

State Philosophy, Micro-Fascism, and New Materiality; Paul Tillich's contribution to Recent Political Philosophy*

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ABSTRACT

The author analyzes the contemporary political situation in a more holistic way, from a relational /international perspective and in the light of the concept of “politics of affect” of Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. So life in society is understood in terms of interdependence, collaboration, co-creation and empowerment. He also refers to the monistic and holistic vision of the human creative process in Tillich. From there, he seeks to meet some of the holistic demands of recent human and cultural sciences, in particular the fascism as mentality issue, binary segmentation and the trajectory of denial. The answer lies in an ontology of the potentialities in the sense of Tillich and Agamben.

Keywords: Holism, Monism, politics of affect, Micro-fascism, new Materiality, potentialities.

FILOSOFIA DO ESTADO, MICRO-FASCISMO E NOVA MATERIALIDADE: A CONTRIBUIÇÃO DE PAUL TILlich PARA A FILOSOFIA POLÍTICA ATUAL

RESUMO

O autor analisa a situação política contemporânea de modo mais holista, a partir de uma perspectiva relacional/interacional e à luz da noção de “política do afeto”, de Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze e Félix Guattari. Assim, a vida em sociedade é entendida em termos de interdependência, colaboração, co-criação e empoderamento. Ele remete também à visão monista e holista do processo criativo humano em Tillich. A partir daí, ele procura encontrar algumas das demandas holistas das ciências

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humanas e culturais atuais, em particular o fascismo como mentalidade, a segmentação binária e a trajetória da denegação. A resposta encontra-se numa ontologia das potencialidades no sentido de Tillich e Agamben. **Palavras-chave:** holismo, monismo, política do afeto, microfascismo, nova materialidade, potencialidades.

“My spirit will rise from the grave,
and the whole world will know that I was right.”
—Adolf Hitler, April 1945

“Hitler must now be removed from
the German people, not only outwardly but also inwardly.”

“His spirit must be banished from the German spirit.”
—Paul Tillich, September 1943¹

If we were to characterize recent political philosophy, we see a move from dualistic patterns of understanding to more holistic patterns. It is understood that we live in societal and cultural holarchies: life in society is understood in terms of interdependence, collaboration, and co-creation, not only from the individual-perspective but also from the relational/interactional perspective. There is also a move from seeing power as “power over” to understanding power as “power for.” On the individual, societal, and cultural level power might be understood as power for empowerment, as supportive action. To talk about the relational/interactional view gives space to the individual to individual relationship: it is only in relation to the Other that we become what we are; in interaction with each other we realize ourselves. The individual as a moral subject comes into being in relation to the Other; it is the Other who offers us the world with consciousness of human nature, culture, justice, and life.²

Speaking about the holarchy of individual/societal/cultural interaction helps us to lift up those societal, cultural, and environmental

1 Tillich, P. (1998). *Against the Third Reich*. Paul Tillich’s Wartime Radio Broadcasts into Nazi Germany. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, p. 191.

2 “But with this self-transcendence in the moral act, the dignity of person, the seriousness of culture, and the justice of life are made possible.” Tillich, P. (1960). “Questions and answers,” *bMS* 649/39 (2), March 10, p. 15.

phenomena that influence, affect, and effectuate us. There is the insight of seeing and feeling, or emotion, as an essential part of thinking and understanding; there is “the politics of affect” in the wake of Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari.³ The holistic understanding is not only about the individual/societal/culture interaction, but it is also about the individual as a whole: as a thinking, feeling, and willing person; about the potentials we are invested with. In this, there is the new materiality of understanding human beings as material beings in physical reality, not materialism as an ontological reductive category, but materiality as open-ended, emphasizing the human and the more-than-human potentials.

I think Paul Tillich, during the last two decades of his life, become more and more interested in this new materiality. While moving into a monistic view of reality, Tillich pointed that this view, grounded in the self-transcending process of life, could be characterized as naturalism or materialism: “I have no trouble with this labeling,” he said.⁴ In Tillich’s monistic and holistic view, there is “the unity of the rational with the vital, the bodily with the mental, the unconscious with self-consciousness, the intellectual with the emotional; this unity is the creative process in human beings. It is human beings as spirit, or a realm of life under the predominance of spirit[s].”⁵ One purpose of this paper is to try to meet some of the holistic demands of recent human and cultural sciences.

