Research Article

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Symbolic Theology and Resistance in the Theology of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Paul Tillich

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Abstract: In this article, I study how symbolic theology can be advantageously utilized in the resistance against oppressing structures and ideologies. Studying two sermons of Paul Tillich and two speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the symbols used herein as a call to resistance against injustice, I wish to show how theologically grounded symbols have been used to resist injustice and in the call for justice. Furthermore, I study how the symbols used by Tillich and King can be utilized and reinterpreted in the various struggles taking place today against old and new oppressing structures and ideologies. The resistance against injustice must, however, also be undertaken intersectionally. And finally, I propose to bring the understanding of theology as symbolic engagement from Robert C. Neville into conversation with intersectional symbolic theology. I believe an intersectional symbolic theology can be successfully applied to feminist theology, queer theology, and other liberative theologies today.

Keywords: symbols, resistance against oppressing structures, Black theology, feminist theology, queer theology, liberation theology

1 Introduction

In this article, I will apply the concept of symbolic theology to Paul Tillich's and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s works. Symbolic theology is in its nature related to the theology of Tillich and thus also to the theology of King, who was a Tillich scholar.[1] I will furthermore bring Tillich and King's theology into conversation with Robert C. Neville's understanding of theology as symbolic engagement.[2] As noted by John J. Thatamanil, Neville's understanding of theology as symbolic engagement has a double Tillichian claim as it

1 For King's work on Tillich, see his PhD on the doctrine of God in Tillich and in Henry N. Wieman titled *A Comparison of the Conception of God in the Thinking of Paul Tillich and Henry Nelson Wieman*.

2 Neville, *Scope and Truth of Theology*. Neville is, however, far from the only one working on symbolic engagement. For other contributions to this field, see for example Mobley, *Systematic Theology of the Symbol*. For a deeper understanding of Neville's understanding of theology as symbolic engagement, see e.g. Neville, *Symbols of Jesus* for Neville's Christology of symbolic engagement where he analyses e.g. the symbol of Jesus the Lamb of God and the symbol of Jesus as friend; Neville, *The Truth of Broken Symbols*, where Neville works with the tension of symbols symbolizing the infinite while themselves being finite; Neville, *Existence*, where Neville describes religion as engagement of ultimate realities. For an analysis of this pragmatic core of Neville's philosophical theology, see Raposa, "Praying the Ultimate;" Willison, "Human Dignity and the Five Ultimates;" Polke, "Ultimates, The Ultimate, and the Quest of a Personal God." I will in this article use Neville's own term "symbolic engagement" when referring to his theology as "Nevillean symbolic engagement" and the term "symbolic theology" when referring to the symbolic

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understands the aim of theology to be to engage ultimate matters while concurrently recognizing that such engagement is only possible through symbols.[3] All of life is filled with symbols, which constantly must have their ability to carry over any valuable or important meaning evaluated.[4]

While this article explores the works of two Christian theologians as my case studies, I do not believe that symbolic engagement should be limited to Christian theology or to theology in general.[5] In addition to an openness regarding dialogue with anything secular, theology as symbolic engagement acknowledges that theology does not exist in a vacuum.[6] The interpretation of the symbols contains universals, but the context of any given interpretation is always concrete and particular.[7] It would therefore, I believe, be fruitful and necessary to combine symbolic theology with the acknowledgment that theology must be done intersectionally.[8] Intersectionality as a theological method acknowledges that we all exist in different contexts marked by varying relationships to power and hierarchy based on gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nation, economic status, ability, age, and other forms of social diversity. Therefore, an intersectional approach to theology calls for attention to the ways in which social location affects theologies while recognizing the impossibility of universalizing theologies and embracing multiple theological perspectives as both necessary and desirable in aiming for more inclusive theologies.[9] I, therefore, believe it to be fruitful to apply this use of an intersectional symbolic theology to feminist theology, ecotheology, queer theology, and the multitude of different forms of liberation theologies today, whereby the analysis and evaluation of any given symbol does not happen only in relation to gender, only in relation to climate, only in relation to sexual identity, and so on, but in relation to the variety of intersections of the human being – or as Tillich would state it, the multidimensional unity of life.[10] Many of these theologies already work intersectionally, and for them it would be even more fruitful to enter into dialogue with intersectional symbolic theology.

The task of theology – and not just Christian theology – is, according to an intersectional symbolic theology, to determine whether and how symbols engage ultimate matters in their particular context, and

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theology of Tillich and in some degree of King. Furthermore, I will use the term "intersectional symbolic theology" for my own understanding of symbolic theology, which is highly influenced by Tillich as well as intersectionality.

3 Thatamanil, "Scope and Truth of Theology," 529. See further, Neville, *Scope and Truth of Theology*, 6–7 in which he analyses Tillich's notion of the Ultimate Concern.

4 Ibid., 39. Neville believes that interpretation engages reality through symbols in at least four different modes of symbolic engagement, namely as imagination, critical assertion, dialectical systematic theorizing, and practical reason or symbolic interpretations guiding religious and other practice, cf. ibid., 1–2. Neville concludes that "theology as symbolic engagement interprets ultimate matters in all of these loci, and in their interconnections", cf. ibid., 2.

