

“One Moment of Beauty”: An East-West Dialogue of Paul Tillich and *Farewell My Concubine*

Kris H. K. Chong

School of Theology
Fuller Theological Seminary
296 N. Oakland Ave #18
Pasadena, CA, 91101. USA.
Email: krischong [at] fuller.edu

ABSTRACT— *This paper looks at Paul Tillich’s discourse on the religious dimension in art and culture, and the way Sandro Botticelli’s painting shaped his aesthetics. Since Tillich’s depiction of his encounter with beauty through art is so similar to a Beijing opera scene in Chinese filmmaker Chen Kaige’s movie, Farewell My Concubine, I will draw on Tillich’s aesthetic notions to dialogue with the motion picture. To my knowledge, there is no scholarly work in whole or in large part that analyzes Tillich’s thoughts in conjunction with this film from a theological perspective. At the same time, the opera scene discussed in this paper is also a less investigated aspect of this movie.*

Keywords— Paul Tillich, Botticelli’s art, Chinese cinema, aesthetics, religion

1. INTRODUCTION

In his famous short prose from 1955 “One Moment of Beauty,” German existentialist philosopher and theologian Paul Tillich relates in detail a transformative experience he had when viewing Sandro Botticelli’s painting, *Madonna and Child Singing with Angels* (Tillich 1987a, 234-235). Tillich’s transcendental encounter with beauty resembles the reaction of the male protagonist in the internationally acclaimed Chinese film, *Farewell My Concubine*. Among the film’s array of international awards,¹ was the Palme d’Or, the highest award of the Cannes Film Festival in 1994 as well as nominations for Best Foreign Film and Best Cinematography at the 66th Academy Awards in the same year.

This paper investigates the religious dimension of Paul Tillich’s aesthetic construct of art, and how it is expressed through Chen’s film. Since Tillich’s definition is grounded in Western aesthetics and *Farewell My Concubine* is a film produced by an ethnic Chinese filmmaker depicting traditional Chinese performing art, I will also highlight the underlying elements of aesthetics alluded to in the film thus broadening the East-West aesthetic dialogue. The overarching inquiry here is: How might we speak theologically concerning aesthetics or beauty as a possible “spiritual” experience using Tillich’s theology to engage film? Central to my discourse is also the re-conceptualization of Tillich’s theology of “art” as a much wider conception of “opera” as visual or performing art in relation to this film.

In the following sections, I will, first of all, briefly examine Tillich’s theology of art in conversation with his cultural and religious ideas. Next, I will review what is valuable in Tillich’s theology of art for theological aesthetics, which will provide the backdrop for the discourse in section three where I will juxtapose the theologian’s “one moment” of encounter with beauty with an encounter similarly experienced by the protagonist in *Farewell My Concubine*.

2. THE RELATIONSHIP OF HUMANITY, ART AND RELIGION IN CULTURE

To understand the relationship between art and religion for Tillich, we must first look at how he addresses existential issues. In the first of a series of lectures, Tillich raises the question “What is the nature of a being that is able to produce art?” (Tillich 1987b, 14). He postulates humanity as a combination of being and non-being, finitude (which it is) and infinitude (to which it belongs). Tillich believes that human beings are aware of the tension between their finiteness and the infinite in their time on earth. This awareness causes anxiety. From this tension a desire for unity emerges which may be expressed through both religious and artistic symbols. However, humans are self-centered beings prone to exclude and be excluded by other finite things. It is not surprising that humanity’s crisis in the first three decades of the 20th century has been a “desperate attempt [of man] to return to himself [*sic*]” (6).

There are various forms of knowledge that are pivotal to this return to self and to one’s participation in and reunion with other beings. While scientific knowledge shapes the structure and relation of a thing to other objects, only artistic

knowledge “penetrates into the depths of things which are beyond the reach of cognition.” Herein lies the key to artistic creation through which the power of being is experienced as something new and creates in us an awareness of the quality of things otherwise hidden to us. According to Tillich,

[i]n this sense, the history of art is the history of continuous discoveries. The repeated, often ecstatic joy in encountering such discoveries is rooted in the fact that intuitive participation in works of art liberates us from the loneliness of our separated existence in a much more radical way than cognitive participation can. In knowledge, distance and detachment always remain decisive. In art, union, that is, uniting love, dominates (16).