Fascism as a Mentality Issue

Since the Renaissance and times before, the understanding of power as “power over” has been one of the dominating features of Western cultural understanding. The other way of understanding power, as the “power for,” which we also find in Renaissance, has been passed

³ Massumi, B. (2015). *The Politics of Affect*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

⁴ “If naturalism is ecstatic i. e. going beyond itself, getting out of itself into the direction of the eternal, then I have no trouble with that labeling.” Tillich, P. (1960). “Questions and answers,” bMS 649/39 (2), March 10, 1960, p. 14).

⁵ Tillich, P. (nd). “The Doctrine of the Spirit.” bMS 649/53 (1). 1. Lecture, p. 3.

over and left behind. This other way of relating became a form of subjugated knowledge. Tillich points out that Nazi Germany's domestic and foreign policy was based on the "power over a nation (and) over continents and the earth itself."⁶ In National Socialism, "the powers of the most ancient past triumphed when Hitler gained power," he said.⁷ In Tillich's view, "Hitler was long seen coming" before this particular person took hold of the power over Germany and over Europe.⁸ What is fascism and neo-fascism other than this: totalitarian colonial dominating power over the other, set within the hierarchical pattern of understanding: as mentality in the individual; as mentality-structure in groups and societies; as a culture that glorifies the past and sees the past as the paradigmatic model for the present and for the future? Fascism gets its tools for the future from the past. It would be wrong to say that it is only backward looking, but it likes to construe future out of the past. Fascism is an absolute loyalty to the absolute ruler; the demonic collective uplifting of a finite person to infinite significance. As Daniel Guérin, Deleuze & Guattari writes: Hitler not only took power "over the German State administration," but "it was because from the beginning he had at his disposal micro-organizations giving him "an unequaled, irreplaceable ability to penetrate every cell of society."⁹ If we understood fascism as a mentality issue, as micro-fascism and as macro-fascism, as "power over," we might start to deal with the fascist in our own culturally formed mentality.¹⁰ If we identified the trajectory of denial upon which it is based we might find another mentality based on mutual understanding and common humanity with justice and love. Instead of excluding the others, we might welcome the Other.¹¹

⁶ Tillich, (1998), p. 71.

⁷ Ibid., p. 101.

⁸ Ibid., p. 181.

⁹ Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1998). *A Thousand Plateaus*. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press. p. 214.

¹⁰ Considering the use of words Tillich writes: "I avoid the word mental, but when I say spiritual this is more or less the same. It's only more embracing. It doesn't leave out what mental often does, the element of power in everything which the individual does in his or her spiritual functions." Tillich, P. (1959). "Religion in Higher Education." *BMS* 649/42 (8), p. 8.

¹¹ Levinas, E. (2007). *Totality and Infinity. An Essay on Exteriority*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Fascism is an historical product; if we get its order of production clear, where it comes from, what it is, and how it functions, we might be able to turn the tide. Philip Roth in his *The Plot against America* has said much about micro-fascism; so did Paul Tillich in his *Wartime Radio Broadcasts into Nazi Germany*. In Roth's book, it is the micro-fascism in the closest neighborhood that is one of the central driving forces. "What makes fascism dangerous," Deleuze and Guattari write, "is its molecular or micro-political power, for it is a mass movement: a cancerous body rather than a totalitarian organism."¹² "Molecular" is their characterization of the unconscious, of the synthetic level of mind where things link together and build *phantasma* and figures of thought, infused with desire and passion. In cancer, biological/physical powers of the body turn against the body. In fascism, desire turns upon itself and starts to "desire its own repression"; why this is so, "only micro-fascism provides an answer to the global question," Deleuze & Guattari write.¹³ When desire starts to repress itself, we are no longer content with life but we are agitated in many known and unknown ways. The surplus-feeling of repressed desire arises at the outer horizon of the conscious I. Micro-fascism gets its power from the surplus-feeling; it builds on the agitation of this very feeling. In one of his wartime sermons, Tillich pointed to micro-fascism in Germany: "The desire for life, which is natural for every person, is bent back into the desire for death, first the death of one's opponent and then one's own death."¹⁴ People were educated for death. National Socialists, Tillich said, "turned death into the object of desire."¹⁵ As an answer to the challenge of micro-fascism and fascism in general, Tillich points into the direction of life: life instead of death. As an answer to the challenge of fascism we could say that the knot of the bent desire is to be opened. Perhaps the longing for the lost past is also a surplus-feeling, explaining why fascism will build future on the past? "Today," Tillich said in one of the wartime sermons, "people in Germany know what death is. But do they

¹² Deleuze & Guattari, p. 215.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Tillich, (1998), p. 18.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 92.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 18.

also know what life is?”¹⁶ Fascism and Nazism are not only a German phenomenon; what is happening today shows that, but they have long cultural chains of production behind them. I think the question, “Do we know what life is,” is to be directed to all of us.

