



North American
Paul Tillich
Society

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In This Issue:

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Editor's Note

The Annual Meeting

2021 Annual Meeting & Fellowship Calls for Papers

Deep Thanks to Fred Parrella, Editor of the *NAPTS Bulletin*

Sharon Burch
Mary Ann Stenger
Lon Weaver
Tom Bandy

Articles

Confucianism and Tillich's Protestant Principle
Lawrence A. Whitney, PhD, LC⁺

Is Mengzi or Xunzi More Protestant?
Bin Song, PhD

*Paul Tillich, Boston Confucianism, Theology of Religions: a Short Reflection
from the Perspective of Theo-dao*
Heup Young Kim, PhD (Kim, Hüb-yŏng 金洽榮)

Rescuing Xunzi and Tillich
Lawrence A. Whitney, PhD, LC⁺

New Publications

Conferences

In Memoriam

Editor's Note

At long last, my first edition of the *NAPTS Bulletin* is completed. When Fred and I first started talking about my taking over as editor when he retired, I was excited about the possibility, but also aware that I was stepping into a position long-held by an extraordinary person. My conversations with Fred over the years have filled me with awe for his tremendous abilities, wonder at the things he has accomplished, and tears as we laughed and laughed. I am deeply honored and more than a little intimidated by Fred's willingness to take this chance with me. As I worked on this first issue, I realized just how much Fred has done for the Society in his years as both secretary-treasurer and editor of the *Bulletin*. It will certainly take time for me to learn, but I am grateful for the opportunity to serve the society in this role.

The Annual Meeting in the Year of the Pandemic

Due to the challenges faced by all conferences this fall, the NAPTS executive committee decided to do a virtual meeting one day later than the originally planned meeting. Rather than a series of panels and presentations, we had a single panel on "Paul Tillich and Crisis." Presenters included Frederick Parrella, Benjamin Chicka, Ilona Nord, and Russell Re Manning. A presentation by Marion Hausner Pauck was planned but unable to be delivered at the meeting. We look forward to including Marion's presentation in the future. The presentations were recorded and will eventually be available through our website. The business meeting following the presentations included two important votes. The first vote was to maintain the current officers and board for another year. We will hold regular elections at the 2021 annual meeting. The second vote was to move the *Bulletin* to an online format, continuing to publish the bulletin with its current content, but adding an editor's blog and video components as well. This change will not be made until the new website is complete. Finally, the decision was made that paper and panel proposals for the 2020 meeting will be retained and reviewed for the 2021 meeting, along with new proposals submitted in response to the below call for papers.

2021 Annual Meeting & Fellowship Calls for Papers

For its November 19, 2021 Annual Meeting in San Antonio, Texas, immediately prior to the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, the North American Paul Tillich Society seeks paper or panel proposals for two sessions. We seek papers that either interpret Tillich in his historical context with implications drawn for present concerns, or that engage Tillich as a theological resource, either constructively or methodologically, for addressing contemporary society and culture. The generality of this call reflects the desire of the board to engage broadly across the interests represented in the Society and to draw beyond our current membership to welcome new and compelling voices into our number. Panels at the 2021 meeting will be limited to 90 minutes, and so we would prefer papers and panels that commit to pre-circulating papers so that the meeting time may focus on brief summaries, engagement among panelists, and engagement with annual meeting participants.

Paper proposals should include a 300-word abstract and a CV. Panel proposals should include a 200 word abstract of the panel and 300 word abstracts of each of the papers on the panel along with CVs of each of the participants. Proposals should be submitted to binsong1981@gmail.com no later than April 1, 2021. Accepted papers or panels will be notified by May 1, and papers are encouraged to be submitted for pre-circulation by September 15.

NAPTS Fellowship

The North American Paul Tillich Society seeks paper proposals from junior scholars (ABD or PhD completed no earlier than 2018) for a workshop to be held at its annual meeting in San Antonio, Texas, November 19, 2021, immediately prior to the 2021 Meeting of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature. Up to three selected workshop participants will become 2021 Tillich Society Fellows. Each fellow will receive \$250.00 in travel reimbursement to attend the annual meeting and will have their NAPTS dues and banquet fee waived for the year.

Proposals should develop an aspect of Tillich's thought (i.e. a theme, trajectory, or method) or constructively employ Tillich's method within their work. This is to say that the Society seeks constructive, rather than historical, proposals. We encourage papers that use

specific theological tools or ideas from Tillich to address contemporary theological and cultural issues. In selecting Fellows, weight will be given to original constructive contribution over demonstration of exhaustive knowledge of Tillich's works.

Proposals should include a 250 word abstract of the paper and a CV. Abstracts of dissertation chapters, journal articles, or book chapters in progress are quite welcome. Materials should be submitted to Brother Lawrence A. Whitney, LC†, President of the North American Paul Tillich Society, at lawrence.whitney.lc@gmail.com by April 15, 2021. Selected Fellows will be notified no later than May 1 and must accept by May 15. Accepting the Fellowship includes agreement to attend the sessions of the NAPTS annual meeting. Fellows will submit a full paper draft by September 1 for pre-circulation among the Society membership in preparation for the workshop. Fellows will also be assigned a mentor from among the more senior scholars in the Society who have related interests.

Deep Thanks to Fred Parrella, Editor of the *NAPTS Bulletin*

Sharon Burch
Mary Ann Stenger
Lon Weaver
Tom Bandy

After twenty-two years, Fred Parrella has passed on the task of editing the *Bulletin* to Verna Ehret. In honor of Fred's immense service to NAPTS, a few of us have written short tributes:

Sharon Burch: When Fred and I first talked over his becoming the Secretary-Treasurer, we never dreamed that the future would present a moment when we would be thanking him for 22 years of service to NAPTS. From the beginning, he demonstrated that he had the comprehensive vision needed to foresee complexities and concerns regarding monetary matters, and the ability to take the time to edit the quarterly *Bulletin* that published the presentations made at the last AAR and to keep up a mailing list that required both electronic and paper copies be

disseminated amongst a wide range of scholars, students, and libraries. Throughout he has maintained his delightful but slightly sardonic sense of humor (especially important considering those of us with whom he has had to deal), received both praise and complaints with dignity and balance, and resisted all blandishments to don the aura of the One In Control, the epicenter of the Society, the puller of strings.

Thank you, Fred, for gracing our Society with your considerable talents. When the time came for you to pass on your responsibilities, it was recognized that the job exceeded the expenditure of time and energy that could be expected of one person, so two people are assuming your duties. We know that the Society is in good hands. But we will miss you and your flair that has so gently pervaded all things NAPTS.

Mary Ann Stenger: As Editor of the *NAPTS Bulletin*, Fred Parrella has worked countless hours reading through and editing every submitted paper from both our NAPTS and AAR sessions. His strong commitment to Tillich scholarship and his professional judgment have contributed greatly to the high quality of the *Bulletin*. Many of us rely on it for re-reading conference papers as well as newly written essays. That several scholarly libraries receive the *Bulletin* attests to its value and recognition. In overseeing the electronic editions of the *Bulletin*, Fred enabled the work of NAPTS to be available globally.

To put Fred's contributions in historical context: In the first years of the NAPTS (officially formed in 1975 after two years of Tillich consultations), the communication of NAPTS was simply a Newsletter sent out by the Secretary-Treasurer to report on previous meetings and announce the next annual meeting. But from the beginning, NAPTS committed to disseminating Tillich scholarship. In the early years, John Carey edited four volumes of Tillich scholarship, mostly stemming from NAPTS meetings.¹ Beginning in 1988, Robert Scharlemann sent a packet of papers from the annual NAPTS meetings as a separate mailing from the Newsletter. But it was Fred Parrella who turned the Newsletter into the *Bulletin*.

Beginning in 1998 Fred began to publish papers given at the annual Tillich meetings (NAPTS and AAR) in regular issues of the Newsletter, making them easily accessible to all members. In 2003 the NAPTS board

1 The first two volumes were published by NAPTS: *Tillich Studies*: 1975 (Florida State University) and *Kairos and Logos: Studies in the Roots and Implications of Tillich's Theology* (Cambridge, MA, 1978). He published the next two volumes

through Mercer University Press: *Kairos and Logos: Studies in the Roots and Implications of Tillich's Theology* (1984) and *Theonomy and Autonomy* (1984).

approved changing the Newsletter to the *Bulletin of NAPTS* with Volume XXX (2004). That change acknowledged the scholarly purpose of the publication. Instead of scholars needing to wait for conference papers to be published elsewhere, they could publish their work in the *Bulletin* and still be free to submit the work for publication in a journal or a book of collected essays.

Lon Weaver: First, Fred tenaciously reminded us - and especially new scholars with little publishing history - to submit the texts for publication papers we presented for NAPTS/AAR events. The first articles I published were in the Newsletter-later-to-become-*Bulletin*.

Second, Fred responded to one budget "crisis" with an openness to transitioning from an exclusively print version of the *Bulletin* to a largely digital one (I can't remember whose idea this was, but Fred was the one who drew on the expertise of others to make this happen). In addition to this, he worked with Michael Burch to help the NAPTS have a better online presence. Combined, these were important for moving us more into a 21st century IT mindset.