How does participatory knowledge enable reunion? Tillich identifies knowledge, art, and communion as the three basic elements paramount for humanity. The cognitive, artistic, and communal are the symbolic expressions through which humanity reaches out towards the infinite in finite separation. At the same time, human beings also possess a “finite freedom,” which is self-transcendent in technical (tool making) and deliberative (ethical-decision making) ways. Additionally, humanity is also “free from the bondage to the given” to create new means and ends. Through these means, a work of art is produced through a relationship between the self and the world with the desire to express “the realness of the real in the object” (Scharlemann 1985, 160). The object is that which embodies such a relationship of self to the world.

This is essentially Tillich’s world of art, one that can “express and transform the given” (18). Tillich explains that artistic freedom is a kind of imaginative play in which a world might be created beyond the structures of reality. Art then expresses this discovered reality, transforms the ordinary world into something beyond itself, and anticipates possibilities of existence in order to transcend what is known. This is what Tillich meant by art discovering and expressing its “realm of the given in forms which transcend the given” (18). While art expresses reality beyond the real and the ideal, it also desires to be re-united with the meaning of everything beyond the subjective outcry, one that echoes humanity’s desire to return to God (or the “ground of Being”, in Tillichian terms). Hence, salvation is anticipated in art. It is important to note that for Tillich, art bears the symbol of healing.

The substance of all such artistic or cultural creativity is religion. By “religion” Tillich is not referring to the church or instances of individual piety, but rather to “a discrete sphere within a culture in which revelatory experiences are openly transmitted through texts, liturgies, stories, clergy, and institution.” Religion in this sense functions as the substance of culture and generates meaning-making for all cultural activity. This is the locus of what Tillich refers to as the “ultimate concern.”

Religion as one’s “ultimate concern” is not restricted to any one sphere of human existence but is unconditional and relates to each moment of space and time. God as Creator occupies our world and the cosmos, so the “ultimate concern” is ever-present. As such, the boundary between the secular and the religious is crossed when religion’s “ultimate concern” unleashes life to the substance of culture in all the comprehensiveness of forms that it expresses and represents.

The relationship between culture and religion can also be conceived as that of a boundary between the religious (or sacred) and secular space according to the following often-quoted statement of Tillich:

Culture is religious wherever human existence is subjected to ultimate questions and thus transcended; and wherever unconditional meaning becomes visible in works that have only conditional meaning in themselves (Tillich 1966, 68-74).

In other words, when culture deals with human existence that concerns ultimate questions, and when unconditioned meanings are presented in frameworks with conditioned meaning, culture becomes religious. Consequently, there exists a harmonious relationship between culture and religion, in which human creative endeavor finds its unique space in light of theological convictions.

The “boundary” between religion and culture in Tillichian terms is indicative of Tillich’s theology of culture framework. For Tillich, religion concerns the Absolute, which is larger than culture and, therefore, is not subject to cultural interpretations. Yet self-contained, cultural forms do manifest religious (absolute) contents. In his often-quoted dictum that religion is the “substance of culture,” and culture is the “form of religion” (96), Tillich expresses the idea that in culture, the religious is directed towards substance (“unconditioned source”) through particular forms of meaning. Cultural forms are symbols of that substance through which symbols representative of religious substance can also be perceived. In other words, substance must be viewed through symbols.

Tillich’s primary concern here is to deal with the dualism between religion and culture that was prevalent in post-World War I Europe. Hence, for him, the finest cultural forms present themselves as the finitude of human existence, as seen through the lens of the human quest for the Infinite. These are the basic principles of Tillich’s philosophy of religion and culture, through which intellectual and social movements are to be understood; his main concern being a discussion that reflects the actual religious situation of the times. While political and social concerns must not overshadow doctrines, cultural interpretation is to be carried out through a religious lens.