What I try to do is to give a picture of our historical, societal, and cultural situation and to discuss and to propose alternatives or alternative ways of action in that situation. Today we live in a local/global holarchy. Political philosophers write that “the modern political system is a global whole, unified and unifying.”¹⁷ If we live in a political/economical holarchy, then we have to look for holistic ways of meeting the situation. I think that Paul Tillich’s political thinking, as well as his thinking in general, is to be brought in dialogue with recent political philosophy. He had important ideas about the state of things, about the human/society/culture interaction in the modern world; about the formation of individuals and societies by cultural patterns of understanding; and about the possible ways of action. His thinking on politics and culture is highly relevant for trying to understand what is happening in the world today. In Tillich’s view, life as we know, is ambiguous, a mixture of existential and essential elements. This does not mean that all things in human life are a mess, even if that seems to be the case when taking a look around; it means that we move with both elements in our interpretation.

What is Going On?

Today’s Nazi movement is an international movement. Recently, the Nordic neo-Nazi movement had a meeting in Finland. One purpose of this meeting was to discuss what symbols and narratives could be used in recruiting children and young people for the movement. What we see today is that Nazis target children, trying to win them for their cause. In some Baltic countries, forest camps are established for young people in order to introduce them into Nazi rituals and ideology: camp fires are made to glow not only in the woods but in the minds of young people. In

¹⁷ Deleuze & Guattari, (1998), p. 210.

Sweden, Nazis openly march on the streets and anti-Semitic propaganda and anti-Semitic deeds are common. Synagogues are attacked and Jewish people are violated. In October in Gothenburg, about 400 or 500 neo-Nazis demonstrated, planning to march past the town synagogue where the Jewish congregation was celebrating Yom Kippur. The neo-Nazis were met by 10,000 citizens demonstrating against them. In Charlottesville, North Carolina Nazis marched with torches, fire in hands and hatred in minds. Some leaders of the Swedish neo-Nazi movement were present in Charlottesville. In November 2017, 60,000 right-wing nationalists, people from ultra-right and from different countries, were demonstrating in Warsaw, shouting: “God, honor, the land,” also “We want God” and “For a pure Poland, for a white Poland.” Polish Minister of the Interior from the Law and Justice party, called the demonstration “beautiful.”¹⁸ The Third Reich knew the power of symbols, and so do today’s neo-Nazis: the Swedish Nazis do not use swastika but they use the “Tyr rune,” a symbol that was carried by those who were educated in the Nazi movement’s leadership schools.¹⁹ It is the power of the fascist and Nazi-symbols that is to be broken; the investment of desire into that world of symbols is to be exposed as it is: its purpose is to give the feeling of superiority for the adherents. One affective modulation of the surplus-feeling, anger and hatred, is canalized by another affective modulation: that of exclusive superiority.²⁰ In the surplus-feeling of the repressed desire, there is now the feeling of superiority. This affective modulation is a group phenomenon; the modulation has become a collective and a political force.

Fascism is not only on the level of macro-politics; it is not only run by corporations and institutions in search of prosperity, but it also gets its power from desire-investments, from micro-fascism. Charlie Chaplin writes in his autobiography that fascism is an international, global network with cells around the globe; in times of unrest the cells are activated, the global cell-system is set in motion.²¹ It is the political, social, and economic un- rest, the international/national unrest,

¹⁸ Svenska Dagbladet 20171113.

¹⁹ <https://www.adl.org/education/references/hate-symbols/tyr-runet> 20171031.

²⁰ Considering affective modulation, see Massumi (2015).