5 As Neville too holds, "theology cannot make a stable case for its truth unless its scope includes a global public of all religious traditions with which it might interact, and these as brought into dialogue with secular thought," ibid., 3–4. Neville's reasons for believing this is reminiscent of Tillich's Protestant Principle, as Neville states that "theology in the long run needs to be vulnerable to anything that might correct its biases, errors, or omissions concerning ultimate matters." cf. ibid., 4. Furthermore, just as Tillich believes that the Protestant Principle needs the Catholic substance (Tillich, *Systematic Theology, III*, 245), Neville believes that dialectical systematic theory, coming from the critical assertion and critical communication of theology, needs to not only learn from aspects outside of religion but also needs to be shaped in the light of the richness of a theological tradition, cf. Neville, *Scope and Truth of Theology*, 97f.

6 As Boff so famously noted, "theologians do not live in the clouds," cf. Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 265, and neither do the symbols which they must engage.

7 Neville, *Scope and Truth of Theology* 59. According to Neville, two elements are always present in the context, namely the setting and the purpose, cf. ibid.

8 See for example Carfore, "Ecofeminist Theology," for an ecofeminist analysis of intersectional justice; Lee and McGarrah Sharp, "Interrogating Identities, Histories, and Cultures," for an intersectional approach to pastoral care; Gaard, "Queer Ecofeminism," for an analysis of the potential intersections of ecofeminist and queer theories and the need for the study of symbols in this regard.

9 Kim and Shaw, *Intersectional Theology*, 41. The acknowledgment of the impossibility of universalizing theologies does not, however, mean that theology does not have anything to offer, but instead calls for a multitude of contextual theologies. Kim and Shaw states that "on the one hand, we cannot produce theologies for which we claim universal applicability; on the other, we can only produce the theologies that we do from our social locations, and so each of us has something significant to add to the whole of Christian theology," cf. ibid.

10 See for example Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 12.

then to articulate the truth and error in the engagement of these symbols in said contexts.[11] I will therefore in this article be using the two-step structure springing from Nevillean symbolic engagement: identification and evaluation of theologically grounded symbols. I will in the analysis of the four sources first identify the symbols herein and then critically evaluate them from an intersectional perspective. I will first introduce how I understand symbols in this article, then analyze the symbols in the four sources of the case studies, and finally discuss the need for the use of symbols in resisting oppressing structures and ideologies today.

2 What is a Symbol?

I understand symbols in line with Tillich as containing a duality of both the essential and the existential structures, as they are not only signs of but also participate in what they symbolize.[12] Therefore, I use the word "symbol" in this article when the essential and the existential elements are present, while I use the word "notion" when only the existential elements are present. This relates to the acknowledgment that the symbols might participate in the essential structures and Being, but they are expressed through the existential structures of the human beings' experienced world. Thus, we use our experiences as the material for the expression of the symbols.[13] The material used in the analysis of the human situation can be found in all realms of culture – for example, poetry, psychology, philosophy, drama, and so on – through what Tillich refers to as the human being's creative self-interpretation.[14] Because the material used in the expressing of different symbols differs, the symbols can be applied in different directions of meaning. However, the symbols still mutually include each other, as they contain a mutual immanence of all, that is to say the emphasis might differ, but the substance remains the same.[15]

The human being needs the symbolic language, as it alone is able to express the ultimate according to Tillich. Through the symbols, a level of reality as well as dimensions and elements of the human soul are opened up, which otherwise would be closed to the human being.[16] However, as the true ultimate transcends the realm of the finite reality infinitely, no finite reality can express it directly and properly. The symbolic language is needed.[17] The symbols found in the symbolic language can be either dead (no longer containing meaning) or alive (containing meaning).[18] The producing of a symbol cannot happen intentionally but must grow out of the individual or groups unconsciously and be accepted by the unconscious dimension of the human being's being.[19] As the concrete, existential situation of the human being from which it finds the material for the expressing of the symbols changes over time, the symbols must also change if they are to continue to be meaningful to the human being. An example of this would be referring to the Christian god as "Father." This symbol is no longer meaningful to several feminist theologians, who therefore instead refer to the Christian god as "Mother"[20] or "friend."[21]

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11 See here Neville, *Scope and Truth of Theology*, 7.

12 Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, 61f. See furthermore Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 41–3 for Tillich's discussion of the difference between signs and symbols.

13 Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice*, 109.

14 Tillich, *Systematic Theology I*, 63.

15 Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 108–9.

16 Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 41–3.

17 Ibid., 44–5.

18 Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, 58. See furthermore Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 50–2, for Tillich's discussion of demythologization with regard to symbols and ibid., 96–7, for Tillich's discussion of the life and death of symbols with regard to faith. Here, Tillich moreover combines the truth of faith with his warning against the demonic elevation of something finite. He emphasizes that "every type of faith has the tendency to elevate its concrete symbols to absolute validity. The criterion of the truth of faith, therefore, is that it implies an element of self-negation. That symbol is most adequate which expresses not only the ultimate but also its own lack of ultimacy," cf. ibid., 97. One such symbol is the Christian symbol of the Cross of the Christ, cf. ibid., 97–8.

