-wei*).⁶⁰⁵

In Tillich's system the difficulty in being fully human lies in the ambiguities of life. To be fully human means to be free - to live creatively by transcending the ambiguities of life. But could it be that these ambiguities are created by Tillich's insistence upon his cool, reflective, rational approach? Could it be that the difficulty Tillich sees in being

⁶⁰⁵ See pp.222-225 above.

human is derived from his disproportionately high valuation of epistemology in relation to the concern shown in his system for uncritical experience, instinct and intuition?

The Chinese tradition has demonstrated the importance of living through one's heart-mind (*hsin*). To live in such a way is to act intuitively, instinctively and spontaneously in harmonious accord with the *Tao* as it flows through one's entire being, including the physical body, the emotions and the spirit.⁶⁰⁶

Reflective consciousness, in contrast, emphasises the head of the human being without a commensurate valuation of other aspects of the organism, such as direct unself-conscious experience and intuition. Where Tillich does make reference to the non-rational aspects of the human being, he tends to depict them as being controlled by cognition. For example, he states:

Emotion is the vehicle for receiving cognition. But the vehicle is far from making the content itself emotional. The content is rational, something to be verified, to be looked at with critical caution... No union of subject and object is possible without emotional participation.⁶⁰⁷

Here, although he recognises emotion as playing a role in the integration of subject and object, it is a role that confirms the supremacy of cognition in the process of integration.

⁶⁰⁶ The term 'spirit' in the context of the Chinese texts under examination should not be interpreted in the Tillichian sense of the term. Watson uses the term "Spirit Storehouse" in his translation of *Chuang Tzu* Ch.5 and explains this expression as "a Taoist term for the mind" (*The Complete works of Chuang Tzu*, transl. Watson, p.74.). Chan translates 'spirit' as *shen* in Chinese, and suggests that in the *Lao Tzu*, *shen* pertains both to the connection between human energy and that of the *Tao*. (A.K.L.Chan, A Tale of Two Commentaries: 'Ho-shang-kung and Wang Pi on the Lao-tzu', L.Kohn & M. LaFargue (eds.), *Lao Tzu & the Tao-te-ching* (State University of New York Press, Albany 1998), p.93. The connection between spirit (*shen*) and *Tao* is developed more clearly in Traditional Chinese Medicine and the ancient breathing art of Qi Gong. There, spirit (*shen*) has both pre-natal and post-natal aspects, as well as microcosmic and macrocosmic aspects. In view of the complexity and ambiguity of the term, it lies beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the term any further. The purpose of making reference to the term here is simply to highlight the Chinese texts' far more holistic and integrated understanding of life in relation to the *Tao* compared with Tillichian theology.

⁶⁰⁷ Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol.1, p.98.

Tillich's high valuation of the faculty of reason finds particularly clear expression in his insistence upon the gulf generated between *dreaming innocence* and post-Fall consciousness. This gulf, expressed by the term *ontological estrangement*, perhaps suggests Tillich's fear of the unconscious. Tillich equates *dreaming innocence* with unconsciousness and although he argues that this is the reservoir from which consciousness draws, his insistence upon the ontological estrangement that the Fall symbolises would seem to reveal his wish not to draw too much from such a reservoir. The theme of estrangement effectively establishes a safe haven for conscious reflection, where the human reasoning faculty can reign supreme as the bearer of spirit for the world.

Tillich's suggestion that encounter of the divine can only be fragmentary ensures the safety of the faculty of reason from a deluge of unconsciousness that might threaten to overwhelm it. Let us have access to the divine, yes, but please Lord, let it only be a trickle. His symbol system provides the channel through which the divine life finds expression in creaturely life, but because this system is entrenched in the faculty of reason and language, the extent to which Spirit imbues creaturely life is determined by the creature. It is necessary to expand upon this assertion a little. How does Tillich's symbol system enable the creature to do this?

In Chapter Three, the significance of Tillich's symbol system was discussed. A symbol is the means of accessing the divine that dwells in our hidden depths.⁶⁰⁸ This it does by virtue of its two qualities: firstly, it points to the power or meaning that lies beyond the immediacy of the physical aspect of the symbol itself. Secondly, it participates in that power or meaning toward which it points. For Tillich, a symbol springs spontaneously from the depths of the collective unconscious. It therefore, has the capacity to unlock the dimension of depth in reality, and to open up this dimension both in the world and in the soul of an individual.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁸ See p.133 above.

⁶⁰⁹ Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, p.57.

Thus, the symbol mediates the subject-object correlation. Through the symbol's mediation, a process of integration begins between the inner and outer aspects of the human being. In short, the symbol acts as the channel between the potential that is unconsciousness and actuality that is consciousness. It acts as the channel for communion between the Creator and the creature.

By defining symbol as participating in meaning and pointing beyond itself toward the depth of meaning, Tillich affirms symbol as a tool of reflective consciousness. The power of the symbol lies in its entrenchment in reflective thought. The power of the divine in the depths of the human unconscious speaks through human consciousness by means of the symbol.

His symbol system reiterates his insistence upon separation. There is no direct accessing of the unconscious aspect of our creatureliness; it may only be accessed through the controlling influence of conscious reflection, of which the symbol is a tool. Tillich's high valuation of the human faculty of reason shows his theology to demand that the ground of being speaks our language. In this way, his symbol system enables the creature to regulate the extent to which the divine life can find expression in creaturely life.

This use of symbolism contrasts starkly with that used in the *Lao Tzu*. In Chapter Five, although reference was made to Doeringer's drawing of parallels between Tillich's use of symbol and the symbolism of the *Lao Tzu*, this thesis argued that Tillich's use of symbolism was more in line with that of Cusanus than that of the *Lao Tzu*. It was suggested that both Cusanus and Tillich shared a sense of the mediatory role of symbolism to point toward that which lies qualitatively removed from the realm of existence.⁶¹⁰ In contrast, the symbolism of the *Lao Tzu* was shown to be intentionally illogical and paradoxical, the means by which the symbol functioned as a tool for shocking the reader into recognition of the inadequacy of conceptual thought.⁶¹¹ The non-rational nature of the symbolism of the Chinese text highlighted the need to let go

⁶¹⁰ See p.210 above.

⁶¹¹ *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, transl. Watson, p.6.

of conceptualisation in the process of integration. This process was one that was unmediated and wholly accessible to the human being.

In stark contrast, Tillich's emphasis upon symbolism as the mediator of meaning emphasises Tillich's high valuation of the faculty of reason and conceptualisation. Its mediatory role accentuates Tillich's insistence upon the qualitative gulf between the realms of the human and the divine, and the consequent incompleteness of the human being in existence.

The symbolism of the Chinese texts alludes to a process of integration in which the human being expands out beyond the confines of dualistic awareness into a dynamic state in which an individual functions in total harmony with the dynamic power of the macrocosm. Thus, the Chinese symbolism expresses the holistic understanding of human existence in relation to the macrocosm, and provides further illustration of the cosmo-ontology/onto-cosmological nature of reality. Unlike Tillich's system, integration with the macrocosm does not leave the individual with a sense of incompleteness. Instead, integration empowers the individual.

The Partial Nature of Tillich's Integration

Tillich makes reference to spontaneity in his system. He states:

a reaction to a stimulus is spontaneous if it comes from the centred and self-related whole of a being.⁶¹²

He claims that the relationship between spontaneity and law is analogous to that between freedom and destiny: to be spontaneous is to act in full accord with the

⁶¹² Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol.1, p.185.

structure of one's being.⁶¹³ As the law of the human being is based upon the rational structure of the creature, spontaneity is the acting of a being that has become centred and whole through the resonance between one's inner rational structure and the external rational structure of the world.