²¹ Chaplin, C (1964). *Min självbiografi/My Auto-biography*. Stockholm: Norstedt.

we should say, that sets the global underground network in motion, after a while it is filled with anger, hate, and reactive affects. Manipulating people, with the help of like-minded media and social media, canalize the hatred-filled movement for their own benefits. Through agitation, the movement becomes a collective force. Manipulating symbols, which are intended as attracting symbols, are introduced in media, social media, and public places like highway viaducts leading to central airports. Tremendous political and mental powers are in motion today in all countries. We simply cannot ignore the power of symbols. But there is more than the symbol- world: there are the images of the other and the underlying pattern of understanding set on the trajectory of denial. It is always the other or others that is to be blamed: “I have no part in this. You say it, not me.” I think there is a desperate longing for a lost world in fascism; there is a longing for wholeness. If fascism is a mentality and a symbol- world, only the holistic way of meeting it will do. If it is a local/global phenomenon, one state or one nation cannot deal with it alone; it must be met with global means through a global mental or spiritual change: the mentality or the spirit that makes the position of the absolute ruler possible, the sovereign despotic authority in whatever form—political, religious, cultural, societal—it comes, is to be banished from the local/global mentality so that it will not rise from its grave anymore.

Binary Segmentation and the Trajectory of Denial

Basic for Deleuze and Guattari is desire-production; materiality of life is run by desire-production, or the material side. On the formal side of life, the patterns or constellations of understanding, assemblages as they call them, set the order of desire. Deleuze and Guattari coined the conception of “rhizome unconscious.” Instead of speaking about the root-system, they preferred so speak about the rhizome. Root-system is under the plant at a particular spot; a rhizome is all over and it is spreading itself all over. The individual and the collective unconscious have rhizome character. Micro-fascism gets its power from the rhizome. “Desire,” they write, “is never undifferentiated instinctual energy, but itself results from a highly developed,

engineered set up rich in interactions: a whole supple segmentarity that processes molecular energies and potentially gives desire a fascist determination.”²² To process molecular energies is to make use of the underground unconscious rhizome connections. It is, among other things, to let the blaming gossip, this societal disaster, to have its way both among individuals and in media. Bullying is a micro-fascist strategy: the blaming gossip living from the surplus-feeling. It is those feelings and the patterns that make it possible that are to be caught up, if the change is to come.

“A whole supple segmentarity,” when interpreted in a binary way, is the split between the conscious and the unconscious mind, between the rationalized consciousness and the forgotten sensing body. The split segmentarity is run from the top down by the “power over.” The fascist determination of desire in individuals, in groups, and in societies is the power over the other, nature, animals, plants; it is power over the earth itself; it is the power over the body. Both sides of the binary segmentation are still there—the one side triumphant, the other side repressed. In fascism, the surplus-feeling of repressed desire does not only get the modulation of superiority, but the repressed body is identified as the bearer of degeneration and filth, as something to be attacked in degenerate art. It is essential to fascism that superiority and filth are found together: they are brought together by the binary segmentation and, ultimately, by the fascist determination of desire. Shadows—surplus-feelings—are chased, but the worst thing is that these shadows become political powers in the collective paranoia, as the repressed elements are seen in certain groups of people. The human dignity is taken away from these people and they are made into numbers. They become, what Agamben calls, “bearers of bare life,” where their only property is that they are still alive.²³ It is the nomadic people, camp people, and refugees, that the institutional powers, build on the “power over,” attack in fascism, in Nazism, and in bio-politics. In the proclamation of a ban and in camps, they are allowed to be killed. Agamben identifies a pattern of understanding

²² Deleuze & Guattari, (1998), p. 215.

²³ Agamben, G. (1998). *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

behind the excluding strategy: the juridical/political model with the binary structure between the sovereign power of the ruler or state and the state of exception. The bearers of bare life are placed in the state of exception. In Agamben's view, the juridical/political model has regulated the civil society since the times of the Roman law.²⁴ To attack the bearers of bare life is to deny our common humanity. It is to go over the boundary of humanity, and the crimes against humanity are to be met by the international law and its retributive/proportional justice. This is one side of the situation; the other side concerns the victims and their fate. How about the victims in the past and in the present? How to restore their dignity? Is this possible at all?