Third, by bringing Jonathan Rothchild into the editing process, Fred was already looking forward to a new generation assuming responsibility for the *Bulletin*.

Fourth, and finally, Fred predictably brought his infectious sense of humor to the task, making joy a part of the process.

Tom Bandy: I share the gratitude of everyone in the Tillich Societies internationally for Fred Parrella's service as Secretary-Treasurer to the NAPTS. Fred's timely *Bulletins* and his attention to detail are only small parts of his gift to us. He has been the communication center to link American and Canadian members together, and also to link our members to the German and French Societies and other scholars around the world. Under his guidance, the *Bulletin* has become an opportunity to publish for younger scholars, and a way to test new ideas among veteran colleagues. He has brought professional editorial skills that made the *Bulletin* valuable to researchers and libraries. During his years as Secretary, the *Bulletin* has developed from news to history, preserving and sharing ideas that might easily have been lost. It has also made the transition from print to digital, making it easier for graduate students to incorporate the most recent Tillich work into their research. The *Bulletin* has

come a long way, and become an indispensable resource, under his creative leadership. Its next editor has a clear model for future work.

I also celebrate the fact that what I call "The Essential Fred" is still going strong. He continues to be at the center of a huge network of relationships. The real glue for the society has been his ready insight, wit and charm, approachability, practicality combined with great imagination, administrative skills, diplomacy (whenever needed), dogged persistence (chasing overworked academics), and good taste in martinis. The "Essential Fred" cannot be contained by an office or a bookshelf. I, for one, am rather glad he has retired from secretary-ship so that he can concentrate on what the society needs most: his presence.

Articles

Confucianism and Tillich's Protestant Principle

Lawrence A. Whitney, PhD, LCT[†]

The Protestant Principle

The Protestant principle, for Paul Tillich, always stands over against Protestantism. As a result, the Protestant principle takes on renewed significance as the Pew Forum on Religion in American Public Life published its report, "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace" in October 2019. The percentage of U.S. adults who identify as Protestant dipped below 50% for the first time in 2012, and only one third of Millennials, born between 1981 and 1996, (thus including yours truly), identify as Protestant as of 2018. Tillich would hardly have been surprised by this, having predicted the possibility of an end to the Protestant era, that is, an end to the historical, institutional expression of Protestantism. "The Protestant era might come to an end. But if it came to an end, the Protestant principle would not be refuted. On the contrary, the end of the Protestant era would be another manifestation of the truth and power of the Protestant principle."² Indeed, as Paul E. Capetz notes in an article on the Protestant principle, written first as a lecture during the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, "Protestant denominations may well deserve to die if they no longer embody or express the Protestant principle that gave rise to them in the

² Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, trans. James Luther Adams (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1948), xii.

first place, insofar as that is the sole reason why they exist.”³

While it may be the case that the historical and institutional expression of Protestantism, that is, the Protestant era, is waning, what of the Protestant principle? On this, Tillich is crystal clear:

This principle is not a special religious or cultural idea; it is not subject to the changes of history; it is not dependent on the increase or decrease of religious experience or spiritual power. It is the ultimate criterion of all religious and all spiritual experiences; it lies at their base, whether they are aware of it or not. The way in which this principle is realized and expressed and applied and connected with other sides of the divine-human relationship is different in different times and places, groups, and individuals. Protestantism as a principle is eternal and a permanent criterion of everything temporal.⁴

By contrast, Tillich is clear as mud as to what the Protestant principle actually is, at least positively. Amidst his many definitions either by way of contrast or by ascription of function, however, emerge several more or less helpful indexical gems that point a way toward clarification: The Protestant principle

is the theological expression of the true relation between the unconditional and the conditioned... It is the guardian against the attempts of the finite and conditioned to usurp the place of the unconditional in thinking and acting... It is the prophetic judgment against religious pride, ecclesiastical arrogance, and secular self-sufficiency and their destructive consequences.⁵

Capetz is helpful here too, connecting the Protestant principle in Tillich with the *sola fides* of Luther: “In the late medieval context Luther formulated the Protestant principle as the doctrine of justification by faith alone, but Tillich understood that it can be formulated in other ways.”⁶ The Protestant principle, then, is that humanity, and so also human ideas, institutions, actions, and

projects, are always finite and unfinished, and therefore require perpetual refinement, reworking, and reformation. In theological language, the moment you think you have figured out where God is going, you had best look over your shoulder, because it is quite likely the Holy Spirit is headed off in the other direction.

If Tillich is right that the Protestant principle is contextually present in all religious and spiritual experiences, whether reflexively appropriated therein or not, then it should in principle be discernable within the traditions and lineages that give shape to those experiences. The goal in the remainder of this paper is to discern whether or not the Protestant principle registers in Confucianism, more properly called Ruism. Doing so requires demonstrating that Ruism has both a conception of the human situation as finite and unfinished, or conditional in Tillich’s preferred parlance, and remains hospitable to ongoing processes of reinvention in the personal, social, cultural, and intellectual realms.

The Human Condition

Debates about human nature (Xing 性) were central to Warring States 戰國時代 (453 – 221 BCE) philosophical discourse in China. The extremes of the debate are represented by two members of the School of Scholars (Rujia 儒家), now most often referred to as Confucians, which is characterized by reflection on and with classical literature.⁷ Thinkers in the Ru school tended to idealize the achievements of the Zhou dynasty rulers (1056 – 256 BCE) vis-à-vis excellent sociopolitical order and stability, and to emphasize continuity between moral leadership by rulers and societal flourishing.

One side of the debate is represented by Mencius (Mengzi 孟子; 372 – 289 BCE) in his eponymous text.⁸ He makes a case for the ultimate goodness of human

3 Paul E. Capetz, “A Theology of Protest: The Reformation and Paul Tillich’s ‘Protestant Principle,’” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 45, no. 4 (October 2018): 65.

4 Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, xii.

5 Tillich, 163.

6 Capetz, “A Theology of Protest: The Reformation and Paul Tillich’s ‘Protestant Principle,’” 65.

7 By the Han dynasty, the Ru lineage was identified primarily in terms of its reverence for the five classics, such that “Ru” could be translated “classicist.” Mark Csikszentmihalyi and Michael Nylan, “Constructing Lineages and Inventing Traditions through Exemplary Figures in Early China,” *T’oung Pao*, Second Series, 89, no. 1/3 (January 1, 2003): 59–99,

<https://doi.org/10.1163/156853203322691329>.

8 There are three scholarly translations of the Mencius into English. Van Norden includes substantial commentary, primarily from Zhu Xi 朱熹, the Song dynasty Neoconfucian who codified the Four Books (Sishu Wujing 四書五經) and heavily influenced subsequent Confucian developments: Mengzi, *Mengzi: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries*, trans. Bryan W. Van Norden (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2008). Bloom is a very good recent translation: Mencius, *Mencius*, trans. Irene Bloom (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2009). Lau is somewhat dated but still used regularly in classes and anthologies: Mencius, *The Book of Mencius*, trans. D. C. Lau (New York, NY: Penguin, 1970).

nature by demonstrating the innate, natural inclination to do good for the sake of good rather than for any personal benefit, as illustrated in the parable of the child falling into the well:

Now, if anyone were suddenly to see a child about to fall into a well, his mind would be filled with alarm, distress, pity, and compassion. That he would react accordingly is not because he would hope to use the opportunity to ingratiate himself with the child's parents, nor because he would seek commendation from neighbors and friends, nor because he would hate the adverse reputation [that could come from not reacting accordingly]. From this it may be seen that one who lacks a mind that feels pity and compassion would not be human; one who lacks a mind that feels shame and aversion would not be human; one who lacks a mind that feels modesty and compliance would not be human; and one who lacks a mind that knows right and wrong would not be human.⁹

It is from these feelings that Mencius derives the four cardinal virtues: humaneness (Ren 仁), rightness (Yi 義), propriety (Li 禮), and wisdom (Zhi 智).¹⁰ Moreover, the nature of a thing is what the thing would be without injury, disruption, or malnourishment: "One's natural tendencies enable one to do good; this is what I mean by human nature being good. When one does what is not good, it is not the fault of one's native capacities."¹¹ Instead, Mencius concludes, doing what is not good is a result of letting lesser natural desires, associated with the senses, overcome pursuit of the greater natural desire for the good, associated with the thinking heart: "One who nurtures the smaller part of oneself becomes a small person, while one who nurtures the greater part of oneself becomes a great person."¹² This is the doctrine of human nature that would become the orthodox view among over two millennia of Ru intellectuals in East Asia.