From this, it would appear that Tillich's understanding of spontaneity is not far removed from that found in the Chinese texts. As discussed in Chapter Five, spontaneity (*ziran*) in the *Chuang Tzu* is a dynamic state in which the sage is able to respond instinctively to any situation through an awareness that has expanded beyond the limits of normality. Both imply that spontaneity is the effect of integration, and both suggest that there is an integrating principle that facilitates this. In the Chinese texts, virtue (*te*), the microcosmic expression of the *Tao*, permits the human being to integrate with the macrocosmic flow of the *Tao*; for Tillich it is logos, the structure of reason.

However, in contrast to the Chinese texts, which depict the spontaneous nature of sagely integration,⁶¹⁴ Tillich insists upon the mediation of the symbol system to bring about integration of the internal self and external world.

Tillich does not permit human integration to be so complete that experience of the divine is spontaneous. His insistence upon the mediating role of symbol establishes that human integration remains only partial. The gulf between the creature and Creator is unbridgeable for the creature, despite the divine integrating principle of logos residing in the very structure of the creature's being. Despite his insistence that reason pertains to one's whole being, and not simply to one's mind, his refusal to allow spontaneous experience of the divine to be unmediated betrays the fact that his theology pays only lip service to the presence of the logos structure in the entire organism of the human being. His insistence upon the importance of reflective consciousness as the expression of logos undermines the presence of the logos structure in non-reflective human experience.

⁶¹³ Ibid.

⁶¹⁴ See p.228 above.

Tillich's sense of integration lacks experiential impact upon the individual. The integration of which he speaks does not happen within the individual, but in some abstract, intangible midway point between the inner being of the individual and their external world. What is more, it requires a third element to bring it about. Thus, Tillich's sense of integration is not rooted within the human creature at all; it hovers close to it, but it does not work within it.

If the creature's function in life is to act as bearer of Spirit, as Tillich claims, and if the dimension of spirit is activated through the creature's capacity to transcend the ambiguities of life, then it is necessary to speak in very concrete terms, not in abstract notions. Reflective thought must be anchored by the concrete circumstance of personal experience and feeling. The integration between self and world must be exemplified in the actual life of a particular human being, not in the theoretical life of 'the creature'. To speak of the human creature accessing its depths is to speak in an abstract way. For that to have any meaning whatsoever, it must be pinned down to the reality of individual people experiencing the effects of accessing their personal depths.

Tillich, indeed, realised the importance of situating integration within a particular human being and therefore, of grounding his theology in concrete circumstance. This he did by means of the symbol, Jesus as the Christ. This is the pivotal symbol in his system that integrates the vertical dimension of divine life with the horizontal dimension of historical creaturely life.⁶¹⁵ However, his insistence upon the symbolic nature of Jesus as the Christ reiterates his own failure to become integrated through this figure, for we have seen that a symbol is the mediator between the potentiality of our unconsciousness and the actuality of consciousness. With Jesus as the Christ as a symbol, Tillich repeats his sense of the separation between unconsciousness and consciousness. The symbolic nature of this figure shows that its function is a mediating one, and mediation is needed only when there is separation or estrangement between two parties. His insistence upon Jesus as the Christ as the perfect symbol that fulfills all others brings integration closer to the human being, but the fact that it remains a

⁶¹⁵ See pp.139-141 above.

symbol indicates that even this is not powerful enough to overcome the estrangement that Tillich insists upon.

He maintains that only Jesus as the Christ is integrated because only this figure embodies the concrete circumstance of Jesus of Nazareth and the divine authority of Jesus Christ.⁶¹⁶ Yet, if Tillich is able to assert that we are all grounded in being itself and that we live with the divine in our depths, why is it not possible for Jesus as the Christ to be integral to us, rather than a mediating channel for us?

The salvific function of Jesus as the Christ is one of integration; Tillich himself defines salvation as making whole, making complete.⁶¹⁷ If Jesus as the Christ provides salvation in terms of making whole that which is separated, and if that which is separated is the conscious life of the creature from the unconscious depths of its being, as Tillich asserts in his discussion of the Fall, then salvation means integrating consciousness with unconsciousness. Through such integration there would no longer be the need for the mediating function of the symbol.

Therefore, if Jesus as the Christ is the Saviour, he does not do so as a symbol. Rather, the power of his presence within the soul of the human being and within the external world functions to connect human consciousness with its unconscious depths. Such a connection would facilitate the spontaneity in the creature that is lacking in the estranged creature depicted in Tillich's system.

Tillich's claim that the power of Jesus as the Christ is a mediating symbol reveals his own failure to accept the integrative power of this figure. It perhaps betrays the fact that Tillich's inner being was not so moved by that power that he could let go of his hold upon conscious reflection to allow himself to act spontaneously and fall into his own divine depths, knowing that the Saviour was there to ensure that he did not fall into oblivion.

⁶¹⁶ See p.139 above.

⁶¹⁷ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol.1, p.146.

Tillich's insistence upon symbol as the means by which the depths of being are accessed portrays the distance that he must have felt between those depths and the conscious life of the individual. To claim that the unconscious is the reservoir from which consciousness draws and, at the same time, to suggest that mediation is needed to draw from that reservoir reveals the extent to which his own consciousness perhaps needed protection from his unconscious depths. He must have been afraid of those depths, for why else would he insist upon separation, if he knew that his consciousness depended upon the sustenance of the power residing in them?

In the Chinese texts, we have learned of no sense of fear with regard to the power of the *Tao*. On the contrary, readers are shown the way in which the *Tao* empowers the sage by flowing through him as he aligns his whole microcosmic being with the macrocosm. The holistic nature of reality presented in these texts renders unnecessary allusions to fear with regard to the macrocosm.

Tillich depicts the ineffability of God by asserting that God "...is that which lies beyond the polarity of finitude and infinite self-transcendence".⁶¹⁸ By using this expression however, Tillich, does more than express God's ineffability: effectively, he removes God from finite reference. He turns his back upon God: the mind cannot conceive of the infinite beyond the infinite and therefore, God is out of our frame of reference.

In the Chinese texts, in contrast, the ineffability of the *Tao* is openly acknowledged and accepted without any sense of foreboding. This ineffability is not so much a comment upon the *Tao*, as a comment upon the human limitation to comprehend.⁶¹⁹ Furthermore, despite its incomprehensibility, the *Tao* can be experienced.⁶²⁰

⁶¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.191.

⁶¹⁹ *Lao Tzu*, transl. Ch'en p.3: "Since Lao Tzu's *Tao* by definition cannot be restricted, there is no way that he can use language to designate it while preserving the scope of its existence."

⁶²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.16.

This would appear to contrast starkly with Tillich's removal from the finite frame of reference of the infinite "beyond the polarity of finitude and infinite self-transcendence".⁶²¹ In an attempt to express the immanence of God, Tillich speaks of the divine as Creator and thus, offers a divine face that appears somewhat less ineffable than the infinite beyond the infinite.

The Chinese texts succeed in integrating the ineffability of the *Tao* with its presence in the world far more effectively than does Tillich's system because the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* recognise the capacity of the human being to develop consciousness to universal proportions, not as a means of dissolving the self, but as a means of functioning more powerfully as a human being. In contrast, Tillich's insistence upon the immanence of God in our depths on the one hand, and the gulf between the unconsciousness of those depths and consciousness on the other, demonstrates the clumsiness of Tillich's method.

To eliminate the clumsiness, it is necessary to relinquish the excessive control enjoyed by the faculty of reason in his system, to allow the potential lying in the depths of humanity to find full expression. The grasping and shaping,⁶²² so characteristic of Tillichian theology, evoke images of control and fear; we grasp something when we do not want to let it go, when we want to keep it for ourselves. We shape something in our own image because that is the image with which we are familiar.

However, at the same time, the relinquishing of control does not mean a letting-go to the extent that all reflective consciousness disappears. This is the way promoted by the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*.⁶²³ However, this is not appropriate for Tillichian theology, entrenched as it is in the western Christian tradition. In Christian terms, to let go to such an extent would mean the relinquishing of the reason that structures our being. This, in turn, would mean the impossibility of spontaneous action in the world in

⁶²¹ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol.1, p.146.