Deleuze and Guattari speak about the binary segmentations as characterizing the world we live in: adults/children, men/women, normal/different, native people/foreigners, consciousness/unconscious, striated space/smooth space, high rationality/low desire. In a binary, split segmentation only one pole is preferred at the cost of the other pole. The other side of the constellation does not disappear: it sinks into the unconscious, arises as the surplus-feeling, and becomes a political force making use of rhizome connections. We might say that Western cultural patterns have been fashioned in a dualistic, binary way. Keeping us within a pole, the trajectory of denial is there; for example, we rational, uplifted and cultivated people deny the low desires of the masses. In Tillich's view, the rationalized consciousness—"empty intellect" he called it—was one of the factors behind the rise of fascism and Nazism in Germany. "Faith in the intellect," he said, "had been lost...because the intellect that was found in oneself and in others did not issue from life."²⁵ People with rationalized consciousness and rationalized reason (technical reason) could not resist the power of the collective unconscious, and "that which is contrary to intellectual life has won power over them," Tillich said.²⁶ We should use the power of reason to integrate those powers that are against reason; otherwise "the aspects of life that are not shaped by the mind rebel against the

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Tillich, (1998), p. 58.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 58.

mind and destroy it,” Tillich said.²⁷ In Tillich’s view, we should find “the passion that overcomes hatred, which does not avenge... National Socialism can fear nothing more than such a victory. Only if its force of hatred is conquered is itself conquered.”²⁸ If the force of hatred is from and through the rhizome unconscious, arising as a surplus-feeling, it is only at the level that it is to be conquered. How to manage with that? If we identify the surplus-feeling and the trajectory of denial, this identification is a step away from the fascist-determination of desire. We are meant to be wholes, with the rational and the vital intact, aren’t we?

Patterns of Understanding or Underlying Wholes

The work of philosophy is to offer wholes. Kant did this, Hegel did this, and feminist thought does this by offering new societal structures and patterns of understanding instead of patriarchal structures.²⁹ Adherents claim that even the Alt-Right movement likes to offer wholes: patterns and structures of white supremacy instead of the leftist/feminist structures.³⁰ In the Alt-Right movement we find the trajectory of denial: people or races are not to be blended with each other: “We, better white persons, know better and we are not to be blended with inferior races.” Fascism, Nazism, Neo-Nazism and the Alt-Right movement seem to live from the same mentality-structure; it is at the structural level they are to be met. It is not only the symbol-world that is to be exposed, but the underlying binary pattern or model with its trajectory of denial has to be exposed as well. And more than this, the dimension of potentiality, the root of our common humanity, has to be lifted up. An alternative holistic pattern to the binary patterns could be sketched in the following way: The rationalized consciousness is congruent with reflection, abstraction, general concepts, and ideology. We might say that informative knowledge, when we construe concepts and theories in abstraction, is the *knowledge of first degree*. Facts, as far as they are referential, belong to this class of knowledge. Fake news

²⁸ Ibid., p. 65.

²⁹ Butler, J. *Bodies that Matter. On the discursive Limits of “Sex.”* New York: Routledge, 2011.

³⁰ Svenska Dagbladet, 20171106.

and many alternative facts seem to lack the referential object, which is the necessary condition for facts. In State Philosophy, if it operates with general concepts only, getting its power from an ideology, we find in the knowledge of first, general order. Knowledge in terms of patterns of understanding—as formations of desire—we might call the *knowledge of second degree*. In holistic patterns of understanding, the rational and the vital meet each other; that we sense things, have cognitive value.³¹ Desire-production, while in touch with the potential dimension, we might call the *knowledge of third degree*. We have a whole in the light of which we are able to discuss things in an holistic way. For example, we are able to point out that potentials are driving forces behind the desire-production, but as such they are not from desire; they have a deeper ontological significance than that. The model makes it possible to identify that stratum of being in which potentials are to be found.

Potentialities Are in Life

Tillich drew attention to Aristotle and to Aristotle's talk of potentiality. He said that Aristotle's doctrine of potentiality and actuality has followed him throughout his life.³² During the anti-ontological era in philosophy, an era which today is passed, Tillich was accused of being an ontologist. Today ontology has entered into political philosophy. Giorgio Agamben claims that things will not change before we think through the relation between potentiality and actuality. We should think of the relation in a new way, compared with the way it was understood in traditional metaphysics. For the second, he claimed that we should seek the potentials in life; we should start from them in our philosophy of life.³³ Tillich grounded his late differential monism in life.

³¹ Damasio, A. (2012). *Self Comes to Mind. Constructing the Conscious Brain*. London: Vintage Books.