The other side of the debate is represented by Xunzi (荀子; ~310-210 BCE), who is frequently construed as a "heretical" Ru due to his doctrine of Human Nature (Xing 性) as E 惡, which is usually translated "evil."¹³

The problem with this translation begins with the fact that, as many modern scholars note, Mencius and Xunzi employ different operational definitions of "nature." Mencius understands nature to include human agency and artifice (Wei 偽), and thus the basic moral impulse to do good. Xunzi, by contrast, distinguishes nature and artifice such that any moral formation at all falls under the category of artifice,¹⁴ while human nature "embraces what is spontaneous from Nature, what cannot be learned, and what requires no application to master."¹⁵ Human nature for Xunzi is thus made up of competing desires, senses for discriminating their fulfillment, and the drive to fulfill them.¹⁶ Attempting to fulfill all of the desires to their ultimate extent simultaneously leads to chaos and conflict such that none of them may in fact be fulfilled, and so education and ritual are needed to limit and harmonize the desires for their maximal satisfaction.¹⁷ Following this analysis, the translation of Xunzi to say that human nature is "evil" may be rejected in favor of a more nuanced translation that human nature is "crude," in the sense that it requires refinement by education and ritual just as a block of stone requires refinement by a sculptor to turn it into a piece of art.¹⁸ What the conception of crudeness fails to capture, however, is what Xunzi took to be the inevitably disastrous outcomes of failing to refine human nature through education and ritual, which is a situation entirely unlike the decision of a sculptor to simply leave the stone be. Thus, perhaps the best way of understanding human nature for Xunzi is to say that human nature is ominous.¹⁹

9 Mencius, *Mencius*. 2A6.

10 Mencius. 2A6. Angus Charles Graham, *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1989).

11 Mencius, *Mencius*. 6A6.

12 Mencius. 6A14. see also 6A15 and Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*. 129-32.

13 Xunzi, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works*, trans. John Knoblock (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988). I: 99; III: 139-62. For debate over orthodoxy, see Homer H. Dubs, "'Nature' in the Teaching of Confucius," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 50 (January 1, 1930): 233-37, <https://doi.org/10.2307/593076>; Herrlee Glessner Creel, "Confucius and Hsün-Tzū," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 51, no. 1 (March 1, 1931): 23-32, <https://doi.org/10.2307/593216>.

14 T. C. Kline and P. J. Ivanhoe, *Virtue, Nature, and Moral Agency in the Xunzi* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2000). 103-04, 128n1-10. see also Paul R. Goldin, *Rituals of the Way: The Philosophy of Xunzi* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1999). 1-37; Kurtis Hagen, *The Philosophy of Xunzi: A Reconstruction* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2007), 121-45. 121-145; Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 244-51.

15 Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*. 23.1c (III: 152). see also III: 139-50.

16 Xunzi. 23.1e (III: 153), 4.9-10 (I: 191-92).

17 Xunzi. 19.1a (III: 55). see also T. C. Kline and Justin Tiwald, *Ritual and Religion in the Xunzi* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2014). 79-80.

18 Hagen, *The Philosophy of Xunzi*. 122-23.

19 I am grateful to my colleague Bin Song 宋斌 for this translation, which he received from John Berthrong, who

Clearly, the vision of the human situation advanced by Xunzi fulfills the requirement of the Protestant principle that humanity be understood as finite and unfinished. Nevertheless, Mencius too admits of the need for reformation at least as a result of disruption, depreciation, and degradation of a more basically unambiguous human goodness. This too fits with the notion of the human situation characterized as conditional by Tillich, although Mencius is more concerned with conditioning by finitude while Tillich is somewhat more focused on humanity conditioned by the unconditional. This is an important difference, and one deserving consideration after considering the second criterion of the Protestant principle, that is, whether or not these Ru thinkers envision a process of ongoing development and transformation of finite, conditional, and unfinished humanity.

Moral Self-Cultivation

Central to the Ru project is the goal of fostering humaneness (Ren 仁), which is an ideal of self-integrated harmony alongside harmonization of self with others and everything else in the environment, through a process of moral self-cultivation. While what constitutes moral self-cultivation is not entirely uniform across Ru thinkers, the conception of this process as elaborated by Xunzi will be taken as paradigmatic for present purposes.

For Xunzi, achievement of humaneness results from human nature proceeding through a parallel process of transformation by education and change by ritual (Li 禮):²⁰ “It is through ritual that the individual is rectified. It is by means of a teacher that ritual is rectified. If there were no ritual, how could the individual be rectified? If there were no teachers, how could you know which ritual is correct?”²¹ He says that ritual encompasses “the highest sense of morality, duty, and social order as well as the most minor rules of good manners, the minutiae of polite forms, and insignificant, it seems to us, details of costume and dress.”²² Indeed, ritual is any and all conventional human behavior, from personal mannerisms learned by imitating parents all the way up to whole political, economic, and cultural systems. Ritual for Xunzi is

crucial for forming and shaping human nature from crudeness to refinement and to avoid its otherwise ominous tendencies by restraining unbounded desire:

How did ritual principles arise? I say that men are born with desires which, if not satisfied, cannot but lead men to seek to satisfy them. If in seeking to satisfy their desires men observe no measure and apportion things without limits, then it would be impossible for them not to contend over the means to satisfy their desires. Such contention leads to disorder. Disorder leads to poverty. The Ancient Kings abhorred such disorder; so they established the regulations contained within ritual and moral principles in order to apportion things, to nurture the desires of men, and to supply the means for their satisfaction. They so fashioned their regulations that desires should not want for the things which satisfy them and goods would not be exhausted by the desires. In this way the two of them, desires and goods, sustained each other over the course of time. This is the origin of ritual principles.

Thus, the meaning of ritual is to nurture.²³

The role of ritual in restraining unbounded desire makes it the basis of social ethics by providing “the rules that lead to the general welfare of society by promoting conservation, attendance to the needs of others, and care for the comfort and well-being of others.”²⁴ Furthermore, ritual is the ideal means of governing, such that the ruler will embody ritual principles and thereby influence the people through the resulting moral force to follow ritual principles and thus achieve a harmonious society.²⁵ Indeed, government by ritual is the human contribution to the trinity of heaven, earth, and humanity: “Heaven has its seasons; Earth its resources; and Man his government.”²⁶ Notably, however, Xunzi is a political realist who recognizes the unlikelihood of rulers so fully embodying ritual, so he encourages less able rulers to hand the reins of power to more able ministers to manage in accordance with ritual.²⁷

This analysis shows that not only does the Ru tradition envision the necessity of reinvention, refinement, reworking, and reformation in order to overcome the vagaries of finitude, the tradition further elaborates two modes in which those transformative processes play out: education and ritual. In this sense, the Ru tradition offers an advance on Tillich and the

believes he may have heard it from someone else a long time ago.

20 Yanming An, *The Idea of Cheng (Sincerity/Reality) in the History of Chinese Philosophy* (New York, NY: Global Scholarly, 2005). 48-50.

21 Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*. 2.11 (I: 157).

22 Xunzi. III: 49.

23 Xunzi. 19.1a,b (III: 55).

24 Xunzi. III: 50.

25 Xunzi. 8 (II: 63-84).

26 Xunzi. 17.2a (III: 15).

27 Yuri Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire: Chinese Political Thought of the Warring States Period* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2009). 82-97.

Protestant principle, providing a practical philosophy to accompany and address the underlying existential analysis of the human predicament. Moreover, the twin findings of an understanding of human finitude, and the concomitantly necessary adjustment to meet the needs of each successive drop of finite temporality, both at the heart of the Ru tradition and at the inception of its lineage, serves to provide some confirmatory evidence of the universality of the Protestant principle as Tillich understood it. There is, however, one further aspect of the Protestant principle, namely its contrast between the conditional and the unconditioned, that requires further elaboration as it arises in Ruism.

Considering the Unconditional

For Tillich, it is not enough for humanity to be finite and conditional. At the heart of the Protestant principle, and arguably at the heart of the whole Tillichian project, is the insight that the finite and conditional are finite and conditional with respect to the infinite and unconditioned. Finitude and conditionality are contrasts to infinity and the unconditioned. This is what Tillich means in saying that the Protestant principle “is the theological expression of the true relation between the unconditional and the conditioned.” Moreover, the unconditioned conditions the conditioned. The infinite constrains the finite. The ground of being grounds the being that all of the many beings are. The final question to be answered, then, in considering the Ru version of the Protestant principle, is whether there is an unconditioned that conditions conditional humanity that stands over against that which it conditions.

For Ru thinkers of the Warring States period, Heaven (Tian 天) is the unconditional that conditions the conditional world. Fung Yu-lan notes five meanings of heaven in early Chinese writings: 1) material or physical heaven, which together with Earth (Di 地) constitute the physical universe; 2) anthropomorphic ruling or presiding heaven; 3) fatalistic heaven; 4) naturalistic heaven, or nature; and 5) ethical heaven.²⁸ Heaven is ubiquitous among the trajectories of thought in the Warring States period as an element of their cosmologies, even as the nature of heaven and its role and relationship vis-à-vis earth and Humanity (Ren 人) were deeply contested.²⁹ One way of construing their relationship is in a correlational cosmology, “in which entities, processes, and classes of phenomena found in nature correspond to or ‘go together with’ various entities, processes, and classes of phenomena in the human world.”³⁰ A highly influential strand of sinological research in the West takes correlational cosmology to be “a fundamental commitment of the Chinese sensibility,”³¹ but more recent scholarship challenges and undermines this assumption.³²

The relationship between heaven as the unconditioned and the rest of the conditional world also emerged conceptually during this period. For example, All Under Heaven (Tianxia 天下), at this time meaning “the world,”³³ was instrumental in reconceptualizing “the people” to refer to all people and not merely the nobility. Heaven was also important for the project of reconceptualizing rulership, since the legitimacy and authority of a ruler derived from their having received the Mandate of Heaven (Tianming

28 Yu-lan Fung, *A History of Chinese Philosophy, Volume 1* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 31.

29 Michael J. Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divinization in Early China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center for the Harvard-Yenching Institute, 2002).