19 Ibid., 43.

20 See for example Daly, *Beyond God the Father*.

21 See for example Carr, *Transforming Grace*.

Furthermore, symbols function both as a way of describing human beings' existential predicament and as answers to the existential questions inherent herein. And these symbols must be engaged because, as Neville states, "without engagement, the play of symbols is merely play – a game for those who like to toy with symbols."[22] Essential for this engagement is the question of the truth of the symbols. Neville, as well as Tillich, holds that we must always be vigilant of the demonic interpretation of an engaged symbol.[23] The interpretation of a symbol is seen as demonic when it elevates something finite into something infinite or, as Neville states, "when the infinite passion and commitment of an ultimate concern is directed at what is really a finite and proximate, indeed parochial, object."[24] I believe that an intersectional evaluation of the symbols can identify and caution against demonic and destructive elements. The symbols must thus not only be identified but evaluated as well, which is precisely what I will do in this article when studying theologically grounded symbols used against oppressing structures and ideologies found in King and Tillich.

3 The Sources Analyzed in the Case Studies

The relationship between the theology of King and the theology of Tillich has to my knowledge not yet been analyzed with regard to the use of theologically grounded symbols in their resistance to injustice. The relationship between their theology has, however, been studied by Andrew S. Finstuen with regard to their hamartiology,[25] Curtis W. Hart with regard to the notion of estrangement,[26] and Mark L. Taylor with regard to their view on ethics.[27] According to Taylor, King in his speech against the war in Vietnam presents justice as such an essential part of the order of the world that the arc of the universe bends toward it. This ontological presumption King shares with Tillich, who refers to justice as the fulfillment of primal being.[28] This understanding of justice is but one example of how King and Tillich employ similar notions in their resistance against injustice. When one applies the intersectional symbolic theological approach to this example, it becomes clear that justice in King and Tillich can be understood as a symbol expressing the

22 Neville, *Scope and Truth of Theology*, 30.

23 Ibid. See Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, 60, as well. Tillich furthermore discusses the danger of idolatrous symbols of ultimate concern in Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 44–8, and the danger of a demonic-destructive faith in ibid., 76–7.

24 Neville, *Scope and Truth of Theology*, 30. Tillich would often refer to the Nazi ideology's elevation of anything "Aryan" as idolatry, see for example Tillich, "The Human Legacy;" and Tillich, "Defeat of Nazi Belief." This notion has been used by Nathanial Holmes in the evaluation of White Supremacy as idolatry in his paper given at the *Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture Unit* at the Annual Meeting for the American Academy of Religion in 2021 titled "Antiracism as a Spiritual Practice: A Tillichian Framework." In this article, Holmes stated that he believes Tillich's description of the demonic, his critique of idolatrous-distorted faith, his understanding of anxiety from nonbeing, his theological framing of participation, and his vision of justice to provide a viable heuristic theological language which can be fruitful for expressing antiracism.

25 Finstuen, *Original Sin*, especially 44.

26 Hart, "Psychoanalysis," especially 652f, where Hart holds that "one interesting and very important example of the application of Tillich's notion of estrangement appears in Martin Luther King's *Letter From the Birmingham Jail*... King's use of Tillich's refined psychological estrangement thus becomes a source for comprehending the impact of segregation for those involved in that particular struggle in Birmingham and for our own time as well," cf. ibid., 652. For Tillich's notion of estrangement, see e.g. Tillich, *Systematic Theology II*, 29–36, where he describes how the myth of the Fall expresses the transition from essence to existence and the human being's awareness of its existential estrangement. The transition from essence to existence and the existential estrangement resulting therefrom is a universal quality of finite being, and thus not merely a past event. Estrangement implies belonging to that from which one is estranged, which is why Tillich believes the human being to be estranged, but not complexly separated, from its true being, cf. ibid., 45. The human being is thus seen as estranged from its ground of being, from other beings, and from itself, which is why Tillich describes the state of estrangement as a state of existence, cf. ibid., 44.

27 Taylor, "Tillich's Ethics," 189–207. While Tillich's ethics is described by Taylor as emerging "from a tension between his discursive treatments of political existence and ontology. The treatment of political existence was basically a horizontal move embracing the complexity. and anguish of a situation...," the interrelationship between justice and ontology in King is described as a universe "in which we all already participate, is, in spite of every political corruption and systematic distortion, created from its origins with an arc that points and carries a struggling people towards justice," cf. ibid., 189f.

28 Taylor, "Tillich's Ethics," 189.

existential structures, that is the experience of justice taken as material for the expression of the symbol, and the essential structures, that is the ontological assumption of justice being related to Being and the structure of the world. The symbol of justice found in King and Tillich here shares the acknowledgment of the importance of context when making theological statements as well as the understanding of vital theological notions as structural with feminist theology, queer theology, ecotheology, and the various liberation theologies today. Therefore, I believe that these theologies can successfully employ this symbol in their struggles against oppression structures and ideologies.