³² Tillich received "from Aristotle, for my theological thinking, the distinction between the two main ways of being, namely, *potential being* and *actual being*. And this permeates all my thinking." Tillich, P. (1960). "Philosophical Background of My Theology." *bMS* 649/68 (17), p. 7.

³³ Agamben, (1998).

The traditional way of interpreting potentiality and actuality is to see actuality as higher than potentiality; potentiality is dependent on the preceding actuality or the act. In this interpretation, all potentialities need some kind of actuality so that the potential powers are drawn into realization; first comes the actuality and after that the potentiality; potentialities are, given this interpretation, mere passivities. In traditional metaphysics, God is pure act: the sum of all positive actual powers, drawing the finite, created powers in human beings, animals, and plants to realization. In traditional metaphysics, when interpreted in terms of Finalism, it seems that the actuality of God rules over potentiality; God has the power over the potentialities of things. When this translates into history, history is no place for the creation of the genuinely new. When this translates into the societal order, those with the authority of God have the power over the others and those in their nature closest to God: men having power over women. When this translates into the political life, those in power, for example, the absolute rulers, have power over those who have a lower degree of realization and actuality, the lesser people. When this translates into the domain of knowledge and education, those with the expertise have the power over those who do not know yet. Agamben proposes another way than the traditional way in his interpretation of potentiality and actuality. Agamben writes,

One must think the existence of potentiality without any relation to Being in the form of actuality.... This, however, implies nothing less than thinking ontology and politics beyond every figure of relation, beyond even the limit of relation that is the sovereign ban. Yet it is this very task that many, today, refuse to assume at any cost.³⁴

Thinking ontology and politics, beyond every figure of relation, is to let potentiality to stand there on its own without letting any power over to rule over it or run from it. Agamben differentiates between two kinds of potentialities in Aristotle: generic potentiality and existing potentiality or potentiality as such.³⁵ The generic potentiality is

³⁴ Agamben, (1998), p. 47.

³⁵ Agamben, G. (1999). *Potentialities*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. p. 179.

exemplified in that a child grows up to become an adult. The existing potentiality is there on its own whether we realize it and actualize it or not. We might be capable of realizing it but we do not have to do this. It is “potential to not-do, potential not to pass into actuality.”³⁶ It is potentiality as such, not potentiality that waits for some actuality to put it on, which is the ground of potentiality. We might say that the natural and empirical sciences deal with the generic potentiality, as they seek for the causes of things. The humanity of humans, however, is linked with the existing potentiality.

Agamben sees the new understanding of potentiality in existing potentiality. Existing potentiality has its own darkness from which it steps out. This potentiality or “the originary figure of potentiality” contains its own passivity, darkness, and impotentiality. Agamben writes:

*Human beings are the animals who are capable of their own impotentiality. The greatness of human potentiality is measured by the abyss of human impotentiality.... The root of freedom is to be found in the abyss of potentiality. To be free is... to be capable of one's own impotentiality, to be in relation to one's privation. This is why freedom is freedom for both good and evil.*³⁷

What Tillich thought about human freedom and of potentiality is similar to Agamben's understanding: freedom is freedom for good and evil. What does this have to do with political philosophy, one might wonder? In Agamben's interpretation, the privation in potentiality, “its own non-Being...constitutes the essence of potentiality.”³⁸ Agamben continues: “Beings that exist in the mode of potentiality *are capable of their impotentiality*; and only in this way do they become potential. They *can be* because they are in relation to their own non-Being.”³⁹ It is, then, the existing potentiality that makes us into what we are, gives us our nature or essence, and not the generic potentiality only. Identity is, so to speak, an inner matter, given to us by our existing potentiality. There is the coming into being from the non-being of

³⁶ Ibid., p. 180.

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 182f.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 182.

³⁹ Ibid.

existing potentiality: “can be” overcomes non-being, constantly, we might say; there is the non-being and the positive “can be” in the existing potentiality. This means that the political existence is to be found in the ontological/political horizon of becoming human, not only in that what we are able to become in the power of something else outside ourselves, but what we “can be” or can become in the power of our inner existing potentiality. Politics, and with it ethics, is congruent with the roots of our existence: in being human or not, there is no other choice in this context. When this translates into political action, empowerment or supportive action is there. The supportive action is to create conditions for that which we can be. I do not think that the existing potentiality is an exclusive individual property: the existing potentiality in the individual links him or her with our common humanity; what happens in one, happens in all. Following the line of interpretation that we have given of Agamben, the line could be given an extremely individualistic interpretation, but I think that Tillich’s way of understanding the potential field as something common to all living things is truer to the matter in hand.