In a sense, the unconditioned sphere does not demarcate the profane and the sacred, and there are no spheres that are entirely one or the other. While the holy “does not cease to be profane,” the profane “can profess the quality of holiness” (68-69). Tillich illustrates his conviction with the example that a priest and a lay person can be the same person, in one’s articulation of human existence. In other words, in his view, the sacred and the secular are interwoven. Interpreting the “religious” from within the “secular” enables us to see the dynamism of the religious. Rituals, or sacramental acts, are then symbolic forms which represent human existence in a religious manner. This concept immediately brings to mind Mircea Eliade’s starkly contrasting view of sacred space, in particular, the notion of the church as a sacred enclosure and its door a border separating it from the profane on the outside.² Religion and culture are, therefore, not understood dualistically, but rather as being interrelated. In Tillich’s language, religion is the substance of culture, and culture the form of religion. It is this broader sense of religion that provides an interpretive lens for the film, *Farewell My Concubine* which I will discuss in the final section of this paper.

Culture, then, is the soil out of which the arts grow: technically, practically, and theoretically. From a unity of the theoretical and the practical, aesthetics springs. Tillich believes that by reshaping the content of the ordinary encounter (with the practical) into an object of cognitive or aesthetic reception, art can mediate the knowledge of reality as “aesthetic awareness.” In the narrow sense, religion is about knowing the object or content of this ultimate concern, that is, gods or God (Tillich 1987b, 32), and Christianity as religion, in an even narrower sense, directs us to this ultimate concern. The notion that the arts have expressive power and that their style is central for communicating ultimate concern is relevant to my contention that what Tillich emphasizes as the stylistic form of expressive power is not limited to sacred painting. Rather, it is expressed in secular works as well. When the power of being as ultimate reality is expressed in art, the religious in both senses is expressed.

Tillich’s concept of the religious dimensions in culture and his notion of a theology of culture are two of the most prominent aspects of his theological thought. Indispensable to his development of culture is his grasp of the reality of God, which views God as Being itself and not as a separate being. Tillich states that God as “the power of being . . . transcends every being and also the totality of being—the world” (Tillich 1951, 237). This statement leads some scholars to assert that Tillich’s comprehension of God is pantheistic in nature (Scharlemann 2004, 69). This does not mean that God is reducible to non-divine persons, but rather that God is present in the world and in the experiences and actions of individuals.

In all his philosophical and theological probing, Tillich does not explicitly define beauty. However, we can devise a definition of beauty through his postulation that art is beautiful, specifically, when it mediates a “special realm of meaning by transforming reality.” In other words, beauty is that which transcends the given reality with a transformative power. Viewed this way, beauty also anticipates the state of perfection beyond that which exists imperfectly. We shall see in *Farewell My Concubine*, how art, in the form of Beijing opera, expresses a new reality that is in a sense both salvific and transforming.

3. TILlich’S EXPERIENCE OF ECSTATIC REVELATION

Having established Tillich’s notion of the relationship between art and religion, I now turn to revisit his account of his own transcendental experience with art.

Tillich recounts his transcendental experience with Sandro Botticelli’s *Madonna and Child Singing with Angels* in his 1955 famous short writing “One Moment of Beauty” (Tillich 1987a, 234-235). Tillich grew up the son of a Protestant minister in Germany, and according to his own accounts, he had almost no experiences with visual art. In order to find relief from the battle on Western Front, however, Tillich began feasting on picture magazines in which he found images of “great and moving paintings of the ages.” For the rest of his life, Tillich would return to this art which attracted him. Before the war ended, Tillich managed to see Botticelli’s *Madonna* at the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin. In that encounter, Tillich experienced a poignant sense of pleasure with “Beauty itself” and sensed how “something of the divine source of all things came through” that puts him in “a state of ecstasy” (235). For Tillich, this encounter would shape his entire life, giving him essential insights concerning both human existence and that in which it was grounded. In a significant way, Tillich’s encounter with the Botticelli painting helps one makes sense of his understanding of the religious function of art because, as he states, experiences like this “[go] way beyond the way we encounter reality in our daily lives,” and open for us “depths experienced in no other way” (235).