30 Benjamin Isadore Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 351. He relies heavily for this definition on Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1966).

31 David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Anticipating China: Thinking Through the Narratives of Chinese and Western Culture* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), 257. This cultural-essentialist strand of thinking goes back to Marcel Granet, *La Pensée Chinoise* (Paris, France: La Renaissance du Livre, 1934). It continues through Kwang-chih Chang, *The Archaeology of Ancient China* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986); Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*; Frederick W. Mote, *Intellectual Foundations of China* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1993); Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China: Volume 1, Introductory Orientations* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1954). A related, less dominant, but equally problematic

evolutionary strain of thought can be traced through Max Weber, *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1951); Fung, *A History of Chinese Philosophy, Volume 1*; Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History* (London: Routledge, 2010); Heiner Roetz, *Confucian Ethics of the Axial Age: A Reconstruction under the Aspect of the Breakthrough Toward Postconventional Thinking* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993); Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China*. For an excellent analysis of these two trajectories in Western sinology, see Puett, *To Become a God*, 5–21.

32 Puett, *To Become a God*; Nathan Sivin, “State, Cosmos, and Body in The Last Three Centuries B. C.,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 55, no. 1 (June 1, 1995): 5–37, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2719419>; Aihe Wang, *Cosmology and Political Culture in Early China* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

33 Kung-chuan Hsiao, *History of Chinese Political Thought, Volume 1: From the Beginnings to the Sixth Century, A.D.* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 19.

天命), and thus becoming a Son of Heaven (Tianzi 天子). What precisely the mandate of heaven is, though, was highly contested, in part based on the understanding of Heaven at play.³⁴ Mencius argues that the mandate of heaven is expressed through the people:

[Yao] caused [Shun] to preside over the sacrifices, and the hundred spirits enjoyed them. This shows that Heaven accepted him. He put him in charge of affairs, and affairs were well ordered, and the hundred surnames were at peace. This shows that the people accepted him. Heaven gave it to him; the people gave it to him. This is why I said that 'the Son of Heaven cannot give the realm to someone.' ... The 'Great Declaration' says, 'Heaven sees as my people see, Heaven hears as my people hear.' This is what was meant.³⁵

Mencius expects rulers to bring about political and economic reforms in order to win over the people who express heaven's mandate.³⁶

What, then, is heaven? Turning again to Xunzi, unlike human nature, heaven is decidedly not ominous, even though it is responsible for imparting an ominous nature to humanity, although neither could it be considered propitious.³⁷ Rather, heaven is the sum total of the constant processes that direct the world, and Xunzi frequently uses Tian 天 to refer to Tiandi 天地, or heaven and earth, wherein earth is the material of the world that heaven directs or patterns.³⁸ While it is true that it is impossible to understand how Xunzi conceived heaven apart from the analogy to the relationship between a ruler and the people,³⁹ heaven was nevertheless depersonalized and naturalized in his thought such that it should not be expected to respond to ritual invocation or seen as responsible for signs and omens.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, humanity does interact with both heaven and earth in order to order them, as described in the concept of the Trinity of heaven, earth, and humanity: "Heaven and Earth give birth to the gentleman, and the gentleman provides the

organizing principle for Heaven and Earth. The gentleman is the triadic partner of Heaven and Earth, the summation of the myriad of things, and the father and mother of the people."⁴¹ Furthermore, heaven serves as something of a metaphysical or cosmological principle, although a minimally elaborated one,⁴² and the trinity of heaven, earth, and humanity serves as something of a rejoinder to the Yin-Yang and Five Phases cosmology emerging and becoming prominent at the time.⁴³ Finally, the conception of heaven promulgated by Xunzi is remarkable for its consonance with the *Daodejing* and Zhuangzi with respect to its constancy, such that "the principles, the Way, controlling it are invariable, that its patterns are regular, and that, when the Triad of Heaven, Earth, and Man is complete, its order is systematic and hierarchical."⁴⁴ In so doing, Xunzi is rejecting the central Mohist doctrine of heaven's intention,⁴⁵ not unlike the way Tillich rejects anthropomorphic conceptions of God.

Is the Protestant Principle Protestant?

The Protestant principle as Tillich conceived it predicts that it must register in any religious and spiritual experience. Tillich is proven right by demonstrating how Warring States period Ru thinkers understood the human situation to be one of finitude and conditionality requiring reinvention and reformation in light of the infinite and unconditioned. The Protestant principle does in fact register, as Tillich suggested it must, in the Ru lineage as it emerged in Warring States China. In so doing, another conundrum emerges. The universality of the Protestant principle and its appearance long before Protestantism raises the question as to what it is that makes the Protestant principle Protestant. Tillich acknowledged that the historical phenomenon of Protestantism might well cease to exist, but that the Protestant principle would endure because it is eternal. The eternality of the Protestant principle means that it is always there and has always been there, even

34 Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire*, 17, 38–44, 74–76, 170–71, 235n11.

35 Mencius, *Mencius*, 5A5, 104.

36 Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 113.

37 Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, III: 4-7; Paul R. Goldin, *Rituals of the Way: The Philosophy of Xunzi* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1999), 39–54.

38 Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, III: 3-4; Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 238–44.

39 Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, III: 8; Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 243.

40 Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, III: 13-14, 4-6; Goldin, *Rituals of the Way*, 1999, 53.

41 Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, 9.15 (II: 103); 17.2a (III: 15).

42 Sor-hoon Tan, "Li (Ritual/Rite) and Tian (Heaven/Nature) in the Xunzi: Does Confucian Li Need Metaphysics?," *Sophia* 51, no. 2 (June 1, 2012): 155–75, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11841-012-0304-6>; Robert C. Neville, "New Projects in Chinese Philosophy," *The Pluralist* 5, no. 2 (July 1, 2010): 45–56, <https://doi.org/10.5406/pluralist.5.2.0045>.

43 Goldin, *Rituals of the Way*, 1999, 53; Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 238–44. This is not to say that Xunzi does not, on occasion, refer to Yin and Yang principles: Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, 19.6 (III: 67).

44 Xunzi, *Xunzi: Translation and Study*, III: 7.

45 Xunzi, III: 6.

before Protestantism. This would suggest that the principle is not really Protestant in any meaningful sense beyond the fact that Tillich himself deduced it from its historical incarnation in the outworking of the Protestant Reformation, especially that of Luther. Others might well deduce it elsewhere, as it has been here in the Ru thinkers associated with Confucius. What it might better be called instead is a matter for future reflection.

Is Mengzi or Xunzi More Protestant?

Bin Song, PhD

Can the Protestant principle, as formulated by Paul Tillich, register in the Ru tradition? This is the central question asked by Whitney. He analyzes the question with its two components: (1) In the Ru tradition, whether human nature is seen as finite and unfinished, and thus, demands endless refinement and cultivation towards a purported ideal; and (2) whether human existence conceptualized as such is conditioned by something unconditional, so that any manifestation of the purported ideal in the human world would not be treated as ultimate and final. Through analyzing Mengzi (Mencius)'s and Xunzi's thought, Whitney furnishes an unequivocal "yes" to each of these two componential questions, and accordingly, affirms the registration of the Tillichian Protestant principle in Ruism.

From the standpoint of the Ru tradition, Whitney's question is significant because it prods the tradition to try its own changes, and at the same time, to insist on its historically inherited ideal, which, using Tillich's term, can be considered as unchanging, unconditional and thus, ultimately challenging and emboldening. For instance, if the Protestant principle registers in the Ru tradition, the old ethical code of filial piety which requires a daughter-in-law to blindly obey almost anything that her mother-in-law does should and can be refuted by Ruists today in the same name of filial piety. A Chinese citizen loyal to their own country should and can denounce the mass incarceration of Uyghurs by their government through applying the same Ruist principles claimed by the government to legitimize its political mandate. And a Ruist professor at an American liberal arts college should and can be delightful to hear their students indicate the misogynist elements in traditional Ruist moral teaching, and hence,

to advocate women's rights while drawing upon sources within the same tradition under critique. Seen from this perspective, Whitney's affirmative answer to major components of his question should be deeply appreciated by Ruists, since it conveys the depth of the Ruist discourse, which enables the tradition to make progress through vicissitudes of human life and simultaneously, to maintain its historical continuity and intellectual integrity.

Since Whitney's question and his answer to it are so significant to the Ru tradition, I would like to furnish my own analysis of the question to enhance Whitney's case in this response. I will do it through firstly providing my own constructive answer to Whitney's question on the basis of my knowledge of the entire Ru tradition; and then, presenting a more nuanced reading of Mengzi's and Xunzi's thought to indicate my modest disagreement with Whitney, especially in the case of Xunzi. At last, let me express my hope of new ways of applying the Protestant principle in a Ruist context today.