Both King and Tillich sought to inspire people amid political struggles, although the notable difference in this regard between them is to be found in their hopes amid the struggle against American racial injustice in the 1960s. Tillich barely dared to hope, although he did inspire students to enter into the movements working against racism. He himself ascribed the racial injustice to the nation's awful sickness.[29] However, in his sermons broadcasted into wartime Germany in 1942–1944, Tillich still dared to hope and used this hope to call the German people to take part in the resistance against the Third Reich.[30] Therefore, I will in this article be working on Tillich's sermons broadcasted into wartime Germany instead of his later sermons as case studies in the analysis of his theologically grounded symbols used in resistance against oppressing structures and ideologies.

My two main sources from Tillich are *Justice and Humanity* (11 May 1942) and *Collective guilt* (9 August 1943). These sermons are part of the 112 sermons he prepared in real time to be broadcasted in German into wartime Germany from March 1942 to May 1944.[31] This was part of the Voice of America project in a time when listening to the forbidden radio stations as a form of resistance was a capital offence in the Third Reich. Tillich himself had fled Germany in 1933 on invitation from the Union Theological Seminary and Columbia University following his dismissal from the University of Frankfurt due to his support for Jews, his religious socialism, and his explement of unruly Nazi students.[32]

My two main sources from King are his famous speech *I have a Dream* (28 August 1963), held in Washington in relation to the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, and *Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution* (June 1965),[33] a commencement address for Oberlin College. As the intersectional symbolic theological interpretation of symbols is always concrete and particular, the context of these sermons is important. Miriam Y. Perkins terms King a prophetic voice and believes there to be three vital communication practices which support the prophetic voice advocating for social change. Perkins exemplifies proximal power and standpoint[34] with the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955 and intermediate power and strategic interaction through facework[35] with the march from Selma to Montgomery in 1965. She believes that King in the late 1960s had moved[36] from standpoint and strategic interaction to a more

29 Ibid., 190. See Stone, "On the Boundary," 215, as well.

30 According to Gary Dorrien, this change is explicitly mentioned by Tillich in his 1952 autobiographical reflections where he describes the tragedy of the fascists as giving way to the tragedy of the Cold War dualism, that is a bipolar world where no theonomous third way between capitalism and communism was possible. Here, he states that "I lost the inspiration for, and the contact with, active politics," cf. Dorrien, "Abyss of Estrangement," 445.

31 Stone and Weaver, *Against the Third Reich*, 1.

32 Ibid., 2–6. For Tillich's religious socialism, see Dorrien, "Abyss of Estrangement," 425.434–5; and Stone, "On the Boundary," particularly 210–3. In accordance with Dorrien, Tillich's socialism can be seen as theologically grounded, as Tillich believed socialism to provide meaning for subjected people – and thus believed it to be the self-expression of the oppressed. For Tillich's own works addressing this matter, see "Ten Theses: The Church and the Third Reich" (1933), cf. Stone and Weaver, "Against the Third Reich," 6.

33 This was, however, not the first time King gave a speech on this subject. See for example his address given at Morehouse College Commencement on 2 June 1959, also titled *Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution*.

34 Perkins believes that standpoint "gathers community resources and directs them against the presumptions of injustice and racism," cf. Perkins, "Prophetic Voice," 243.

35 Perkins believes that strategic interaction through facework "challenges opponents directly without either antagonizing or conceding power," cf. ibid., 243.

36 Montague R. Williams states that while one might want to focus a historical comparison of King's thought on a pre- and post-1965, one should not see King's later developments as a complete change in praxis, but as a furthering of his praxis due to contextual demands, cf. Williams, "Church in Color," 126.

assertive and comprehensive opposition to the economic inequality, to international patterns of injustice, and to war. Therefore, Perkins pairs peripheral power and co-cultural resistance.[37] However, I would add to Perkins' analysis that *Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution* from 1965 strongly asserts an opposition to economic inequality, to international patterns of and indifference to injustice, and to war. Thus, this speech, though it is from 1965, can advantageously be related to the pair of peripheral power and co-cultural resistance which it may have anticipated as well as intermediate power and strategic interaction. *I have a Dream* from 1963 can advantageously be related to the pair of intermediate power and strategic interaction due to its call for the realization of the Beloved Community.

The prophetic voice has the ability to speak with moral and theological vision in pursuit of social justice from nondominant standpoints.[38] Thereby, the claim of an intersectional symbolic theology that the embracing of multiple theological perspectives will contribute to establishing more inclusive theologies is taken seriously, as the voices of nondominant standpoints are acknowledged as important and necessary. I do not only understand King as utilizing such a prophetic voice, but Tillich too – both employing it through theologically grounded symbols used in resistance against oppressing structures and ideologies.

4 The Urgency of the Now and Kairotic Time: I Have a Dream

In King's famous speech *I have a Dream*, he uses the kairotic sense of time which can be expressed through the theologically grounded symbols of the Beloved Community and the urgency of the Now. King begins his speech by stating that he and the gathered demonstrators stand in the "symbolic shadow" of Abraham Lincoln.[39] Time carries a weight in this speech, as the Emancipation Proclamation is seen as "joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity"[40] and as the racial injustice of the time of King again and again is referred to with the introductory words of "one hundred years later"[41] in the beginning of the speech.