⁶²² Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol.1, p.75.

⁶²³ "Forget distinctions. Leap into the boundless and make it your home!" (*The Complete Works of Chuang-tzu*, Transl. Watson, p.49.)

the Tillichian sense of spontaneity. To do so would be not to function as a human being, for the role of humanity is, for Tillich, to act as bearer of the dimension of spirit to the world.

In contrast, the Chinese texts, with their powerful sense of onto-cosmology, coupled with their lack of interest in human purpose in and for the world,⁶²⁴ are able to let go without losing human identity. This is possible because the human being functions through the universe and likewise, the universe functions through the human being. There is total interrelation and no suggestion of human uniqueness as part of its identity.

In short, the total relinquishing of reflective consciousness in the Chinese texts leads to a human freedom that is fundamentally different from that proffered by Tillich. Freedom for the Chinese texts means intentionless, spontaneous accord with the flow of the *Tao*. The macrocosmic *Tao* drives the actions of the sage because reality is not determined by human consciousness, but rather by the *Tao*.⁶²⁵

In contrast, in Tillichian terms, freedom is the spontaneous action that is produced from the centred and self-related whole of a being.⁶²⁶ As such, it is the expression of the integration of the drive of eros and the structure of reason within an individual, which is also the integration of the inner being of individuals with their external function.

Thus, the contrast with the Chinese notion of freedom, once again, as with other themes discussed in this chapter, is one of focus. For Tillich, integration and freedom focus upon the individual - the microcosm - and its function within the macrocosm, while for the Chinese texts, the focus is upon the macrocosm, not the individual. Once again, the reason for this contrast lies in the fundamentally divergent views of reality between the

⁶²⁴ “Whoever takes the empire and wishes to do anything to it I see will have not respite. The empire is a sacred vessel and nothing should be done to it. Whoever does anything to it will ruin it; whoever lays hold of it will lose it. (*Lao Tzu*, xxix,66, cited in *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching*, transl. Lau, p.xxviii.)

⁶²⁵ In less dualistic terms, the intent of the sage is so integrated with the flow of the *Tao* that the two cannot be differentiated; all distinctions have dissolved.

⁶²⁶ P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol.1, p.158.

Chinese texts and Tillich. For the Chinese texts, the macrocosmic *Tao* is reality; for Tillich, human perception, as the vehicle of the divine, determines reality.

However, while accepting that a total letting-go of reflective consciousness is inappropriate in Tillichian theology, the elimination of the clumsiness of his approach requires a much stronger sense of the resonance between the creature's faculty of reason and the unconscious reservoir that fuels it. There must be a sense in which the flow between the two is much more powerful than a mere trickle.

The question remains as to how the resonance and flow can be made more powerful. Although we have learned in the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* of the powerful resonance experienced by the sage in the dynamic state of non-action (*wu-wei*), it is not possible to suggest that the Chinese texts in this respect can lead Tillichian theology toward a more powerful theme of resonance and flow. The tension in Tillich's system and his insistence upon the importance of the faculty of reason is not simply his own idiosyncrasy; it is a tension rooted in the western Christian tradition, in which he was steeped. Thus, the solution must be one that is compatible with, and meaningful to, that very tradition.

The Chinese heritage of non-reflective consciousness and function is certainly not compatible with the Christian valuation of the unique role of humanity in the process of actualisation. For this reason, it is clear that the solution to Tillich's problem must be one that is compatible with the western heritage of reflective consciousness, creature/Creator relationship and historical process.

Tillich's theology emphasises the resonating relationship between creature and Creator. It is a relationship of mutual participation expressed in terms of grace and faith: the Creator, through grace, reaches out to the creature to bridge the gap, unbridgeable by the creature, which is generated by the Fall. The correct response to the gracious divine act is to live a life of faith. Through faith, the ambiguities of life are transcended, for faith is the expression of the activation of the dimension of the spirit in life. Faith, however, cannot eliminate the ambiguities of life, the products of the ontological nature

of estrangement. Thus, for Tillich, all that faith empowers the human creature to do is to live life courageously. It provides the creature with the 'courage to be.'⁶²⁷ In stark contrast to the Chinese texts, despite Tillich's theoretical understanding of spontaneity, there is no reference to joyous and spontaneous living in his system.

Thus, Tillich's understanding of faith highlights the separation between the divine and the creature. It suggests that, once again, God is with us, but not totally. God is clarity, but the human being lives a life of ambiguity. We can access God's clarity, but only to help reduce the mist that is the reality of life because of the ontological nature of our estrangement from God. He claims we should live life in faith, but his system denies us the opportunity to do that because his insistence upon ontological separation means that God cannot be with us every step of the way, even though he asserts that God is the ground of our being and is present in our depths. Here again, is the inconsistency in his system.

Tillich's insistence upon creaturely estrangement means that we cannot have faith in ourselves because we are estranged from our root of being. Just as the integrative power of Jesus as the Christ is prevented from working from within, this fundamental estrangement denies us the possibility of resting in ourselves.

Effectively, being human means knowing that we are not complete. Thus, our faith in God is a projection out in search of completeness, from the creaturely position of incompleteness. Our faith in the light of estrangement is not absolute trust in the solid root within ourselves, but a hope and a wish projected out in fear and anxiety. There is little wonder then, that the language of God is of a grasping and controlling nature, for what we seek is that rock which holds us as we drown in our estrangement. We need to have that rock.

⁶²⁷ P. Tillich, *The Courage to Be*, (Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1952), pp.178-190.

The need to have something is a further demonstration of separation. It indicates a lack of integration within a being, for the desire to have is an admission of something lacking within ourselves.

Removing the Theme of Estrangement from Tillich's System

Now, if, as was proposed earlier, the notion of ontological separation were to be removed from Tillich's system, what would be the effect on his ideas of faith and grace? If I were to awake tomorrow knowing that there was no longer an unbridgeable gulf between my Creator and me, what would happen to my faith? Would I claim that I was now as powerful as God? Would I see no distinction between God and me?

The answer to that would depend upon the way in which my life changed as a result of this discovery. It would depend not upon rational discourse, but upon experiential circumstance. If I felt nothing different as a consequence of this knowing, then perhaps I would learn to despise the Creator to whom I had attributed so much power when I had believed myself to be in estrangement.

However, if the recognition of the lack of estrangement were to result in the overwhelming presence of the divine in my life, then I would fall to my knees and rejoice. The power of the presence of the divine would show me my finitude and my powerlessness. I would not need a theological discourse to point this out. That very power and presence would not allow me to presume my equality with God. However, unlike rational discourse, the experience of the divine would comfort me in my powerlessness because my weakness would be expression of my resonance with the strength of the divine.

If the presence of the Creator were to be felt through the realisation of the lack of estrangement, I would no longer need to *have* faith, for I could live *in* faith. Equally, I would no longer need to *have* the symbol of Jesus as the Christ because I would be able

to live *in* the power of that figure. If I knew my Creator to reside in my depths, I could trust in myself as a human being to be a creature of God. Faith would therefore, cease to be an external projection and would become an internal reality. Faith would become an expression of my very being and, as a consequence, my actions in life could become fully integrated with the experience of God in my depths. My being and doing could integrate and I would be able to live spontaneously as bearer of spirit in the world. Through such integration I would live in completeness; in short, I would enjoy wholeness - salvation.

The removal of Tillich's insistence upon ontological estrangement would not threaten the ineffable status of the divine. Such a threat is the product of the limitations of reasoned discourse and strictly dualistic consciousness. It is the product of epistemology, which lacks the scope to extend beyond the limits of paradox. Reason must hold God at a distance in order to uphold God's ineffability. However, personal experience and intuition know no such limitation.

The removal of ontological estrangement allows God's ineffability to be felt in God's immanent presence. By removing the insistence upon estrangement, the voice of being itself may ring out loud and clear from our depths without being muffled by a theologian's fear of what he may hear.