In this manner, we see Tillich’s view of revelation, with its sense of the immanent presence of the divine power in every creature, and his perception of religion, which is latent in all cultures. Such an understanding is basic in all his larger theological discourses. The emphasis of the powerful element of revelation in art cannot be missed. It was one fleeting moment of beauty forever embedded in Tillich’s memory. It is evident that the revelatory element was already at work in Tillich’s life, even before he saw Botticelli’s original painting. The invitation to him to enter into an intuitive participation had already been made as he “huddled in the dugouts studying” (236) the reproductions. This, in turn, created in him a deep sense of longing to witness the original work, even as the reproduction provided much-needed

comfort as well as freedom from the alienated existence of his war years. In this sense, Tillich's one moment of participation in the power of transcendence began early in the trenches. Here he became aware of the tension between his own finiteness and the infinite. His act of "studying" art provided the knowledge that enabled his reunion with and participation in God, as with other beings.

Clearly, Tillich found in art "keys for the interpretation of human existence" and a sense of joy he regarded as "revelation" (236). In that particular situation, art expressed and reflected his own existential predicament, and exposed his lack of personal existential knowledge through Botticelli's painting. Such fundamental revelation was for Tillich epistemic, providing him with a basic knowledge of God. However, in reclaiming this experience, Tillich did not address the central question of how an art work conveys such religious experience. Was it his own emotional participation that was pivotal in receiving such knowledge of Beauty (divine), or was Botticelli's use of themes in the subject matter the factor that awakened intense feelings in the viewer? Upon this encounter with "revelatory ecstasy," Tillich formulated his theology of culture as well as his own aesthetic theological arguments (Scharlemann 1985, 157).³

In the final segment of this paper, we shall see how Tillich's ideas are fleshed out in a cinematic form, and perceive the way "cultural" and "religious" are synonymous transcendental experiences as Tillich maintained. Above all, the concept that art is concerned with daily life and the conventional aspects of experience is particularly evident in Chen Kaige's film.

4. BEAUTY — AN EAST-WEST DIALOGUE

4.1 Synopsis of the Film

Farewell My Concubine tells the story of a 52-year friendship between two orphans, Deiyi and Xiaolou a friendship that begins in their childhood when they were trainees in their Beijing Opera school in the 1920s, and continues through the Japanese occupation and the Communist victory in 1949, to the traumas of the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s. As adults, they become renowned national performers through only after having endured hardships, persecutions and betrayal. The film ends with Deiyi taking his own life. Chinese Director Chen Kaige's *Farewell My Concubine* enjoyed fame and success at the Oscars and Cannes Film Festival. As a massive epic that spans the first half of the twentieth century, the movie portrays three interlocking elements that damaged the Chinese artistic tradition during this period, namely, political upheavals, cultural changes, and historical shifts. Most critical studies of this movie, however, simply hover over these cultural, socio-political and historical aspects at best. Other analyses conclude that it is a romantic story which explicitly depicts homosexual relations.⁴ In the process, the artistic merit of this film is often overlooked. One such critique is as follows:

As definitive as these relationships should be, the film, which focuses on the more universal narrative of romance, has projected a rather one-dimensional treatment of Beijing Opera and its love/hate exchanges with its characters. Although in the film Dieyi is a nationally acclaimed artist, one does not see how he interacts with his art. Nor does the film make any attempt to dig deeply into the specific "character" of the art. Rather, the first part of the film is an excessive display of torture and the second part a detached depiction of what are supposedly glamorous performances. It is true that in the past the training of opera actors was notoriously harsh or even abusive. But since the protagonist is willing to die for his art one would expect to see *where the art intermingles with life* (Lau 1995, 32. Italics added).

Such a conclusion about *Farewell My Concubine* is not uncommon. The criticism that the filmmaker does not portray the protagonist's interaction with his art is a perspective that needs to be re-examined through a transcendental lens. In this movie, Beijing Opera functions as the interest and object of artistic expression that intertwines the fate of the characters. For Deiyi, who is obsessed with his art, opera is more than just a stage performance. It is a lifelong pursuit: his *telos*. For the opera troupe leader, Beijing opera is simply an objectified performance: it represents a means of income and a commercialized commodity. The degradation and dismissal of any and all art forms by the Communist regime is tantamount to desecrating the performance art of opera. In the midst of this onslaught, Deiyi is thus confronted with anxiety, hopelessness and a sense of finitude that translates into a form of estrangement from God and from the world with a concomitant sense of loss of freedom. Viewed this way, despair is a culmination of a loss of meaning in an individual's existence. Yet in Tillichian terms, the awareness of despair can lead one to God (Tillich, 1975, 75-86). In short, human nature is subsumed under the overarching grandeur of artistic pursuit.