Considering potentiality, Tillich writes: “*Potential being* is the *power of being* which has not used its power but which might use it in every moment. It is not *non-being*; it is more than *non-being*.”⁴⁰ It is more than non-being, as it makes existence in time and place possible, making that we can be. That we can be is, in Tillich’s language, our power of being, and all things have their own power of being in the power of their potentiality. Our power of being is dependent on that how much of non-being we are able to overcome and so for all things. In Tillich’s view, the positive in life is the continuous over-coming of the negative, of non-being. We might say that the way Tillich understands the power of being in a thing is dependent on how much of the potential non-being it has been able to overcome; so for all things. In the end of his *Systematic Theology*, Tillich speaks about “the self in self-creativity,” which finds itself in the universal life.⁴¹ I think this is

⁴⁰ P. Tillich, (1960). “Philosophical Background of my Theology,” pp. 7f.

⁴¹ P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1974 (1963), p. 402.

the self that in self-transcendence has found itself: the self is given to itself. In Agamben's view, this is the act that characterizes the self in the existing potentiality.

In Tillich's view, there is the "universal essentialization."⁴² In this essentialization, all things have their "can be," but they become in interaction with each other. Life in Tillich's view is interaction. Tillich writes: "in the essence of the least actualized individual, the essences of other individuals, and indirectly, of all beings are present."⁴³ Essences are potentials. Creation, Tillich said, "means the whole of potentialities."⁴⁴ When God created the first atom, as Tillich affirms, God created the potentiality of all that today is a part of the universe, including human beings.⁴⁵ God did not plant a piece here and another there, as if the universe was a potting soil, but God created all of the potentials at the same time. In Tillich's view, if we are to believe his claim about essentialization, the potentials are connected with each other: in the potentiality of the individual, the potentialities of other individuals, of all beings are present. What happens in one individual realization has consequences for other individuals. It is here in essentialization as the eschatological event, that the restoration of human dignity is to be searched.

What we see in democracies today is an overtaking by experts, by people who believe they know better in the power of their position, knowledge, and rationalized consciousness; the authoritarian personality is there. We are not free from this. A new dictatorship is growing as the society grows more complex, impenetrable and diverse: the dictatorship of those who believe they know how to manage the local/global society, its politics, its economics, and its morals in the power of their knowledge. Voices are raised in America and in Europe for and against this dictatorship. If this knowledge is that of the knowledge of first degree, build on abstraction and representation, we should be

⁴² Ibid., p. 408.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 409.

⁴⁴ P. Tillich, "Ambiguities of life." *bms* 649/45 (7). March, 1, 1958, Lecture, p. 6.

⁴⁵ There is "the immanence of the dimensions and the "creation of human being with the atom and of atom with human being." Tillich, P. (1958). "Ambiguities of life." March, 1. Lecture, p. 6.

cautious: a general theory is used to mold the earth. I think that an allowance of the impotentiality of potentiality, this knowledge of the third degree, might give us a more enjoyable future than the expert-dictatorship is capable of offering. If we said that we do not have anything to do with the expert-dictatorship, then we also made ourselves into the victims of the trajectory of denial. If we said that the expert-dictatorship is built on the same mentality and mentality-structure as those movements we have spoken of here, we might have exposed a central phenomenon in our cultural heritage: the power over the earth itself, including all its beings through knowledge and authority. The trajectory of denial is to deny our common humanity and those potentials we have a share into. The strategy of empowerment is to admit that all beings, not just human beings, have the potentials that they long to realize in interaction with other potentials. Love, in Tillich's view, is the deepest driving power in life, conquering the negative in us, in our society and in our local/global holarchy. Love, Tillich writes, "is the movement of life itself, power is that which gives reality to life, and justice is that which gives structure to life."⁴⁶ Love, power, and justice come here from life. We are capable of political action: to change the affective modulation through anger and hatred for the affective modulation through love, the power of "can be," and justice. Agamben in his writings points to love as the ontological foundation of life as well.

⁴⁶ Tillich, P. (1954). "Love, Power and Justice." *bMS* 649/69 (8), p. 7.