In other words, to move beyond the controlling language employed by Tillich, it is necessary to let go; to let go of estrangement and thus, to let go of the protective barrier between conscious reflection and the unconscious depths of being. This, in turn, means letting go of the predominance of reasoned discourse over the intuitions coming from our unconscious depths. If Tillich is right when he claims that the logos structure is present in our entire being, then it will be as present in our intuition and instincts as it is in our faculty of reason.

This does not mean a saying goodbye to reason itself. On the contrary, to be human in Tillichian terms means to live in the dimension of spirit, which is rooted in the faculty of reason. What it does mean however, is that reason must learn to listen to intuition

and to be fuelled by it to such an extent that critical awareness in life becomes the product of divine guidance from the depths of our unconsciousness. Tillich himself intuited this and his discussion of the ontological and epistemological natures of reason illustrate this.⁶²⁸ However, his inability to live according to his system is revealed in his insistence upon separation between God and humanity, and human consciousness and unconsciousness.

Earlier, the following question was raised: *in what way must consciousness of the Creator/creature relationship in Tillichian theology change, in order to overcome the sense of distinction between divine omnipotence and creaturely freedom, without losing the essential nature of both?* Perhaps we are now in a position to answer it. To be distinct from something does not require that we live separately from that thing. If I ride a bike, I do not fear losing my identity in the process. What make something distinct from something else are the functions that distinguish them. In the case of the creature and the Creator, we have seen that Tillich intuited there to be a resonating relationship between both, in which the creature participates as the sustained and the Creator as the Sustainer. However, we have also seen that Tillich emphasises the role of the human being to act as bearer of spirit in the world, for the world. These two identities: the sustained and the bearer of spirit, must not be seen in isolation, but as an integrated unity.

The identity of the creature as the sustained relates to the being of the creature. The identity of bearer of spirit relates to the task of the creature. If the power of Jesus as the Christ as the Saviour means the power to make whole, then the function of the human being in and for the world can only be understood in terms of its relation to the Creator. In other words, the power of Jesus as the Christ as Saviour must be to integrate the being and doing of the creature: in terms of being, the creature must recognise itself as being sustained by its Creator. In terms of its function (its 'doing'), the creature must recognise its function to bear the divine Spirit in the world, for the world.

⁶²⁸ See pp.50-53 above.

Integration provides us with our identity in relation to God and in relation to the world. In other words, our purpose is derived from our connection to God and our involvement in the world. Separation from God impedes our purpose, for the flow of the divine Spirit becomes restricted and fragmentary, as Tillich maintains in his theology. The recognition of our identity as the sustained means that the divine function as Sustainer emanating from the depths of human unconsciousness finds full expression in the creature's activity in the world as bearer of spirit.

By letting go of the notion of separation expressed in Tillich's term *estrangement*, there is no dissolving of the conscious state of the creature into the unconscious abyss of the divine. On the contrary, the creature's consciousness is given a practical application; it is given a function – to be the vehicle of Spirit for the world. Moreover, it is not just given *a* function, but *the* very function that fulfills its entire nature as the sustained creature. By letting go of separation from its Creator, the creature is able to live as the microcosm of the divine, which implies a fulfilling of both creature and Creator, not a dissolving of distinction between them.

Fulfilment comes through function. By letting go of the fear of the unconscious depths, creature and Creator can connect through resonance; consciousness opens to the unconscious depths to be fuelled by it, and then converts that fuel into spontaneous spiritual living in the world, for the benefit of the world.

We have seen that the Chinese cook connects up to the macrocosm through his innate connection with the macrocosmic *Tao*, in order to extend his awareness beyond the limitations of normal everyday living, and to execute his skill with a degree of perfection not attainable in a normal dualistic state of awareness.⁶²⁹ Our suggested way of moving beyond the dualistic reflective consciousness evident in Tillich's system has been inspired by the microcosmic cosmology presented in the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*.

⁶²⁹ See pp.230-231 above.

However, we have also gone beyond the cosmology of the Chinese texts by accommodating in our suggestion the unique function of the human being as bearer of spirit in and for the world, so central in Tillichian theology and the Christian tradition in which he was entrenched.

In other words, the Chinese microcosmic/macrocosmic approach has helped to illuminate a way to integrate Tillichian notions of consciousness and unconsciousness. The result is the discovery of the possibility of a far more balanced relationship, in which consciousness does not run away from unconsciousness, but instead, moves toward it, and is able to do so by virtue of the presence of the logos structure in both. There is no dissolving of the former into the latter, but instead, an expanding of consciousness beyond the confines of reason, although always maintaining the critical awareness of human reason as the means by which the expanded consciousness functions within the world.

Through this approach, it becomes possible to live in far greater clarity than Tillich's theology permits. Clarity comes from the full and spontaneous realisation of our purpose as bearer of spirit, made possible by our recognition of the utterly sustained nature of our being. Just as the Chinese master cook can carve up the bullock in a dynamic state of non-action (*wu-wei*), in which his whole being is integrated with the macrocosm, so the human creature can learn to live in creative freedom, in which the effort of living in the tension of ambiguity is converted into the effortless flow of clarity. In such a life, it is not the *courage* to be that we find *through* faith, but rather the *joy* to be that we find *in* faith.

Conclusion

The objective of this chapter has been to address the question raised at the end of Part One of the thesis: *How would it be possible to assess the validity of Tillich's Christian assumption of the ontological nature of estrangement?* With this in mind, two main points have been argued: firstly, the microcosmic theme underlying Tillich's system reveals a contradiction in his theology with regard to creaturely freedom and his notion of ontological creaturely estrangement from the ground of being.

The microcosmic motif reveals the theme of dynamic resonance between the life of the divine and that of the creature, which characterises Tillich's system as a whole. His insistence upon the creature's freedom to choose between creative living and the surrendering of one's humanity however, contradicts its generally resonating hue. His insistence upon the ontological nature of creaturely estrangement from the ground of being is responsible for this contradiction and creates the tension and ambiguity present in both the content and structure of his system. Reflective and rational discourse, heavily employed by Tillich in both the structure and the content of his theology, is characterised by the making of distinctions and thus, the use of such a method promotes themes of separation.

Secondly, through the Chinese microcosmic theme, which offers no sense of estrangement between the human being as microcosm and the universe as macrocosm, Tillich's insistence upon the ontological nature of estrangement can be challenged. The Chinese microcosmic motif, as expressed through the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu*, contrasts in this respect with the two western expressions of microcosm that have been considered in this study: that of the Renaissance and that underlying Tillich's theology.

The Chinese microcosmic theme maintains the ineffable nature of the *Tao* without resorting to the theme of separation. At the same time, it is able to depict the presence of the *Tao* in the midst of life without having to grapple with inconsistency and

contradiction. This is achieved by emphasis upon the utter integration of the sage with the flow of the *Tao*, attained by the letting-go of attachment to the phenomenal world, including the relinquishing of attachment to reflective thought and conceptualisation.

The chapter however, warns the reader not to presume that the Chinese texts provide the answers to the inconsistencies inherent in Tillich's system. The very stark differences with regard to the understanding of the nature of reality find expression in the two fundamental differences in focus in their respective microcosmic themes. While the Chinese texts' focus is far more macrocosmic, reflecting their understanding of reality in terms of the enigmatic flow of the *Tao*, the Tillichian focus is more microcosmic, echoing Tillich's emphasis upon the role of human perception in the grasping and shaping of reality. In view of this fundamental difference, any presumption as to the power of the Chinese texts directly to address the inconsistencies in Tillich's system is naïve and ill-advised.

Instead, the microcosmic theme of the Chinese texts, in which there has been found no sense of ontological estrangement for the human being, has enabled the researcher to dare to challenge Tillich's presupposition as to the ontological nature of creaturely estrangement. Proposed in this respect has been a shift in emphasis away from the ontological nature of estrangement toward a much stronger emphasis upon the ontological nature of the creature's connection with the Creator. This was not possible for Tillich because of his own lack of integration.