So, can the Protestant principle register in the Ru tradition? As shown by Whitney's analysis, the answer to this question rests upon how the Ru tradition conceptualizes three key mutual-related ideas: the normal state of human existence, its ideal, and ultimate reality.

The normal state of human existence is deeply ambiguous. Good behaviors may be conducted with complicated intentions, while ominous demeanors could lead to unexpected lucky consequences. Using Wang Yangming's (1472-1529 C.E) words, we can say "humans are both good and bad when our intentions are in action." (有善有恶是意之动).⁴⁶ However, no matter how complex the realized, daily state of human existence is, all human beings, as long as we can be distinguished from other beings, have an inherent potential of striving for being good. The goodness here implies an ability of harmonization, i.e., a human contribution to the co-thriving of beings involved in varying and gradually expanding social and natural contexts (family, community, state, inter-states, nature, etc.). This process of human harmonization will never end, and can never be fully accomplished. In this way, the finite modes of human harmonization take the spontaneous harmonization of *Tian* (天, the universe) as an ideal. The words used by Ruist thinkers to

⁴⁶ Wang Yangming, *The Complete Works of Wang Yangming* (王陽明全集), ed. by Wu Guang and Qian Ming, Shang Hai: Hang Hai Gu Ji Chu Ban She, 1992: 117.

characterize the most generic features of *Tian*'s creativity derive from the *Classic of Change*: 元 (initiation), 亨 (permeation), 利 (harmonization), and 貞 (integration).⁴⁷ It means that without *Tian*, there would be nothing in the world, so *Tian* is the greatest initiator. *Tian*'s creativity permeates all things in the world since the evolution of *Tian* gives rise to everything. While endowing each changing being with a determinate nature, *Tian*'s all-encompassing creativity makes it possible for humans to perceive all cosmic beings as an integrated whole, because all beings change, interact and co-exist in the eternal cosmic scene comprising all possible temporal modes of past, present and future. This endlessly harmonizing process of *Tian* can be taken as an ideal of human harmonization because (1) *Tian* is not a deity, and thus, *Tian* has no intention or plan prior to the actual act of creation. In this way, the harmonization of *Tian* is achieved constantly, instantaneously and spontaneously, which is far superior to human harmonization since the latter always involves ready-to-fail intentions, plans, and contriving. (2) *Tian* succeeds to harmonize all created beings because it allows the co-existence and co-becoming of all beings in the broadest temporal scale of eternity. However, none of humans' harmonizing efforts can reach this far and succeed this completely: humans, as finite beings, can manage to empower the co-thriving of beings involved in a certain context and to a certain extent, with many consequences and repercussions of the efforts impossible to foresee and control.

Despite the contrast between *Tian*'s and humans' harmonization, there are extraordinary human beings who succeed to realize *Tian*'s harmonization in the human world in varying contexts and to a significant extent. In particular, these human exemplars are lucidly aware of and able to reconcile with the finitude of human conditions, and thus, they never give up the efforts of harmonizing despite constant failures. If a human cultivates themselves so much as to obtain these stable character traits needed for continual harmonization, they will be seen as a sage (聖人), a role model to imitate and follow. Regarding the relationship between normal human existence, its ideal

and ultimate reality, which is so crucial for us to envision the registration of the Protestant principle in the Ru tradition, we can use Zhou Dunyi's (1017-1073 C.E) words to give a very positive answer: yes, the Protestant principle registers here, because in the Ru tradition, "a sage strives for being *Tian*-like, a worthy strives for being a sage, and a learner strives for being a worthy."⁴⁸

In light of this constructed Ruist answer to Whitney's question, I will continue to analyze whether the Protestant principle registers in Mengzi's or Xunzi's thought.

The constructed answer is essentially Mencian, although Mengzi's thought lacks those metaphysical details which were mainly developed in later Ruism, especially in the so-called period of Neo-Confucianism. This is because firstly, for Mengzi, the concept of *Tian* has a religious connotation, and it refers to a supreme reality that humans need to gaze at with a feeling of awe. Mengzi says,

To fully fathom one's heart is to understand one's nature. To understand one's nature is to understand *Tian*. To preserve one's heart and nourish one's nature is the way to serve *Tian*. To not become deviant over the length of one's life but to cultivate oneself and await the right time is the way to take one's stand on fate.⁴⁹

It can be discerned that this quote already implies major elements of the constructed answer: *Tian* is the ontological origin of all beings in the world, including humans and their nature, so that it can be "understood" through understanding humans. However, without human efforts, *Tian*'s awesome power of harmonizing would not be automatically implemented humanely in the human world, so that humans need to cultivate themselves to serve *Tian*. While acknowledging the irrevocable finitude of human conditions, the "fate" of human individuals depends upon how we continually transform ourselves in order to await the right time of bringing real changes to the world.

We also have the second proof that Mengzi's thought resonates with the Protestant principle: while considering sages as extraordinary human exemplars, Mengzi does not think sages are perfect beings

⁴⁷ A recent translation and commentary on the Word of Hexagram Qian can be found at Cheng Yi, *The Yi River commentary on the Book of Changes*, ed. and trans. by L. Michael Harrington, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019: 27. My philosophical interpretation of these words can be found at Bin Song, "Shengsheng and the Confucian Sacred Canopy in the *Yijing*," in *周易研究 Zhouyi Studies* (English version), Vol.9, no.1 (June 2018): 33-55.

⁴⁸ Zhou Dunyi, "Book of Penetration" (通書), in *Collective Works of Zhou Dunyi* (周敦頤集), Beijing: Zhong Hua Shu Ju, 1990: 22.

⁴⁹ Mencius (Mengzi), *Mengzi: with Selections from Traditional Commentaries*, trans. by Bryan W. Van Norden, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company. 171. The translation of this text has been modified in this response.

stripped of any mistake or failure. For instance, while commenting upon the unforeseeable consequence of the appointment of Guang Shu by the Duke of Zhou, a sage recognized by Mengzi and the Ru tradition, Mencius says that:

The Duke of Zhou was the younger brother to his older brother Guan Shu. Was the Duke of Zhou's mistake (of the appointment) not, after all, appropriate? Furthermore, when the gentlemen of ancient times made a mistake, they corrected it. When the gentlemen of today make a mistake, they stick to it. The mistakes of ancient gentlemen were like eclipses of the Sun or Moon. The people all saw them. When they fixed their mistaking, the people all look up to them. The gentlemen of today do not only stick to their mistakes, they even rationalize them.⁵⁰

In other words, all Ru learners, the so-called gentlemen (junzi), need to learn from sages who are dedicated to continually correcting their own mistakes and perfecting themselves.

Finally, I would say the third proof comes from Whitney's meticulous analysis (with which I also agree) on Mengzi's thought that human nature, notwithstanding with good potentials, is unfinished, and thus, needs continual refinement towards a supreme ideal.

Nevertheless, in comparison with these three aspects of Mengzi's thought, I would argue that Xunzi's thought is significantly different from it, and the difference gives us good reasons to doubt whether the Protestant principle registers in Xunzi's thought as well. Therefore, my disagreement is with Whitney's interpretation of Xunzi on this issue.

Although the wondrous power of *Tian* to generate things in the world gets acclaimed,⁵¹ *Tian* in Xunzi's writing loses its religious connotation, and turns to merely imply the non-human nature so as to become an object to be "managed" and "utilized": "To exalt *Tian* and long for it, how can this compare to storing things and manage them? To obey *Tian* and praise it, how can this compare to managing what *Tian* yields and utilize it?"⁵² While intending to manage and utilize what *Tian* yields for the human world, Xunzi's ideal is to rely upon humans' organizing efforts to achieve the sustainable development of human

civilization, which entails a process of co-thriving harmonization among natural and human beings:

Thus, all the areas covered by heaven (*Tian*) and all the areas supported by earth produce their finest goods and contribute them for use. Above, (a true king) decorates (their government) with good and worthy men; below, they nourish the common people and bring them comfort and joy. This is called the great wonder!⁵³

Since *Tian* here is not the same supreme being deserving human worship and service as in Mencius' thought, Xunzi does not see *Tian* as an ultimate reality.

Then, what is the ultimate reality pivotal to Xunzi's project of harmonizing society through optimal ritualization? It is the super-intelligence of sages. As analyzed by Whitney's paper, Xunzi proposes a prominent proposition in the history of ancient Chinese thought: since the inborn human nature is ominously bad, it is sages who can "invent artifices" (起偽) so as to "transform the human nature" (化性), and here, artifices mean rituals. Xunzi says,

In ancient times, the sage kings saw that because people's nature is bad, they were deviant, dangerous, and not correct, unruly, chaotic and not well ordered. Therefore, for their sake they set up ritual and right standard, and established proper models and measures. They did this in order to straighten out and beautify people's inborn dispositions and nature and therefore correct them, and in order to train and transform people's inborn dispositions and nature and thereby guide them, so that for the first time they all came to order and conformed to the Way.⁵⁴

But how can sages invent the right rituals for the sake of harmonization? Xunzi thinks it is through the function of sages' heartmind (xin, 心), which can discern the pattern-principle (li, 理) in varying contexts so as to have the related social and natural realities dynamically and harmoniously fit together. Therefore, another important proposition of Xunzi's philosophy: "ritual is rooted in the unalterable pattern-principle."⁵⁵

Understood as such, three points are crucial for us to understand why beyond sages, there is nothing more significant for Xunzi's Ruist project of harmonization: firstly, *Tian* yields raw materials for humans to utilize to sustain our civilization, and thus, *Tian* loses its religious connotation and does not deserve worship. Secondly, no sage, no ritual. And it is the super-

⁵⁰ Mencius (Mengzi), *Mengzi: with Selections from Traditional Commentaries*, 58.