It is a symbol of time as well, that is the reason King and the gathered demonstrators have come to Washington. They have come "to remind America of the fierce urgency of Now."[42] Not realizing the urgency of the Now would according to King be fatal for the nation. This Now is characterized as the time to "make real the promises of democracy," to "rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice," to "lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood," and to "make justice a reality for all of God's children."[43] Here, the symbol of the urgency of the Now is theologically grounded biblically[44] and in the notion of God's children, which King, as we shall see, uses several times in his speeches. And this theologically grounded symbol of the urgency of the Now is utilized by King in resistance against injustice.

Racial injustice is something which the human being should never become adjusted to according to King. He called for the refusal to assimilate into a racist society as well as a critical consciousness and resistance to the normalization of the *status quo* of racial violence. This is by Adams et al. referred to as a form of creative maladjustment, the source of which is the marginalized knowledge from the epistemic

37 Perkins believes that co-cultural resistance "is the assertive determination to denounce positions that garnish almost no public support," cf. Perkins, *Prophetic Voice*, 242–3.249.

38 Ibid., 242.

39 King, "I have a Dream," 229.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid., 230. In *Letter from a Birmingham Jail,* King also states that he is in Birmingham because the hour has come to live up to the promise of engaging in nonviolent and direct action.

43 King, "I have a Dream," 230.

44 Respectively with reference to the promise motive in the Old Testament, in for example Deut 28:9, the desolate valley of, for example, Isa 7:19, and the quicksand and solid rock of Matt 7:24–7. See Miller, *Biblical Epic* for an analysis of King's approach to the Bible and its importance for his rhetoric.

perspective of subordinated communities.[45] It is through King's symbol of the Beloved Community the epistemic perspective necessary for critical consciousness and creative maladjustment is to be utilized in the realization of the future sunlit path of racial justice. The use of ed Community as an acknowledgment of the subordinated communities showing the epistemic perspective necessary for critical consciousness and creative maladjustment to destructive forces and structures of human society can advantageously be utilized by the various theologies fighting against oppressing structures today. And as the epistemic perspective of the symbol of the Beloved Community originates in the subordinated communities, the use of the symbol includes the intersectional analysis, which too has a focus on racial injustice, economic exploitation, and physical violence among others.[46]

The symbol of the Beloved Community in King refers, as stated by Montague Williams, to "the realization of the society of love, justice, peace, and freedom for which human beings were created and toward which all of creation is heading."[47] I would add to Williams' reading that this symbol can furthermore be seen as theologically grounded protologically as well as eschatologically. Just as the past and future are tied together, so is the present and the future, something which is also an element in the symbol of the urgency of the Now. This is furthermore reminiscent of the Christian notion of already, not yet.[48] The symbol of the Beloved Community of King is an eschatological hope offered by God which shapes the Now through offering a way of seeing and sensing which both promotes the longing for and the possibility of encountering sociopolitical differences. Thereby, the symbol of the Beloved Community calls for the creative actions which reflect God's loving and self-giving character. But this Beloved Community is also a means, possible in the Now, as a microcosm.[49] Therefore, this relationship between the present and the future must be kept in mind when engaging this theologically grounded symbol found in *I have a Dream*.

In *I have a Dream*, King states that the Now is a beginning,[50] something which he later in *Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution* will refer to as a creative beginning. The end, in turn, will be when the bright day of justice emerges.[51] King dreams of this day. King's famous "I have a dream" motive introduces several statements, which all mention one day characterized by racial justice. The first four occurrences of "I have a dream" describe the dream of one day in the future, while the fifth states "I have a dream today!" The sixth once again describes the one day in the future, the seventh again is focused on the present, "I have a dream today!," and the eighth and last once again describes the one day in the future. Thus, King in

45 Adams et al., "Subordinated Knowledge," 338. Here, Adams et al. emphasizes that the creative maladjustment not only concerns racial injustice in King, but economic exploitation, militarism, and rampant physical violence as well, cf. ibid. According to Williams, this must also be seen in relation to the role of the Church, cf. Williams, *Church in Color*, 135.

46 This critical consciousness, I believe, adds an intersectional element to the critical assertion which Neville deems the locus of theology in Neville, *Scope and Truth of Theology*, 96. The critical assertion of theology must be combined with critical communication, which means that to make the best case for any doctrine, it is necessary to make it vulnerable to correction from all relevant angles, cf. ibid., 97. I believe such angles to include the angles analyzed in an intersectional approach.

47 Williams, *Church in Color*, 128.

48 For a general introduction to this motive, see Gombis and Gorman, *Power in Weakness*, 40–1 or Vassilios, "Already/Not Yet." For a more intersectional approach to this motive, see Marchal, "Queer Velocities."