The Chinese theme of non-action (*wu-wei*), with its emphasis upon the alignment of the being and doing of the sage and his connection to the macrocosm, has brought into relief a lack of conscious recognition in Tillich's system of the importance of the alignment between being and doing. That he intuited the importance of such integration has been revealed by the microcosmic theme found to underlie his theology. That such a theme was not overtly expressed revealed his failure consciously to express what he intuited and thus, revealed his own lack of integration.

This chapter has established that Tillich's assumption of the ontological nature of estrangement is not validated by his system as a whole. Neither is it validated by our investigation into the Chinese texts, for they have been found to communicate no sense of the ontological estrangement that Tillich insists upon. The tension and ambiguity generated by his insistence upon estrangement contradicts the microcosmic theme underlying his system and the principles of dynamic harmony and resonance that characterise that theme.

The chapter has gone on to consider the implications of removing the theme of estrangement for the Tillichian understanding of the creature/Creator relationship, and for the relationship between human consciousness and unconsciousness. It has suggested that its removal would lead neither to a dissolving of consciousness into the depths of the unconscious, nor to an overpowering of the creature by the Creator. On the contrary, it would lead to an expanding of consciousness, in which the critical awareness of the rational faculty of the mind would still maintain its vital function, but would lose its imperious status over the unconscious, which Tillich maintained in his theological system. As a consequence, the creature would not be *overpowered*, but *empowered* by its ability to access its unconscious depths, in which the sustaining power of the divine dwelt and found expression through the logos structure of the unconscious. The creature would then be in a position to recognise and accept its one essential function – to act as bearer of spirit for the world and, like the Chinese master cook enjoying the freedom and clarity of non-action (*wu-wei*), the ambiguities of life for the creature would be lifted by its recognition and acceptance of its ontological connection with God, the Creator and Sustainer.

Thesis Conclusion

This thesis set out to demonstrate an inconsistency at the ontological level in Paul Tillich's theological system. This was achieved by establishing the presence of a microcosmic theme underlying his system. The theme established Tillich's powerful sense of the intimate connection between divine life and human life, in which the rhythm of the divine life became the dynamic ground of being of the creature, imbuing the creature with life. This dynamic interrelation he communicated through his *method of correlation* and dialectical approach. The microcosmic theme revealed the intimacy between the Creator and creature, to the extent that the creature's being was grounded in the very pulse of the life of the Creator.

In light of this intimacy, established by the microcosmic theme, Tillich's insistence upon creaturely estrangement at the ontological level was shown to be problematic. The thesis questioned how estrangement could be ontological if the very being of the creature was so grounded in the life of the divine. It argued that the separation from the divine life, implied in Tillich's notion of ontological estrangement, was tantamount to a denial of the nature of human being, namely, being grounded in the divine. This had implications for Tillich's understanding of creaturely freedom.

The thesis observed that Tillich's system, as it stood, was ambiguous with regard to creaturely freedom; on the one hand, the creature was apparently free to choose between being and non-being at every moment, and on the other, to be free creatively to transcend the ambiguities of life. The thesis argued that in light of the creature's grounding in the life of the divine, the human being could not be free to choose between being and non-being; to be human was to be connected to the divine. Thus, the microcosmic theme raised serious doubts about the value of ontological estrangement for Tillich's theological system as a whole.

In acknowledgement of the consistency between Tillichian thinking in this respect and the Christian tradition's emphasis upon the qualitative separation between humanity and God, the thesis sought to consider the validity of Tillich's claims for ontological estrangement by stepping out of the Christian tradition and into the Chinese tradition of *Tao*. This was done by examining the *Tao* as communicated in two classical texts, *the Lao Tzu* and *the Chuang Tzu*. These texts were selected on the basis that they were widely acknowledged among Chinese scholars to be two of the most authoritative texts on the *Tao*, and central to the formulation of Taoist philosophy.⁶³⁰ Discovered through exploration of these texts was the absence of a sense of separation between the phenomenal world and the noumenal unity that created and sustained life.

The absence of a sense of separation between the human being as microcosm and the universe as macrocosm found expression in the texts' cosmo-ontological depiction of the *Tao*. The *Tao* was expressed in terms of the dynamic process of differentiation and return to non-differentiation. The texts communicated the *Tao* in terms of both the universal force that worked toward differentiation of reality, and the process of things as they returned to their origin. As a microcosm of the macrocosmic *Tao*, the human being was able to live in synchronistic accord with the *Tao*, for the *Tao* – the dynamic process of life – was innate to the human being as much as it was innate to every living thing.⁶³¹

The texts also emphasised the non-causal implications of such synchronisation. To be so synchronised with the *Tao* required the letting-go of causal awareness, characterised by discriminating, conceptual thinking. Once such consciousness had been relinquished, it would be possible to enter the dynamic state of non-action (*wu-wei*), in which there was no sense of distinction between the actor and the action being performed. In short, non-action (*wu-wei*) represented the utter synchronisation between internal being and external doing, to the extent that being and action could become fully integrated. The effect of such integration was spontaneous acting in life.⁶³²

⁶³⁰ See p.186 above.

⁶³¹ See p.238 above.

⁶³² See p.228 above.

Thus, the consideration of the Chinese texts brought to light a philosophical tradition which was based upon a microcosmic/macrocosmic cosmology, in which ontology was integral to cosmology, and vice versa. Such integration was possible because of the absence of the sense of separation between the phenomenal and the noumenal.

In light of the exploration of these Chinese texts, the thesis argued that it was possible to challenge Tillich's insistence upon the ontological nature of estrangement. To suggest that estrangement was ontological was to make an assertion that would be applicable to all of human existence, not simply to those within the Christian fold. That there was evidence of a tradition in which estrangement played no role whatsoever, provided the thesis with the grounds for challenging Tillich in this respect.

Moreover, in view of the fact that the microcosmic theme, argued to underlie Tillich's theological system, highlighted an implicit sense of holism in his theology, Tillich's insistence upon the ontological estrangement between human being and the ground of being appeared to create tension and ambiguity in his system. In short, the thesis argued that Tillich's insistence upon ontological estrangement prevented his system from communicating the wholeness and dynamic integration between the divine and finitude that the microcosmic theme brought to the fore.

The reasons for Tillich's insistence upon ontological estrangement were attributed to his excessive valuation of dualistic, conceptual thought, at the expense of other human attributes, such as intuition.⁶³³ The thesis contended that inherent in the reflective nature of reasoned, conceptual discourse was the principle of separation, as reflection itself demanded the distinction to be drawn between object and subject. Thus, if reasoned discourse dominated the structure and content of a theological system, it would inevitably highlight the theme of separation, rather than integration.

Exploration of the Chinese texts demonstrated that integration meant harmony within the human organism at all levels – physical, emotional and spiritual - achieved through

⁶³³ See p.273 above.

synchronistic harmony between the individual and the environment, and the individual and the universe.⁶³⁴

Exploration of the *Tao* demonstrated the possibility of the microcosm of the human being resonating with the macrocosm without any sense of fear of the ineffable aspect of the macrocosm. On the contrary, the ineffability of the unitary aspect of the macrocosm was used to empower the microcosm, enabling the human being to perform creative acts in the phenomenal world. Moreover, empowerment was achieved through the relinquishing of the need for dualistic thought.

Consideration of the *Tao* also revealed a great degree of resonance between the Chinese texts' communication of non-action (*wu-wei*) and spontaneity (*ziran*) and Tillich's system in terms of creative freedom and spontaneity. Both expressed the theme of integration.