⁵¹ See Chapter 17: 45, in Xunzi, *Xunzi: the Complete Text*, Trans. Eric L. Hutton, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014: 176. The translation of this text has been modified in this response.

⁵² Xunzi, *Xunzi: the Complete Text*, 180.

⁵³ Xunzi, *Xunzi: the Complete Text*, 74.

⁵⁴ Xunzi, *Xunzi: the Complete Text*, 248-249.

⁵⁵ Xunzi, *Xunzi: the Complete Text*, 221.

intelligence of sages that provides the ultimate reason why needed rituals are invented. Finally, for Xunzi, sages never err:

The sage bases himself on humaneness and right standard, hits exactly on what is right and wrong, and makes his words and practices match up completely, all without the slightest misstep.⁵⁶

Given these three features of Xunzi's thought, it is not unwarranted for us to conclude that the Protestant principle does not register here. For Xunzi, sages are real historical figures, and they are the inventors of rituals. Since these sages can never err, and hold the absolute authority to preside over the process of ritualization, I have no reason to jettison my concern that this type of philosophy would lead to authoritarianism. A challenging question we can ask to Xunzi is that: if a set of rituals invented by a sage turned out to be oppressive to a certain group of human beings, how could the rituals be corrected and reformed? Should we therefore expect the rising of another sage? What if this new sage also wrong? And another sage? ... In other words, in order to face the challenge in Xunzi's terms, we will be trapped in a vicious cycle to no avail. Noticeably, Chinese history did provide its episodes after Xunzi to prove that Xunzi's thought indeed risked inhumane authoritarianism: that's when Xunzi's thought was divested of its moral commitment by legalist thinkers, and the resulting legalist thought helped to buttress up the cruel Qin Dynasty (221-206 B.C.) which buried Ru scholars and burned Ru classics.

As for the aspect of Xunzi's thought on unfinished human nature that is taken by Whitney as another proof of the concerned registration in Xunzi's thought, I would point out that for Xunzi, the goal of a Ru scholar's seemingly insatiable learning process is to become a sage.⁵⁷ However, since sages are absolutely authoritative and never err, the apparently dynamic nature of Ruist learning in Xunzi's thought cannot provide the needed evidence either.

At the end of this response, I would emphasize that, please do not take me wrong. Yes, I claim that Xunzi's thought does not register the Protestant principle, and therefore, contains "demonic" elements per Tillich's understanding of the term. However, this does not entail my outright dismissal of Xunzi's thought. As the

great synthesizer at the end of classical Ruism, Xunzi has furnished a very sophisticated, empirical approach to moral psychology. In particular, he highlights the human heartmind's ability of discerning pattern-principles in human praxis, and hence, of building ritual systems for the sake of social harmonization. This empirical and institutional approach of ritualization is significantly different from Mengzi who tends to ground ritual systems in the unchanging metaphysical traits of human existence and the cosmos. Considering the immensely complex nature of contemporary society, which is beyond any traditional Ruist thinker's imagination, I believe Xunzi's approach of social harmonization, despite an alternative to the mainstream Ruist thought in history, might be more consequential. However, this promising prospect of Xunzi's thought is premised upon the idea that we must eliminate the demonic elements in Xunzi's thought. To conclude my response, I will express my hope that one day, scholars can come up with a more robust form of modern Ruist thought that combines the advantages of both Mencius's and Xunzi's insights.

Paul Tillich, Boston Confucianism, Theology of Religions: a Short Reflection from the Perspective of Theo-dao

Heup Young Kim, PhD (Kim, Hüb-yǒng 金浚榮)⁵⁸

Dr. Bin Song kindly asked me to make a presentation on Tillich and Confucianism in this panel of the North American Tillich Society at the 2019 Annual Meeting of American Academy of Religion, but I refused. For I am not a Tillich scholar and felt presumptuous to speak about Tillich's theology in front of distinguished Tillich scholars, and I have distanced from Western theologies for decades to focus on the formulation of a Theology of Dao (Theo-dao) as an East Asian theologian. However, he continued to plead with Dr. Lawrence Whitney's paper.⁵⁹ With his agreement, thus, I take this opportunity to share some thoughts on Tillich, Boston Confucianism (Ruism), and recent American theologies of religions.

Paul Tillich and Confucian-Christian Dialogue

Theo-Dao I have been proposing is an East Asian/Korean contextual theology in and through

⁵⁶ Xunzi, *Xunzi: the Complete Text*, 64.

⁵⁷ See Chapter 1: 130, Xunzi, *Xunzi: the Complete Text*, 5.

⁵⁸ In the US libraries, my name is Romanized in two ways. I am using 'Heup Young Kim,' but major US libraries use 'Kim Hüb-yǒng' according to the McCune-Reischauer system. Most of my

monographs are under the latter name, but my book chapters and articles are still under the former.

⁵⁹ Lawrence Whitney, "Confucianism and Tillich's Protestant Principle, presented at the American Academy of Religion, November 22, 2019, San Diego."

Confucian-Christian dialogue.⁶⁰ It sees Western theologies still in inherited dualism, namely, *theo-logos* (classical theologies) and *theo-praxis* (liberation theologies). Adopting holistic dao (道) as the theological root-metaphor, *theo-dao* offers a new paradigm of global theology to move beyond this theological dualism of logos and praxis. Here dao, of course, does not just refer to Daoism but closer to Neo-Confucianism.

When writing the doctoral dissertation on Confucian-Christian dialogue between Wang Yang-ming and Karl Barth, I met both Julia Ching and Hans Küng immediately after their co-publication of *Christianity and Chinese Religions* (1989)⁶¹ and asked their advice on my dissertation project. Both of them unanimously inquired why I wrote with Barth, whom they thought to be an impossible person to make an interreligious dialogue with other religions at that time and suggested Paul Tillich instead. Küng established a famous doctoral thesis that there is no need for the schism between Catholicism and Protestantism on the doctrine of justification if Barth's doctrine is understood correctly.⁶² Similarly but beyond the Western Christian horizons, in the dissertation, I argued that there are remarkably thick resemblances between the Confucian (Wang) notion of Self-Cultivation and the Christian (Barth) doctrine of Sanctification.⁶³ Later, Küng sent me a note appreciating this work. It would be the first work to make Barth in dialogue (or comparative theology) with non-Christian traditions, especially an East Asian tradition. Almost three decades afterward, American Reformed theologians, too, begin to see Barth as a comparative theologian.⁶⁴

Neo-Confucianism, at least Korean Neo-Confucianism, was a study of dao (道學) that takes propriety (禮) and reverence (敬) seriously. Consisting of two components meaning head (首) and action (行), Chinese character dao (道) literally means 'the unity of knowing and acting' for whose doctrine Wang Yang-ming is famous. Karl Barth, likewise, insisted on the unity of theology and ethics, but Tillich rejected ethics tied with theology. This difference is perhaps due to their backgrounds

between Calvinism and Lutheranism, which emphasize sanctification and justification respectively. In this sense, Barth's theology is closer to a study of dao (and *theo-dao*), while Tillich's theology is a more typical Western logos theology (*theo-logos*).

A fundamental question for Tillich from the perspective of *theo-dao* is whether he understood the real meaning of Dao? Whether his notion of ultimate concern can embrace the depth of Dao? Or whether Tillich, as a propagator of 'existential theology of being,' perceived the theological significance of ultimate nothingness sufficiently (ST 1.2.1)? Although he dealt with non-being, it seems to be only with reservation or more likely in a negative or inferior antithesis (finitude or the estrangement between essence and existence) of being. In Daoism and Neo-Confucianism, however, nonbeing and being form one as *yin* and *yang* compose a *Taiji* (無極而太極). David Chai made a helpful comparative study between Tillich and Zhuangzi and concluded:

Herein is where Zhuangzi's meontology surpasses Tillich's *ex nihilo* hybrid. Unlike Tillich, Zhuangzi does not "weaponize" nonbeing by turning it into the ultimate threat facing being; on the contrary, he takes nonbeing to be the root and mutual partner of being. In this way, the world is nourished, not harmed, by nonbeing, living freely and without despondency.⁶⁵

Since Western theological ontology like Tillich's disregards non-being or regards it only as a negative dialectics to being, it inevitably entails a conflict (not harmony) paradigm when the ontological necessity for change or becoming occurs. From this vantage point, Tillich's claim that the Protestant Principle is universal and eternal (as Whitney indicated) can be viewed as a Tillichian way of justifying this ontological weakness, self-contradictory to his insistence that only being is ontological. It will be further elaborated later.