49 Williams, *Church in Color*, 129–30. With reference to King's theological ethics, Williams states that a microcosm of the Beloved Community is possible, if the Beloved Community is recognized as the narrative and ethical end of all creation, cf. ibid. This microcosm of King's Beloved Community must furthermore be understood through Rufus Burrow's term "personal communitarianism." Personal communitarianism describes the tension between two important categories in King's philosophy of personalism, namely "the autonomous individual" and "the community." Thus, the Beloved Community is neither merely individual nor merely communal, but persons-in-community, cf. Burrow, *God and Human Dignity*, 155. Burrow furthermore uses the term personal communitarianism "to establish that because of the long practice in the United States of devaluing the worth and dignity of Afrikan Americans, the dignity of the autonomous individual must have the right-of-way in the person-community polarity," cf. ibid., 157. Thereby, King's symbol of the Beloved Community underscores both the community and the individual, adding yet an intersectional understanding to King's symbols of theological resistance. Furthermore, the symbol of the Beloved Community is resistance in its very character of countering the devaluing of the worth and dignity of the members of the community.

50 King, "I have a Dream," 230.

51 Ibid., 231.

this speech interweaves the present and the future, intertwining the faith in the future transformation with the presence of the Now. This creates the kairotic Now. The symbol of the kairotic Now, too, can advantageously be utilized in the theological resistance to oppressing structures today.[52] This symbol acknowledges the relationship between the future and the now, thus calling for acting in the now instead of merely awaiting a better future. Nevillean symbolic engagement reminds us that all of life is filled with symbols, and the symbol of the kairotic Now calls for us to act in all of life – be it in the present or in the future. Furthermore, when symbolic engagement is understood as supportive of an intersectional approach especially with regard to the importance of the context of the interpretation of any given symbol,[53] the kairotic Now's call to act applied to the various liberative theologies today calls for us to act for the betterment of a future in which the different contexts marked by varying relationships to power and hierarchy based on gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nation, economic status, ability, age, and other forms of social diversity are acknowledged.

5 The Interrelatedness of Reality and the Criteria for Remaining Awake: Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution

In *Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution*, King uses the idea of "sleeping through a revolution" from Washington Irving's *Rip Van Winkle*. King contrasts this with the symbol of remaining awake which expresses and acknowledges the interrelationship between the individual and the group, the idea of destiny, and the understanding of time which we have seen for King is kairotic. In this address, King refers to Tillich's definition of sin, which he also does in his other famous works, for example the *Letter from Birmingham Jail*. Furthermore, King expresses his faith in the future and the creative beginning, which has already begun. Thus, as we shall see in the further analysis of this address, King's symbol of remaining awake is theologically grounded in the doctrine of the human being as well as in theocentric, eschatological, and hamartiological arguments used to oppose the structures of injustice and oppression.

To King, there was no doubt that a great revolution was taking place and that the winds of change were blowing. However, too many people throughout history have slept through revolutions, just as Rip Van Winkle did. Remaining asleep, they fail to achieve the new mental outlooks and responses demanded by the new situation. With reference to Victor Hugo, King states that "the idea *whose time has come* today is the idea of freedom and human dignity."[54] It is the challenge of everyone to remain awake during this time, and thus the symbol of remaining awake calls for resisting oppressing structures and ideologies. Here, again, the theological resistance against oppressing structures today can find a use for this symbol. The intersectional symbolic theological reading of this symbol reminds us that creative maladjustment is necessary for refusing to participate in the delusions or epistemologies of ignorance supporting the conserving of systems of White supremacy.[55] Thus, the symbol of remaining awake calls for resisting oppressing structures and ideologies – it is a call to remain "woke" one might be tempted to say.

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52 See furthermore Williams, *Church in Color*, 132, in which Williams believes that the human being is by God further invited to continue the breaking through of the kairotic Now through creative, redemptive, and transforming power and through the love of God.

53 See here for example Neville, *Scope and Truth of Theology*, 80, where Neville holds that "[…] truth or falsity apply only to actual interpretations, and therefore are always and only contextual."

54 King, "Remaining Awake." Emphasis added. This is similar to Perkins' analysis of the pair proximal power and standpoint, as "in situations of proximal power, standpoint can be an effective starting point for describing injustice and pushing against it. Standpoint theory proposes that cultural and social context, particularly, the social groups to which persons belong, shapes what human beings know and understand about the world," cf. Perkins, "Prophetic Voice," 244. Williams as well touches on this subject, as he holds that King's notion of seeing should be understood as something which "challenges injustice by revealing the possibility of a way of life that runs counter to society's norms," cf. Williams, *Church in Color*, 132.

55 See here Adams et al., "Subordinated Knowledge," 349. Adams et al. hold that in King's theology failing to resist oppressing structures of society must be avoided as well as the present reception of it, cf. ibid.

In order to remain awake, we must follow certain criteria, which King lists in *Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution*. The human being cannot live in isolation – if one believes oneself to be able to live without concern for other human beings and nations,[56] one is simply not awake. The human being is challenged to achieve a world perspective in terms of brotherhood, not just in terms of geographic togetherness.[57] This is the first criterion King mentions in his address. The world is, according to King, through scientific and technological genius, a neighborhood but it is necessary for it to be made a brotherhood through moral and ethical commitment as well. As King simply states: "we must all learn to live together as brothers – or we will all perish together as fools."[58] As stated, I believe that the evaluation of symbols should be done intersectionally. In this regard, what might King's brotherhood be?