In the Chinese texts, non-action (*wu-wei*) expressed the state of total integration, which went beyond normal sensory-consciousness. It was a state in which the microcosm of the individual integrated with the macrocosm to the point of dynamic unity. However, it was not a mystical evaporation of self, but rather, a highly functional state in which the individual was empowered through integration with the unitary nature of the macrocosm to perform actions that surpassed those possible in a normally conscious state. It was not a state of unconsciousness, but one of expanded sensory awareness, in which the function of the individual took on a higher level of performance. The utter integration of the individual meant that the performance was effortless and harmonious and thus, was spontaneous.

Creative freedom, in Tillichian terms was a balancing and a synchronising principle. In terms of balance, freedom meant the ability to live dynamically in relation to self and world. That meant the ability to let go of self in search of world, and to let go of world

⁶³⁴ See p.287 above.

in search of self. If there were resonance between both poles in this way, the human being would be able to grow in an integrated and therefore, balanced way.

In terms of synchronicity, the ability to let go of both world and self meant the power of world to influence self, and vice versa. Freedom therefore, referred to the synchronicity and balance between self and world. Such resonating dynamism was possible because of the logos structure of both self and world. Thus, logos became the vehicle for integration and the vehicle also for spontaneity, for spontaneity was the acting of a being that had become centred and whole through the resonance between the rational structure of inner self and the rational structure of the world.⁶³⁵

The parallels between the Chinese and Tillichian viewpoints in this respect were quite apparent: both emphasised integration as crucial for spontaneity. Both also highlighted the importance of resonance between the internal and external worlds of the human being and because of this, both evoked microcosmic imagery.

However, significant distinctions were also drawn between the two perspectives. While Tillich insisted upon the mediating role of the logos symbol as the channel through which integration was attained, the Chinese texts regarded integration to occur in a much more direct way, with no need for mediation between macrocosmic energies and those of the microcosm. Thus, Chinese spontaneity took on a much more instinctive hue, with the emphasis upon the unpremeditated aspect of spontaneity (*ziran*).

Tillich's view of spontaneity, in contrast, was of a more learned nature, acquired through the human being's learning in life. Although spontaneity, by definition, meant the acting according to impulse or natural law, Tillich's view implied that the natural law had first to be learned before the human being could act spontaneously.

⁶³⁵ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol.1, p.185.

This distinction demonstrated a fundamental and highly significant difference between the Chinese and Tillichian perspectives. It highlighted the Chinese texts' emphasis upon the human being as part of the natural order. No mediation was required in the Chinese perspective because the human being belonged totally to the natural order. The human being functioned within the natural order, and did not have a role to fulfil that set it in any way apart from nature.

In contrast, Tillich's insistence upon the mediating role of the logos symbol highlighted his valuation of the rational structure permeating both the human being and the natural order of the world. For Tillich, the unique function of the human being was to bring that structure to full consciousness in and for the world, and this uniqueness set it apart from other aspects of nature, although he also emphasised the importance of the ultimate multi-dimensional unity of all that lives.

In view of such a fundamental difference in perspective with respect to integration and spontaneity, the resonance between *wu-wei* as communicated through the Chinese texts and creaturely freedom in Tillichian terms was limited.⁶³⁶

However, what our exploration into the Chinese texts demonstrated was the existence of a philosophical tradition that was not based upon the primacy of rational, conceptual thought, with its inevitably detached and reflective character, but rather one that promoted a unitary awareness in which intuitive spontaneity had pride of place. Moreover, unitary awareness demonstrated the utterly integrated nature of human and universal energy. The human being was a microcosm of the universal macrocosm, and as such, was imbued with the same creative and sustaining energy of the universe – the *Tao*.

Thus, our exploration into the Chinese texts provided insights into existence that allowed the ontological assumptions of Tillichian theology to be challenged. Not only did these texts not share Tillich's sense of ontological estrangement, neither did they

⁶³⁶ See pp.281,288 above.

share his high valuation of reason. In fact, reasoned discourse, which was based upon dualistic awareness, was somewhat demeaned in those texts. They advocated the importance of merging with the enigmatic process of the *Tao*, a merging with the darkness of the mystery of the *Tao*. This contrasted starkly with the searching for light of Tillichian theology, communicated through his recognition of the primacy of rational, conceptual thinking, and the role of logos in human destiny. The thesis argued that in this respect, Tillichian theology, influenced profoundly as it was by the classical ideas of Cusanus, Boehme, Paracelsus, and Neo-platonists such as Pseudo-Dionysius and Plotinus, sought to resist the dangers lurking in the darkness of the mystery of the creative ground of being by establishing an unbridgeable gulf between human existence and that very ground. The gulf was established by the limits of human consciousness, represented in Tillich's theology by the categories of time, space, causality and substance. These provided the perimeter fence for human reason; the boundary between conscious existence and the unconscious potential that fuelled existence.⁶³⁷

The establishment of the close association between theology and psychology in Tillich's thinking in Chapter Four, and later developed in Chapter Seven, showed Tillich's ontological assertions about the qualitative distinction between essential and existential being also to be assertions about the qualitative distinction between consciousness and unconsciousness.⁶³⁸ Yet, at the same time, the microcosmic theme, demonstrated in this thesis to be implicit in his theology, brought to the fore Tillich's profound sense of the dynamic power of the divine residing in the potential reservoir of human consciousness - the unconscious. Hence, the microcosmic theme highlighted inconsistency at a profound level in Tillich's theology.

In light of this, the thesis suggested that the tension and ambiguity of Tillichian theology was the product of the inconsistency between the unconscious thrust of his thinking, made evident by the unearthing of the implicit microcosmic theme, and the rational, reflective dualistic nature of his system. His desire to remain in the light, so to speak, denied him access to the profound clarity that resided in the murky waters of his

⁶³⁷ See pp.44 – 58 above.

⁶³⁸ See pp.161-163 above.

unconscious depths, a clarity which the Chinese texts argued could be achieved spontaneously by relinquishing one's hold on reflective thought.

However, the clarity of the Chinese texts was not the same as the light of Tillichian theology. Clarity in *the Lao Tzu* and *the Chuang Tzu* was the simple reflection of reality as it was, namely, the dynamic process that was the *Tao*.⁶³⁹ In contrast, the light of Tillichian theology was that dynamic Divine Principle with which the human being was imbued – Spirit, the integrating Principle of Divine Life – which provided the human being with its unique identity and function. In terms of identity, it was the creature of the Divine; in terms of function, the bearer of spirit.⁶⁴⁰

Tillich's theology fell short in his failure to allow the light of the logos principle to be fully fuelled by the power of the divine pulsating through his unconscious depths. His clinging to reason blinded him to the clarity that could have been his if he had sought to listen to the mystery that spoke to him intuitively in his unconscious depths. Just as the Spirit Principle of the Divine life functioned to integrate the abysmal power of the Godhead with the Principle of Reason,⁶⁴¹ so could Tillich have produced a far more integrated theological system if he had recognised his own microcosmic relation to the Divine. By recognising this, he would have realised that the power of the unconscious and the structure of reason were integrated by means of the Spirit. He would have realised that not only was it not necessary for reason to be protected from the potential that resided in the unconscious, but that by creating barriers to the unconscious, he was effectively impeding the integrative function of Spirit.

In short, the potential of Tillich's theological insight was impeded by his failure to recognise the microcosmic nature of his system. His failure fully to appreciate the dynamics of the Divine life pulsating through his own human life blinded him to the fact that the structure of logos was only one aspect of human identity, human freedom and human destiny. The *dynamis* of human unconsciousness was as important as the

⁶³⁹ See p.233 above.

⁶⁴⁰ See p.146 above.

⁶⁴¹ See p.67 above.

structure of reason, and only when both aspects of human life, emanating from the Divine Life pulsating through the structure of our being, were fully present in the human life could the integrative function of the Spirit Principle weave its magic. Only by letting go of the need to stay permanently in the light of knowledge and conceptual understanding could we experience the power of the mystery of the Divine in our unconsciousness. Only then could Spirit function as the integrative principle within us that would make us bearers of spirit in and for the world.