Culturally speaking, *Farewell My Concubine* delineates the differences between the glittering fantasy of the stage performance and the poverty and tragic destiny of both actors. Most opera performers—like the theatre artists of the Elizabethan stage—were of peasant stock and were treated like thieves and prostitutes: they were placed at the lowest rung of society. Despite this stigma, however, desperate women trying to escape the harshness of feudal peasant families or the impossibility of sustaining life in an overpopulated countryside bled dry by greedy landlords, continuously filled the opera ranks.⁵ For opera artistes, this dilemma was even more acute: if one was famous, one was subjected to the

sexual fantasies of rich and powerful patrons—thus we see teenage Deiyi being brutally raped by a eunuch. Yet, most opera artistes resigned themselves to such a destiny. It is not coincidental that the early scenes of child training in the movie consist of repeated narratives emphasizing the acceptance of each person's fate as inescapable. "Abusive caning" is a culturally accepted, even respected mode of discipline in China. This explains the scene that depicts both Deiyi and Duan, at the height of their stardom, kneeling before their aged teacher, who still whips them violently. This scene underlines the Chinese cultural maxim that "a teacher for a day is to be revered as a father for life."

As most critiques do not focus on the aspect of aesthetics of this film in relation to religion, I will focus on the one scene that depicts Deiyi's experience of exploring beauty as a little boy.

4.2 One Ephemeral Encounter with Beauty

This scene is often missed and seldom discussed, but it forms a leitmotiv in the film. After having run away from the opera school with a companion, the boy Deiyi somehow runs into a real theatre. There he witnesses, for the first time, a live performance of an opera he had been struggling painfully to learn. The dazzling magnificence of the country's best actors' performance on stage brings tears to his eyes, and his companion laments aloud: "What does it take to become a star like them? How many beatings will it take for me to land the lead role?" The camera closes in on little Deiyi who, on the other hand, is beaming beatifically at the performance, speechless and astounded. In that split second, it is as if Transcendence has broken through. Mesmerized, Deiyi seems oblivious to the exaggerated articulation of the singing, the stylized gestures, the elaborate costumes, and the percussion instruments: he is drawn to a Light. Instantly, the cacophonous, secular theatre becomes for him a sacred space. The boundary between the sacred and profane is no more. The ray of light which viewers see seems to be the Divine breaking into Deiyi's existential anguish. As such, the boy's experience is not unlike Tillich's experience with Botticelli's painting for, in both instances, it is an individual's first encounter with beauty. The significance of transformation that accompanies Deiyi's quasi-divine encounter is accentuated when the boys return to the troupe only to be brutally beaten again. But this time, Deiyi shows resolute determination to endure the ordeal in order to succeed as an artist.

Here the aesthetic sphere provides a glimpse of what lies across the chasm between his existential hardship and his future hope. And he has found this in the performance of the country's best theatrical artists. Both the performers and their performance are tough acts to follow. Yet the scene carries a deeper meaning: The transcendental quality of the opera suggests that the artistic realm extends beyond the everyday. While expressing reality, it also fulfills the human desire to be united with what Tillich calls the "ground of being," who is the source of all meanings. We can understand this to mean that Tillich expects a work of art to embody a style that is not bound by the limitations of naturalistic imitation and, at the same time, to display a sign of God's presence in the world: the stamp of beauty.

The spectacular performance seems just like visual poetry to Deiyi. His glimpse of beauty makes him temporarily forget the brutality endured in school. Through such beauty "something of the divine source of all things came through" in Tillich's words (Tillich 1987a, 235), transporting Deiyi to a revelatory ecstasy. For the boys, that particular performance offers insights and the beauty they have witnessed points beyond their existential realities to a possible future of truth and goodness. It is no wonder that after this, little Deiyi abandons his thoughts of running away from the school and faces his most severe punishment with resolute courage. Such is the "revelatory character" of art, which Tillich refers to as a thing beyond reality that highlights the valuable meanings or insights of human existence. While Tillich used painting to illustrate this quality in art, in *Farewell My Concubine*, Beijing opera functions in a similar capacity.