Here, I would call attention to the evaluation of the symbol possible through feminist theology especially with regard to gender. As done by Shatema Threadcraft and Brandon M. Terry, the feminist approaches to the interpretation of King's work can be divided into two points of view. The first is "qualified acceptance" which combines a critique of King's sexism with an attempt to salvage elements of his work. One representative of this point of view is Septima Clark[59] who criticized the sexist leadership of King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference and believed that King didn't think much of women. Despite this, she still saw his political philosophy and example of courage, service to others, and nonviolence as worthy of devotion.[60] Another representant of the "qualified acceptance" point of view is bell hooks. She accused King and other civil right leaders of following the example as that of White male patriarchs as well as being fixated on asserting their masculinity. However, hooks in the symbol of the Beloved Community and the ethos of love found a profound importance in the work of King. These notions were seen by hooks as being able to offer something crucial to theorizing justice, sustaining the commitment to resolve conflict, and inspiring the necessary transformation to sustain and expand human compassion and solidarity.[61]

The second form of feminist approaches to the works of King is "respectful rejection." This approach turns away from King as a source of political–philosophical insight and seeks instead to recover, reconstruct, and promote the work of "local people" and hitherto unnoticed women and queer people of color within the civil rights movement. One representant of this approach is Barbara Ransby and her biography of the life and work of Ella J. Baker.[62] The work of Erica Edwards, who builds upon Baker, on the notion of charisma has shown that "the attribution and apprehension of 'charisma' to someone like King relies upon certain public narrative, rituals, symbols, affective states, and bodily performances."[63]

Threadcraft and Terry criticize "qualified acceptance" for treating the ideas to be recovered in the works of King as "easily disentangled from sexism and androcentrism without adequately *self-reflexive* inquiry."[64] However, it is my belief that this "fatal problem," as Threadcraft and Terry refers to it as,[65] can be somewhat avoided when these ideas are approached realistically and precautiously through an intersectional methodology as well as critically through symbolic theology giving due attention to the relationship between the symbols and what the symbols participate in, that is the existential as well as the essential structures of the symbols. Furthermore, as intersectional symbolic theology must not only identify symbols but must also evaluate them due to the acknowledgment of the need for an intersectional analysis, I believe this will add an element of self-reflexive inquiry which Threadcraft and Terry are calling for.

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56 As King states in this address: "no individual can live alone; no nation can live alone. We are tied together," cf. King, "Remaining Awake."

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid.

59 Threadcraft and Terry refer to Clark, *Ready from Within*, cf. Threadcraft and Terry, "Gender Trouble," 205.

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid., 206. Threadcraft and Terry refer to Hooks, *Ain't I a Woman*; Hooks, *Killing Rage*; Hooks, *We Real Cool*.

62 Threadcraft and Terry, "Gender Trouble," 207. Threadcraft and Terry refer to Ransby, *Ella Baker*.

63 Threadcraft and Terry, "Gender Trouble," 208. Threadcraft and Terry refer to Edwards, *Charisma*.

64 Threadcraft and Terry, "Gender Trouble," 206.

65 Ibid.

Some attention is given to intersections in society in *Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution*, when King states that the interconnectedness of individual intersects with the interconnectedness of groups and nations, the members of which King refers to as God's children.[66] Hereby, the interconnectedness is grounded by a theocentric notion of human beings as the children of God. And this theologically grounded symbol must be used to realize that the structure of reality itself is interrelated and that the acknowledgment of this is necessary for remaining awake.[67]

After this, King makes an often-quoted statement of life's interrelatedness: "we are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."[68] A person can only be what this person ought to be when the other person is what that person ought to be.[69] The interrelatedness is thus tied to King's doctrine of the human being. King furthermore ties the interrelatedness of life to the notion of destiny, thereby giving the interconnectedness and the need to realize it an eschatological element as well.

The second criterion stated by King is to meet the challenge of working "passionately and unrelentingly to get rid of racial injustice in all its dimensions."[70] If one believes that a nation can endure half segregated and half integrated, one is simply not awake. Racial injustice is seen in many sections of society by King and will not work itself out. Instead, one must work unrelentingly to get rid of it. Time will not solve the problem. Good people cannot simply just sit and say "wait on time" while bad people use time effectively in hateful and violent acts. Remaining asleep is to allow time to become an ally of social stagnation. To remain awake is to help time and realize that it is always the right time to do the right thing[71] – to help the kairotic time breaking into the Now, as we saw in *I have a Dream*, in resistance against injustice.

Racial injustice is, as King states in *Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution*, sociologically untenable, politically unsound, and morally wrong.[72] To assert the moral wrongness of racial justice, King draws on other influential philosophers and theologians. Here, he refers to Tillich's understanding of sin as separation. King interprets the symbol of segregation as a symbol of sin, stating: "and what is segregation but an existential expression of man's tragic estrangement – his awful segregation, his terrible sinfulness?"[73] King's understanding of sin is thus theologically elaborated with regard to the hamartiological understanding of the human being's lapsarian condition through the symbol of separation and segregation.