Tillich's claim that humanity is ontologically estranged from the ground of being denies the integrative capacity of Spirit, and ignores the microcosmic relation of the human being to the ground of being. It therefore, contradicts his theological system as a whole, for throughout, he asserts that the human being has a unique and divinely ordained role in and for the world – to be bearer of spirit.

Exploration of the Chinese texts has allowed us to dare to challenge Tillich's ontological presupposition with regard to estrangement. Not only that, it has also shown us that it is possible to let go of conceptualisation and still be able to operate as human beings, without falling into the abyss of unconscious non-differentiation.

However, it has not provided us with a means of reconciling the ambiguities of the Tillichian theological system, for *the Lao Tzu* and *the Chuang Tzu* do not share Tillich's profound understanding of the unique function of humanity as bearer of spirit in and for the world. In short, the power of human consciousness to grasp and shape reality does not feature in these texts.

Nevertheless, we can use the experience of our exploration into the Chinese texts to help us to illuminate a way that overcomes the ambiguity of Tillich's theological system as it stands. By showing us the presence of a way of being in which reason does not rule supreme, the Chinese texts have allowed us to detect an imbalance in Tillich's system, derived from his insistence upon a rational, reflective approach to human life in relation to the divine.

Moreover, by recalling Tillich's own depiction of the Divine life in terms of the three Principles of Godhead, Logos and Spirit, in which Spirit represents the Principle of integration, we begin to see that by redressing the imbalance in his system, it is possible to turn his system into an integrative theology. That is to say, by relaxing the hold of rational reflection upon his system and strengthening the input of the power emanating from the unconscious, the microcosmic intuitions implicit in this rational system are allowed to surface. The effect of this is the creation of a theology that no longer grapples with the impasse of logical paradox and polar tension, but instead, vibrates with the resonance of human life as it acknowledges its microcosmic connection to the dynamic ground of its being.

Integrative theology is inevitably no longer abstract critical reflection, but profound reflection upon the powerful experience of the divine presence in the depth of human existence. It is reflection not upon the qualitative distinction between the realms of the Divine and the finite creature, but instead, reflection upon the resonance between the two that stems from the one Divine energy that creates and sustains.

If the microcosmic theme, implicit in Tillich's theology, is made explicit, then the effect is to amplify the message of resonance between human existence and the ground of being, and consequently, to fade out the theme of estrangement. The subtle shift in theological emphasis in this respect has an impact on Tillich's ontology, for such amplification makes it increasingly impossible to speak in ontological terms without at the same time speaking cosmologically. If human existence is recognised as being dynamically structured by the pulsating rhythm of the Divine Life, as established in this thesis, then it is impossible to have knowledge about human being without having a fundamental experience of the nature of Divine Being.

In short, a microcosmic understanding of the relation of the human being to the ground of being demands that ontology must stand in relation to cosmology. Moreover, the microcosmic theme provides the authority for the human being to claim to participate in the nature of Divine Being, for as a microcosm of the macrocosm, the very essence of the Divine energy imbues the human being.

The suggestion here is not that the human being can know the nature of the Divine, rather that human beings can participate in and experience the Divine. This is a most significant distinction, for while knowledge pertains to reason, conceptual thinking and dualistic awareness, experience embraces knowledge and extends beyond the parameters of duality. In other words, if human existence is based upon the triadic rhythm of the Principles of Divine Life, then Tillich's ontology must pay as much attention to the power of the Godhead in the depths of unconsciousness as it does to the structure of Logos that shapes human consciousness.

Paying attention does not mean reflecting critically upon the theoretical nature of the Divine power, but acknowledging that power for what it is – the ineffable force that empowers the human being to be. To theorise about the Divine power would be to strip it of its divinity; to make assertions about such power would be to make it impotent. However, to feel the power of the Divine, to intuit it with one's entire being and to fail to be able to express it in words but, nevertheless, to be driven by it, would be to acknowledge such power in all of its glory, and in that acknowledgement, to feel Divine power energising one's very being.

To suggest that Tillichian ontology must stand in relation to cosmology to make explicit the microcosmic theme underlying his system is to demand that the status of epistemology in his theology be reduced. Only by attributing less authority to the knowledge of knowing is it possible to begin to feel the power of being that is our essence as much as is the power of reason. Only by being as receptive to the unknowable power of the Godhead as we are to the power of Reason are we able to serve as channels for the integrative function of Spirit. Being receptive to the unknowable power does not mean closing one's self off from the power through the making of abstract statements about the incomprehensibility of the Divine. Instead, it means *feeling* that power and being moved by it. Only then are we in a position to function as bearers of spirit in and for the world, for only then does the Spirit work to integrate the Principles of Godhead and Logos that flow through us, the microcosm of the Divine.

If the microcosmic theme can be made explicit by aligning Tillich's ontology with cosmology, then Tillich's theology is brought to a new level of consciousness. Effectively, his theology adopts an onto-cosmological perspective, in which the resonance between the dynamic ground of being and human being is brought to the point of integration. In this integration there is no dissolving of consciousness into the abyss of unconsciousness; instead, there is an amplified resonance between the power of Reason and the power of Godhead through the vehicle of human being situated in the time and space of existence. Through such resonance, the identity of the human being as the sustained and that of the Creator as Sustainer are firmly established, and the purpose of the human being as the bearer of spirit in and for the world is actualised.

The possibility of integrating ontology and cosmology was established by our discussion of the Chinese texts. However, let it not be assumed that the Chinese onto-cosmological perspective is the same as that suggested with regard to Tillichian theology. The latter is of a very different ilk from the former. While the onto-cosmology pertaining to the *Tao* represents an integration of the phenomenal with the noumenal that highlights the dynamic natural order of reality,⁶⁴² the onto-cosmology pertaining to Tillichian theology highlights an integration of a far more human-centred dynamic, in which human being is empowered to shape reality through a consciousness fuelled and driven by the creative energy of the Godhead. Thus, the state of consciousness derived from a Tillichian onto-cosmology is not one that is characterised by sagely unitary awareness, but one that demands deliberate human action in the world for the sake of the world. However, at the same time, the responsibility for this action is not upon the shoulders of the human being, for the source of human action is derived ultimately and immediately from the Divine, which breathes the power of Spirit into the creature, guiding that creature every step of the way.

Thus, our discovery of a microcosmic theme implicit in Tillich's theology has exposed inconsistency in his system at a profound, indeed, ontological level. Our exploration into the *Lao Tzu* and the *Chuang Tzu* has helped us to clarify the nature of the

⁶⁴² See pp. 275-276 above.

inconsistency, namely, Tillich's insistence upon the qualitative separation of the realm of the divine from humanity. Only exploration of a non-Christian tradition would be able to assist in this way; Tillich's unquestioning acceptance of the ontological nature of human separation from the divine was the consequence of his entrenchment in the values and assumptions of the western Christian tradition, in which the qualitative distinction between humanity and the divine is central.

Consideration of the Chinese texts has also assisted us in providing a possible explanation for the centrality of the theme of separation in Tillich's system, namely, the primacy of the role of reason and conceptualisation in his consideration of the Creator/creature relationship. The critically reflective nature of such a mindset makes inevitable a dualistic awareness of reality.

The Chinese texts have also illuminated a way in which the inconsistency and ambiguities of Tillich's system can be reconciled with the powerful sense of holism and integration underlying that system, as revealed by the microcosmic theme. The ontocosmological hue of these Chinese writings with regard to the *Tao* has not only provided confirmation that separation is not, indeed, a tragic and inescapable fact of life; it has also shown that it is not necessary to be afraid of what cannot be known. The texts' emphasis upon the empowering nature of the mysterious darkness of the *Tao* has made it possible for us to detect an excess in Tillich's insistence upon the light of knowledge with regard to the mystery of the Creator/creature relationship.