Boston Confucianism

As a 28th generation descendant of the Korean Confucian family, first of all, I have been suspicious of whether Boston Confucianism (Ruism) can be more than an intellectual Confucianism, though appreciating it as a vital movement for this age. Can one be a genuine

⁶⁰ Heup Young Kim (Hüb-yǒng Kim, *A Theology of Dao, Ecology and Justice* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2017).

⁶¹ Hans Küng and Julia Ching, *Christianity and Chinese Religions*, 1st ed (New York: Doubleday, 1989).

⁶² Hans Küng, *Justification: The Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic Reflection*, 1st ed (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004).

⁶³ Heup Young Kim (Hüb-yǒng Kim, *Wang Yang-Ming and Karl Barth: A Confucian-Christian Dialogue* (Lanham, Md: University Press of America, 1996).

⁶⁴ Martha L. Moore-Keish and Christian T. Collins Winn, eds., *Karl Barth and Comparative Theology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019).

⁶⁵ David Chai, "Paul Tillich, Zhuangzi, and the Creational Role of Nonbeing," *Philosophy East & West* 69, no. 2 (April 2019): 352.

Confucian only by reading and understanding Confucian scriptures and literature but without learning and practicing the complex and highly nuanced Neo-Confucian system of *li* (propriety) in which humility (not epistemological immodesty) and moral conduct (not ethical hubris) in everyday life are essential? The main issue of Neo-Confucianism that takes one's relationship with others (仁) most seriously is whether one treats other(s) through dignified propriety with sufficient reverence, which is more important than the level of knowledge one has. For this discernment, feeling through the mind-and-heart is more crucial than the cognitive depth of others' verbal expression or logic. Further, as a Korean, I am worried that Boston Intellectual Confucianism will become a school that reproduces Confucian ideologies centered on China. First of all, it is wrong to identify Confucianism as a Chinese religion. Although Christianity originated in Palestine or Israel, we do not call it Palestinian or Israeli religion. Confucianism is not only a Chinese religion, just as Christianity or Buddhism is not only a Palestine or an Indian religion. Further, as Tu Wei-ming said, it is not China but Korea that was "undoubtedly the most thoroughly Confucianized" country and still is as the only predominantly Confucian society in the world today.⁶⁶ Hence, 'Confucianism as a Chinese religion' is a misnomer. Furthermore, this expression can be offensive to Koreans because it reminds Koreans of thorny memories of Sinocentric imperialism in the history of East Asia. Thus, it would be more appropriate to call Confucianism inclusively as an East Asian religion or tradition rather than exclusively Chinese. Moreover, although I understand the need for an alternate term for Confucianism, I am not so convinced with 'Ruism,' because *Ru* is also according to the Chinese pronunciation (Romanization) of character 儒, whereas its Korean pronunciation is different (*Yu*).

Protestant Principle and Confucianism

I may add two points to Lawrence's paper. First, as already mentioned, the Protestant Principle would be a logical result of the static ontology and dualism of Western theology. Tillich did not seem to liberate sufficiently from the modern Western premise that historical development can be achieved only through hierarchical dialectics, where finite and infinite can never be harmonized together (cf., *coincidentia oppositorum*). Neo-Confucianism with the ontology of Ultimate Paradox of *Taiji* (Non-Ultimate is the Ultimate 無極而太極) does not regard the relationship between Being and Non-Being as hierarchical and

confrontational but as relational like yin and yang in the *Taiji* (when yin reaches the extreme, it becomes yang and vice versa). The need for the Protestant Principle in Western Christianity is because it does not have the robust ontology of change. If a change occurs, it needs a dialectical logic for coping with the change, such as the Protestant Principle. Tillich should have known this ontological flaw of Western Christian theology so that he argued the Protestant Principle is more enduring than Protestantism. However, Confucianism defines that being itself is of change. It changes from non-being to being for cosmogony and from yin to yang for life-giving, and vice versa. The *Book of Changes* (易經) characterizes that life (道) itself is a continuous change (一陰一陽謂之道) like breathing. It also defines life (易) as a reversal (逆) against the general trajectory of the force like trees grow against gravity. Yes, there is something like the Protestant Principle in Confucianism. However, it is more ontological and constitutional than merely epistemological or antithetical.

Second, the debate between Mencius and Xunzi on human nature would be better compared in a broader picture of the relationship between Confucianism and Christianity, namely, in comparison with the parallel debate between Augustine and Pelagius. In the Christian theistic context, on the one hand, Augustine's main concern in dealing with human nature was theodicy. As a theologian, he needed to charge the reason for existing sin and evil to the human being in order to justify God as the good Creator. In the Confucian non-theistic context, on the other hand, Mencius needed to find the ontological foundation from which the human can overcome the evil in the world to enable one to do good. For this reason, he argued that humanity as the Heavenly Endowment (天命之謂性) is ontologically good, which Wang Yang-ming further developed in terms of the innate knowledge of good (良知). In other words, while Pelagius and Mencius were right in the ontological sense (體), Augustine and Xunzi would be right in the practical sense (用). In the histories of both traditions, this parallel polar relationship exists *de facto* composing a unity of opposites (as *Taiji* and *tǐyòng*) and continuously appears in their related themes. For example, between *li* (理) and *xin* (心) in Neo-Confucianism and between faith and deed in Christianity.

⁶⁶ See Tu Wei-ming, *Confucianism in a Historical Perspective* (Singapore: The Institute of East Asian Philosophies, 1989), 35;

also, James H. Grayson, *Korea: the Religious History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 216.

Recent American Theologies of Religions

After Tillich, Western theologians have been participating in interreligious dialogue with other religious traditions. From the standpoint of theo-dao, however, they still seem not to move much beyond Eurocentric worldviews. Even John Hick and Hans Küng, two famous pioneers of pluralism and inclusivism, also are not so much exceptional. Notably, it is evident in their rejecting dual or multiple religious belonging (or citizenship), perhaps based on their European mono-religious experiences with violent religious war phobia.⁶⁷ Recently, a genre called 'comparative theology' appeared and now seems to lead the American theology, followed by 'theology without walls' or 'transnational theology.' However, it is doubtful how much different comparative theology can be from a new (twenty-first-century) version of the Jesuit missiology of Matteo Ricci. 'Theology without walls' and 'trans-religious theology' look even weirder. It looks like American theologians are trying to cover up dreadful mistakes and misconduct that Western Christianity has committed in Asia under the name of mission and evangelism of the Good News. In East Asia, our plural religions, such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, had been peacefully together for millennia with no brutal religious wars and conflicts (and 'without walls') before Western Christianity came in. However, missionaries from Western churches built confrontational walls against our religions and cultures for the sake of their aggressive membership expansion. Their heirs are now saying, "Since we no longer need the walls, let us remove them!" What an irresponsible and sneaky position bypassing necessary repentances and compensations for their deplorable missiological and theological failures that have often been causing irreversible religious and cultural damage throughout Asian countries. The Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS), the unique ecumenical platform representing Christian theologians and scholars in the whole of Asia, issued the following statement reviewing the Western mission in Asia:

This Congress aimed at consolidating and advancing the new paradigm of Christian life among the rich variety of religious traditions of Asia. We acknowledge that the Christian mission in Asia has been to a great extent a failure if measured by its own aims. The failure emerged from its unhelpful theology of religions and its missiology... Christians now must humbly acknowledge that in these many ways God has always been savingly

present in the continent. In its failure to acknowledge these facts, the Christian mission in Asia was arrogant and colonialist...

The modern missionary era in Asia... was, to a great extent, a dismal phase with hostile, aggressive, and even arrogant attitudes to the other faiths. The local cultures and religious traditions of Asia were often looked upon as inferior and to be replaced by Christianity and Western cultural traditions. The missionary praxis, in general, was one of converting and baptizing people of other religions and extending the churches at the cost of the social, cultural and religious values that constituted their inherent sense of dignity and identity.⁶⁸

American (and Western) theologians and scholars should listen carefully to reflect on this honest message from the hearts of Asian theologians before attempting any theological engagements with Asian religions and cultures! Whatever forms of theologies originated from the West, whether comparative theology, theology without walls, or trans-religious theology, we hope that it should not be another "unhelpful theology of religions and its missiology" for Asia and other continents. Do Not Spoil Our Metaphors!

Rescuing Xunzi and Tillich

Lawrence A. Whitney, PhD, LC†

I am deeply grateful for these enjoinders provided by my dear friend and colleague, Bin Song, and the inimitable and provocative Heup Young Kim. I confess that I was rather nervous to hear that Bin Song was recruiting Professor Kim to be a respondent to my paper, and then relieved when he declined. I should have had greater confidence in Bin Song's persistence, of course, and Professor Kim does not disappoint in raising issues and questions worthy of my trepidation. Alas, I am only able here to point in a few directions toward responses, rather than elaborating fully fleshed-out answers.

Professor Kim questions the adequacy of Paul Tillich as a dialogue partner with Confucianism in part on the basis of their divergent ways of conceiving the relationship between theology and ethics. Undeniably, Tillich was skeptical of ethics overly determined by

⁶⁷ See Heup Young Kim, "Multiple Religious Belonging as Hospitality: a Korean Confucian-Christian Perspective," in *Many yet One? : Multiple Religious Belonging*, eds. Reniel J. R. Rajkumar and Jopsh P. Dayam (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2016), 75-88.