This scene in film is almost identical to Tillich's experience with Botticelli's painting that brought him joy and healing in the darkest hour of his war-plagued anguish. Consequently, in his essay, he concludes that art cannot be spoken of without highlighting its "relation to being itself, to the ground and the power of being" (Tillich 1987d, 32). Tillich likens human life to a "spiritual odyssey," where art is a medium that accomplishes the goal of human flourishing—it heightens the human desire for relationship with, and participation in, the Infinite Being. The result of such desired reunion together with an anxiety-provoking awareness of one's finitude, as underscored in the beginning of this paper, is a power that drives a person to produce art. For both Tillich and Deiyi, this unique mystifying yet powerful moment proves that beauty may be recognized by a person who encounters it serendipitously, but human words ultimately fail to capture its meaning in a rational way. Yet the comforting presence of love and truth is felt as it emanates from within the "beautiful thing." The crucial point here is that this beauty or incarnate presence will, from then on, be in relationship with the beholder. As with the Hebrew tradition of Yahweh as the One-who-is-not-named, speechlessness here is expressive of divine presence.

Consequently, beauty sustains Deiyi in times of darkness and transforms his hopelessness into an incredible zest for life and art. In a sense, such beauty represents a transcendent truth that bridges the gap between the limitations of a troubled teenage boy and the knowledge of the depth and fullness of God. The performance in this scene is an emblem, or in Tillichian terms, a visible symbol, of what usually is unseen and unsaid. In the movie, opera as artistic form seems

to be an end in itself for Deyi. For Tillich, however, aesthetics is a means to the divine. Since the basic argument of Tillich's theology of art is that "aesthetic is always and already religious" (Manning, 135), he provides us with a framework to reflect theologically about Deyi's single moment of experience of beauty as analogous to revelation in the religious sense. Seen in this light, the religious is one that speaks to the realities of the everyday life that deals with concern for the human situation. Such artworks move us visually with "emotionally charged messages" and grant emotional release.⁶

5. CONCLUSION

While insights can be drawn from Tillich's theological exposition on art and religion, his contribution to this unique affinity is far from flawless. For instance, in his writings examined in this paper, Tillich did not address how aesthetics can and should address violence and the sordid aspects of life. Furthermore, perceptions of beauty are culturally conditioned and culturally shaped. Nevertheless, his views on art and religion can serve as excellent starting points for further research in the arts.

Meanwhile, I am aware that Tillich's theology of art and *Farewell My Concubine* draw from different resources and come from distinctly different cultures. However, I would argue that it is precisely the broadness of both cultures that fits them so well for an East-West dialogue. The strengths of both cultures lie in being able to support varying interpretations, much like the film's own expansive narrative and Tillich's non-heteronomous vision of art.

At the start of this paper, we asked: What does Tillich's conception of aesthetics via art mean for a medium that seeks to relate to the spiritual realm of experience? The answer can be found in the common experiences of the real-life theologian Tillich and the fictional film character, Deyi: the metaphysically-laden single moment of beauty expresses something that defies modern, temporal explanation. The scenes in which each apprehends beauty for the first time actualize hope for each, even as life paradoxically, ends in tragedy for the latter. This is the chief problem in the film. Opera is elevated as the *telos* of humanity and the divine purpose is subjugated to art. In other words, beauty has become an idolatrous object of worship, instead of a creative sphere of human life that brings out the larger purpose of God for believers. This is what Tillich was pointing at when he addressed the problem of religious art in the twentieth century: art takes as its pattern and model human relations instead of the ultimate realities behind them (Tillich 1987b, 35).