Thus, the value of the exploration into the Chinese texts has been to illuminate excess and unchallenged presuppositions in Tillichian theology. Their light in these respects has allowed the researcher to see Tillichian theology through eyes that have very briefly looked beyond the Christian frame of reference, in order to look back into that frame and reflect upon what can be seen. Perhaps Tillich himself would have approved of such an approach, for his *method of correlation* was very much a reference out beyond the limits of circumstance, in order to return to make better sense of that circumstance.

What has become apparent in the process of looking beyond is that the Chinese texts do not provide the answers to inconsistencies in Tillich's theology, for their contexts are utterly different from Tillich's. Therefore, there is no suggestion that the themes of the Chinese texts presented in this thesis might, in some way, be grafted onto Tillich's system to produce a hybrid theo-philosophy.

Instead, those texts have simply shown us a different way of experiencing reality, which has provided fuel for reflection. In the reflection, it is clear that Tillich's theology was not an integrated system because his ontology was based upon the theme of separation and estrangement, while his intuition was based upon the holism of a microcosmic/macrocosmic understanding of reality.

Reflection has also revealed that in order for Tillich's theology to become integrated, it is necessary to acknowledge the power of the Divine in the unconscious aspects of being as much as he acknowledged the power of reason, and to acknowledge that power in experiential rather than abstract conceptual terms.

Only a methodology based upon integration could expose the lack of integration in Tillich's system. Thus, crucial to the findings of this thesis has been the way in which the researcher has conducted the study. As mentioned in the thesis Introduction, the entire study has been conducted through meditation as well as by means of thorough academic research.⁶⁴³ Meditation demanded that the researcher focused upon her inner personal journey in relation to the study at the same time as conducting the more formal aspects of academic research. Through meditation, it was possible to access depths of intuition that would not otherwise have been accessible to the researcher; and those intuitions led the direction of the study from its inception.

The mandala referred to in the thesis Introduction (see Appendix 1),⁶⁴⁴ drawn in a meditational state by the researcher in the early stages of research, established the presence of the microcosmic theme in Tillich's theology. The subsequent study and

⁶⁴³ See p.9 above.

⁶⁴⁴ See p.10 above.

academic reflection on Tillich's thinking were conducted to clarify the significance of the microcosmic theme, which although seen by the researcher through the diagram, made very little conceptual sense to her initially. What ensued in her attempt to make sense of the mandala, was a powerful personal journey into her depths of being, which progressed synchronistically with the in-depth academic study of Tillichian theology.

What was achieved through this original methodological approach was a resonance between intuitive flow and critical conscious reflection. Without critical reflection, the intuitive flow would have been undirected and unexpressed. At the same time, it was necessary to ensure that critical reflection followed the intuitive flow, rather than allowing the latter to become stifled and controlled by the former.

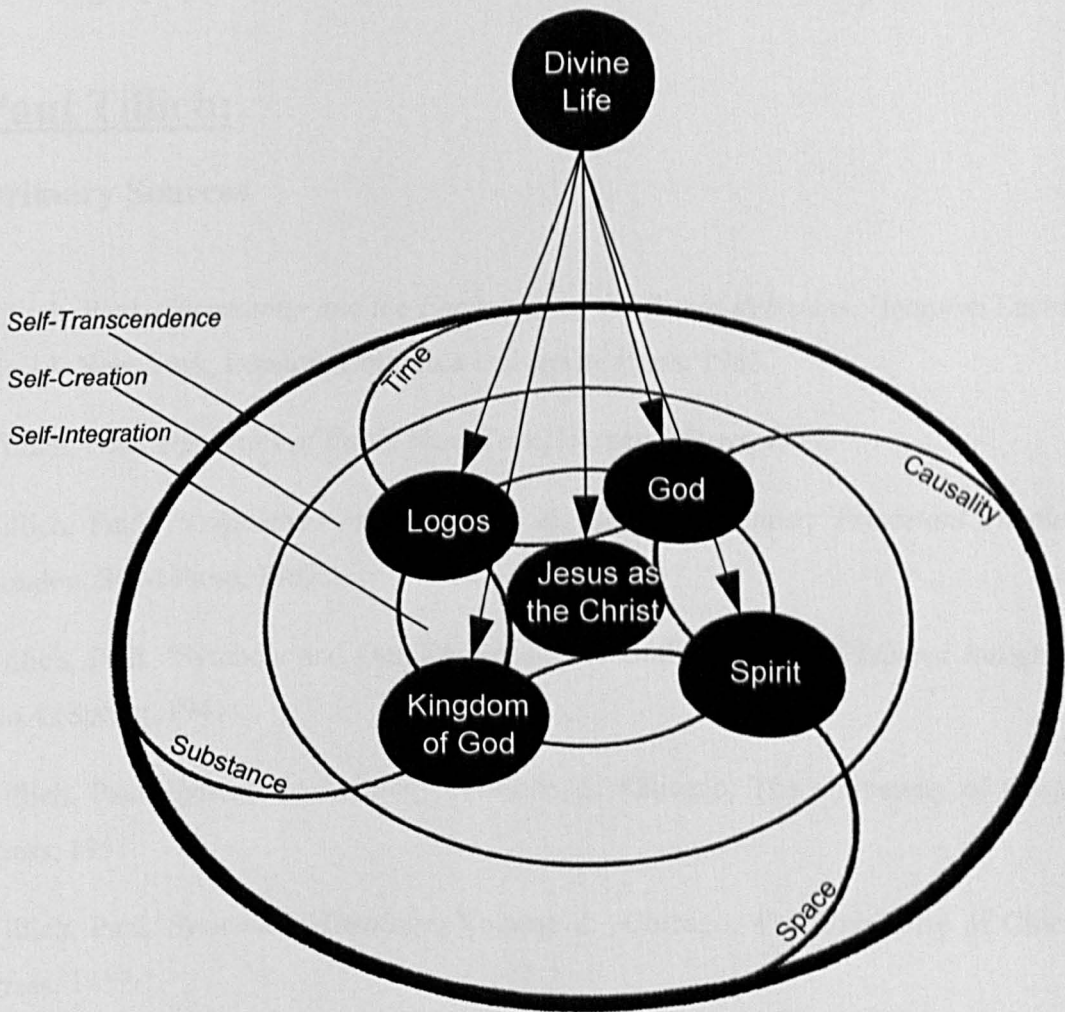
In short, the methodology of this research project was based upon a process of integration – integration between rational reflection and intuitive insight, but also integration between inner being and external action - The research was lived, not simply conducted. The journey was fuelled throughout by the energy emanating from the unconscious aspects of the researchers' being, and navigated by her faculty of reason and reflection.

What such a methodology achieves, which would not perhaps have been possible with a more conventional approach, is the recognition of the means by which Tillichian theology can be taken to a different level of consciousness. Tillich's system fell short of integration because he failed to allow the creative power of his unconscious depths to direct his critical awareness. Instead, he stifled his unconscious by insisting upon the unbridgeable gulf between it and consciousness. His insistence upon the primacy of rational reflection impeded the creative, integrative function of Spirit, rendering the microcosmic theme present in his intuition nothing more than a whisper.

By employing a methodology that was led by an intuitive awareness supported by critical reflection, the researcher was able to hear the whisper of the microcosmic theme and to bring it to the surface. By so doing, Tillich's theology has taken on a different hue, and has been demonstrated to be permeated by a powerful sense of the

holistic, integrated correlation between the human being and the dynamic ground of being.

APPENDIX 1



Mandala: Above is a representation of a diagram drawn by the researcher during the early stages of research. It was the final in a series of diagrams drawn whilst studying in-depth Tillich's three volumes of *Systematic Theology*. At the time of drawing, the researcher understood it to be a picture of Tillich's understanding of the relationship between the lives of the creature and the divine, which she had been unable to express in words.

The diagram, which the researcher later understood to be a mandala, provided the focus for her Tillichian research. Reference to it helped her to bring to full consciousness her intuitions about the microcosmic theme underlying Tillichian theology.

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