⁶⁸ Daniel S. Thiagarajah and A. Wati Longchar, eds., *Visioning New Life Together among Asian Resources: The Third Congress of Asian Theologians* (Hong Kong: CCA, 2002), 294-295.

theology, as evidenced in his correspondence with Emanuel Hirsch in 1934-35. Therein, Tillich drew upon the Protestant principle in order to critique Hirsch's ethics of national loyalty toward Germany.⁶⁹ Given the results in Germany of an overly theologized nationalist ethic, and the problematic nationalisms to which Confucianism has contributed in East Asia, perhaps Confucianism has something to learn from Tillich on this point. Indeed, most of us Boston Confucians would want to be judged not only on our erudition but also our moral conduct, as Professor Kim suggests should be the case. Yet the *raison d'être* of the Boston Confucian movement is to demonstrate the portability of Confucianism, and thereby confound its sequestration to East Asian nations and cultures.⁷⁰

The larger issue Professor Kim raises with respect to Tillich has to do with the capacity of Tillich's ontology to cope with change and the significance of ultimate nothingness. Unfortunately, Professor Kim relies on a straw man interpretation of Tillich's ontology recently promulgated by David Chai. In fact, Tillich relished dealing with nonbeing. As Ray L. Hart notes in *God Being Nothing: Toward a Theogony*, "The 'beyond' that sources God and to which both God and creature return, which precisely is not a 'this or that' (redolent of Paul Tillich's 'God beyond God'), Eckhart names the *nomen innominabile*, the unnameable name, nothing or nonbeing."⁷¹ For Tillich, ultimate nonbeing is indeterminate, and thus incapable of being in dialectical relationship with being, as Professor Kim represents him believing. Thus, the Protestant principle is not a justification of ontological weakness. Rather, the Protestant principle derives from the ultimate indeterminacy that grounds Tillich's ontology, much like the indeterminacy Professor Kim discusses grounding many East Asian ontologies. There is thus much fertile ground for comparative engagement between Tillich and East Asian ontologies. The respective chapters by Au Kin Ming and Ellen Y. Zhang in *Paul Tillich and Asian*

Religions are profitable examples of doing so, albeit with respect to Buddhism.⁷² We would do well, however, to heed Professor Kim's admonition against doing so from a position of retrenchment within Eurocentric worldviews. Tillich similarly "prophetically announces the rising global church in which the New Being in Christ has been latent but is being made manifest, not according to western designs and schemes, but according to the dialectics of the cultures in which they arise." Indeed, it is in his very theology of mission that Tillich insists upon the very humility, vulnerability, and deference⁷³ that Professor Kim identifies as lacking in contemporary American theologies of religions.

I am deeply grateful for Bin Song having advanced my argument regarding the presence of the Protestant principle in Confucianism among the later Neo-Confucians. Our disagreement lies in the proper interpretation of Xunzi. In this, I take Bin Song to more closely echo our mutual teacher, John H. Berthrong,⁷⁴ whereas I more closely follow our other mutual teacher, Robert C. Neville.⁷⁵ The trick is explaining the differences in interpretation without unduly burdening readers with the internecine debates among the south-of-the-Charles River contingent of Boston Confucians. There are two issues. The first has to do with whether Xunzi views Tian as sufficiently unconditioned for the Protestant principle to hold. Bin Song argues not because Xunzi allows that humans have agency with respect to Tian. I argue that Tian is sufficiently unconditioned because, while humans exert some reflexive agency with respect to it, there would be no humans to so act without it: "Heaven and Earth are the beginning of life. Ritual and yi (appropriateness) are the beginning of order. The gentleman is the beginning of ritual and yi."⁷⁶ Humans have agency within the realm of humanly significant reality and in fact construct humanly significant reality through ritual and appropriateness. That said, humans are, and must still

69 A. James Reimer, "Theological Method and Political Ethics: The Paul Tillich-Emanuel Hirsch Debate," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 47, no. 1 (March 1, 1979): 135–135, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/XLVII.1.135>.

70 Robert C. Neville, *Boston Confucianism: Portable Tradition in the Late-Modern World* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000).

71 Ray L. Hart, *God Being Nothing: Toward a Theogony* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 125.

72 Au Kin Ming, "Ultimate Reality: A Comparative Study of Kitaro Nishida's Concept of Nothingness and Paul Tillich's Concept of God," in *Paul Tillich and Asian Religions* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 69–86; Ellen Y. Zhang, "When the Ground of Being Encounters Emptiness: Tillich and Buddhism," in *Paul Tillich and Asian Religions* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 87–107.

73 Lawrence Whitney, "Mission Theology and Interreligious Encounter," *Bulletin of the North American Paul Tillich Society* 37, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 45.

74 John H. Berthrong, "Religion in the Xunzi: What Does Tian 天 Have to Do with It?," in *Dao Companion to the Philosophy of Xunzi*, ed. Eric L. Hutton, Dao Companions to Chinese Philosophy (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2016), 323–51, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-7745-2_11.

75 Robert C. Neville, "Ritual and Religion: A Lesson from Xunzi for Today," in *Ritual and Religion in the Xunzi*, ed. T. C. Kline and Justin Tiwald (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2014), 63–80.

76 Xunzi, *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, trans. Eric L. Hutton (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), chap. 9.290. Parentheses inserted.

cope with, the underlying brute reality conditioned exclusively by Tian.

The second issue has to do with whether sages are in fact finite and conditional, or whether their status as sages confer upon them unconditionality, in no need of, and in fact incapable of, further refinement, reworking, and reformation. Bin Song simply asserts that this is the case for Xunzi, claiming that sages, by virtue of being a sage, are incapable of error. I agree with him that Xunzi views sages as behaving “without the slightest misstep,”⁷⁷ but I also recognize that for Xunzi, the title of “sage” is merely nominal, rather than permanent. For Xunzi, sages share the same inborn nature as every other human, achieving sagehood through learning and practice: “that in which the sage is like the masses, that in which he is no different than the masses, is his nature. That in which he differs from and surpasses the masses is his deliberate efforts.”⁷⁸ It is not that sages are then incapable of missteps, but rather that when they misstep, they stop being a sage, at least until they are corrected by further learning and practice. This is indeed a different view of sagehood than the more mystical appraisal Stephen Angle finds among Mencius and the writers of the *Analects*.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, it is in keeping with Xunzi’s developmental conception of sagehood and the functionalist role of consummate humanity (sages) as providing order to humanly significant reality. On this interpretation, then, the Protestant principle readily applies in the form of the ongoing need for learning and practice necessary to retain and re-attain sagehood. Indeed, on my account, sages for Xunzi are equivalent to humans living into the New Being in Jesus the Christ for Tillich, neither of which are ever unambiguous or finished.

If nothing else, I hope to have demonstrated that the interpretation of ancient Chinese texts is at least as complicated and confounding, and admitting of multiple, contradictory readings, as ancient wisdom from anywhere else, e.g. the Bible. So too, I hope that this symposium of views, taken together, demonstrate the intellectual fertility of engaging in conversation between Tillich and a wide variety of philosophical topics and lineages. Most of all, I hope that the Protestant principle, as elaborated by Tillich and as deducible in Confucianism, may engender the humility, vulnerability, and deference that enable genuine dialogue.

⁷⁷ Xunzi, chap. 8.450.

⁷⁸ Xunzi, chap. 23.120-122.

⁷⁹ Stephen C. Angle, *Sagehood: The Contemporary Significance of Neo-Confucian Philosophy* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009), chap. 1.1.1.

New Publications

Why Tillich? Why Now? forthcoming from Mercer Press, (2021), ed. Thomas G. Bandy, including essays by Adam Pryor, Frederick J. Parrella, Mary Ann Stenger, Christian Danz, Daniel Boscaljon, Jari Ristiniemi, Bin song, Kirk R. MacGregor, Bradford McCall, Thomas G. Bandy, Sharon Burch, Benjamin J. Chicka, Jeremy D. Yunt, Pamela Cooper-White, Devan Stahl, Rev. William G. Ressler, Rachel Sophia Baard, Zachary Royal, Matthew Lon Weaver, Ronald H. Stone, and Echol Nix.

Brokenness and Reconciliation, International Yearbook of Tillich Research/Internationales Jahrbuch für die Tillich-Forschung/Annales internationales de recherches sur Tillich, Vol. 14, ed. by Christian Danz/Marc Dumas/Werner Schüssler/ Bryan Wagoner, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter 2020.

Conferences

Deutsche Paul-Tillich-Gesellschaft. V. Tillich-Kongress 2021, "Paul Tillich in Dresden: Intellectual-Kurs in der Weimarer Republik." July 7-10, 2021. Register by Jun 18, 2021. For more information contact Christian Danz, Christian.danz@univie.ac.at.

In Memoriam

It is with sadness that I relate to the society that NAPTS Past-President (1999) the Rev. Dr. Ronald Bruce MacLennan passed away on Saturday, February 13, 2021 in Lindsborg, KS. [Read his obituary here.](#)