Theologically, the film seems to lack a critique of the problem of evil, but I would argue that the absence of divine goodness opens up the space for an encounter with theodicy and redemption. In the same way the Cultural Revolution, personified as a persecutor of aesthetic arts and opera performers in the film, has far-reaching socio-political ramifications for modern day Chinese to consider how they want to shape their future.⁷

¹ For instance, this movie was awarded the Best Foreign Film Award by National Board of Review (USA, 1993), Golden Globe Awards, Los Angeles Film Critics Association, International Federation of Film Critics (1993), and British Academy Award (1994), just to name a few. Other accolades include the Best Supporting Actress for Gong Li given voted New York Film Critics Circle Awards (1993), the Special Award for lead actor, Leslie Cheung given by Chinese Performance Art Association (1993), and Japanese Critic Society (1994) and several other awards for Best Cinematography.

² Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. 1957. Translated by Willard R. Trask. New York: Mariner Books, 1968.

³ By Tillich's own admission, architecture and expressionist paintings and his subsequent reviews on the topic of religion and art, are two other factors that shaped his theology of culture.

⁴ See, for instance, Hong Lanxing, "Chinese Movie Wins Top Prize at Cannes," *Beijing Review*, June 28, Vol 36, No. 26, (1993): 30-39. Brian D. Johnson, "The Red and the Restless: Soap Opera Unfolds in the Peking Opera," *Maclean's*, November 15, 1993, Vol 16, No. 46 (1993): 92. Johnson accentuates the scenes of child abuse, homosexuality, prostitution, and suicide as groundbreaking simply because they challenge Chinese government's "taboos."

⁵ This is portrayed in the exchange between Deyi's birth mother and her conversation with the troupe leader in a double metaphor: the child's mother is a prostitute, a despised social figure. But poverty is viewed with more contempt than prostitution, hence the mother's decision to abandon her only son to an opera troupe – that he might escape from poverty. Deyi and other children trained in the troupe reflect the same sense of existential angst, desperation and determination common in the lives of Chinese people in that era. If nothing else, this common perception of actors as prostitutes underscores how the opera performers lack power over their lives.

⁶ Norbert Lynton, "Expressionism," in Nikos Stangos ed. *Concepts of Modern Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1994), 30.

⁷ Director Chen Kaige still speaks of his regret of having to denounce his father publicly at the age of fifteen when he joined the Red Guard. Chen attempted to address his regret in several films including *Farewell My Concubine*. (Irvine March 10, 2009).

6. REFERENCES

- Chen Kaige, dir. 1993. *Farewell, My Concubine*. IMDB.
- Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. 1957. Translated by Willard R. Trask. New York: Mariner Books, 1968.
- Hong Lanxing. 1993. “Chinese Movie Wins Top Prize at Cannes.” *Beijing Review*, June 28.
- Irvine, Dean. “Chen Kaige: Capturing the Best and Worst of Times.” *CNN.com*. <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/SHOWBIZ/03/09/ta.chenkaige/#cnnSTCText> (Accessed October 14, 2013).
- Lau, Jenny Kwok Wah. 1995. “Farewell My Concubine’: History, Melodrama, and Ideology in Contemporary Pan-Chinese.” *Film Quarterly* 49, no. 1 (Autumn): 16-27.
- Lynton, Norbert. “Expressionism.” In *Concepts of Modern Art*. Edited by Nikos Stangos. London: Thames & Hudson, 1994.
- Manning, Russell R. *Theology at the End of Culture: Paul Tillich's Theology of Culture and Art*. Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2005.
- Scharlemann, Robert P. 1985. “Tillich and the Religious Interpretation of Art.” In *The Thought of Paul Tillich*. Edited by James Luther Adams, Wilhelm Pauck, and Roger Lincoln Shinn. San Francisco: HarperCollins.
- _____. 2004. *Religion and Reflection: Essays on Paul Tillich's Theology*. Edited by Erdmann Sturm. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Tillich, Paul. 1951. *Systematic Theology*. Vol. 1, *Reason and Revelation: Being and God*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951.
- _____. 1966. *On the Boundary: An Autobiographical Sketch*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966.
- _____. 1975. *Systematic Theology*. Vol. 2, *Existence and the Christ*. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1975.
- _____. 1987a. “One Moment of Beauty.” In *On Art and Architecture*. Edited by John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger. New York: Crossroad.
- _____. 1987b. “Lecture 1: Human Nature and Art.” In *On Art and Architecture*. Edited by John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger. New York: Crossroad, 1987.