The third criterion to be met to remain awake asserted by King is to get rid of violence, hatred, and war. If one believes that the problems of humankind can be solved through violence, one is simply not awake.[74] Violence, according to King, creates more social problems than it solves; succumbing to the temptation of using violence results in the unborn generations carrying the cost by inheriting "a long and desolate night of bitterness".[75] Instead, according to King, one must use another way, one as old as Jesus and as modern as Gandhi,[76] namely standing up against an unjust system.[77] And this must be done with all of one's might, body, and soul.[78] This approach disarms the opponent, exposes the opponent's moral defenses, weakens

66 King, "Remaining Awake."

67 Burrow, too, emphasizes the interrelatedness of all life in King. He shows that for King reality was through and through social, relational, or communal due to King's personalistic metaphysics and his doctrine of God, cf. Burrow, *God and Human Dignity*, 157–9.

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid.

76 For the relationship between Gandhi and King, see for example Hodder, "Black Gandhi."

77 King, "Remaining Awake."

78 This, too, can be seen in *I have a Dream*, where King states: "we must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force," cf. King, "I have a Dream," 231.

the opponent's morale, and works on the opponent's conscience.[79] And it is King's belief that this approach, which can be theologically grounded through a Christocentric component, is able to bring about racial justice for everyone.[80]

The human being must according to King cease to be a silent onlooker, a detached spectator, and become an involved participant in the struggle to make justice a reality.[81] Here, King offers a theocentric argument as well, stating that God is interested in the freedom of the whole human race, in the creation of a society in which every human being will respect the dignity as well as the worth of the person.[82] King had faith in this future. There may have been – and still is – a long way to go, but King believed that at least the creative beginning had been made.

6 Justice and Dignity: Justice and Humanity

Justice and dignity are the subjects of Tillich's broadcasted sermon *Justice and Humanity* from 11 May 1942. Justice and dignity are related according to Tillich, as the symbol of dignity expresses the call for justice. The symbol of dignity is theologically grounded in the doctrine of the human being, as one loses one's humanity if one does not treat others with dignity. Furthermore, Tillich's understanding of justice is theologically grounded in his doctrine of God, as one loses God when one destroys justice. Justice is moreover found in the depth of the human heart and borne by religion, especially the religion of the prophets and their God of justice. This is then by Tillich contrasted with idolatry. Thus, Tillich in this sermon utilizes symbols theologically grounded in his doctrine of the human being, his doctrine of God, and his understanding of idolatry.

In this sermon, Tillich describes the powers of Hitler as setting aside "the fundamental rights of every human being to be considered a person."[83] It is thus something that touches even the foundations of human existence. Tillich, therefore, emphasizes that "the annulment of justice as unconditionally valid is an annulment of the human being as human being, as an entity with a particular dignity, particular strengths, and particular rights."[84] Tillich sees justice as so intimately connected to the human soul that it is impossible to pull it out from it, that even if human beings want to act unjust, they have to do so in the name of justice. While precise rights may be set aside by precise statues in any given country in the name of justice, what has happened in Germany is unpreceded. According to Tillich, it is perhaps even "primeval: the return to prehuman forms of existence."[85] What is happening in Germany is that the right and the freedom of every individual is taken away and transferred to one individual who alone is free and has authority.[86] At present, the German people, it seems according to Tillich, are on a mission to destroy freedom, in spite of what Tillich believes with reference to Hegel should have been its mission in the history of the world, namely to translate freedom into full reality.[87]

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79 King, "Remaining Awake."

80 Ibid. This criterion, too, must be seen on the international level, why it according to King is necessary to find an alternative to war and bloodshed. For the study of King and war, see Ott, "Black Self-Defense", especially 68f; Williams, *Church in Color*, 128.

81 King, "Remaining Awake."

82 Ibid. The anthropological aspect of this argument is also seen in King's speech *Beyond Vietnam*, in which King calls for a shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented one. This is seen by Ott as related to King's calling for a radical revolution of values, cf. Ott, "Black Self-Defense," 71. See also Perkins, "Prophetic Voice," 251, where Perkins emphasizes King's opposition to the war in this speech as being grounded in a call to a revolution in values. Furthermore, Williams relates this to King's symbol of the Beloved Community, cf. Williams, *Church in Color*, 128.

83 Tillich, "Justice and Humanity," 25.

84 Ibid.

85 Ibid., 26.

86 Ibid.

87 Ibid., 27.

Tillich understands justice as exactly that which makes the human being human; the human being loses itself when it loses its justice. Tillich clarifies that "we cease to be a person when our justice is taken from us; by person, I mean a special, unmistakable essence, with special possibilities and special duties."[88] The human being exists in justice which is the acknowledgment that the human being demands to be recognized as a person. And just as King does, Tillich relates the lack of acknowledgment of this to the objectification of the human being. When one is deprived of one's rights – which Tillich believed the German people to be at the time of his sermon – one has become a thing which can be used as others' desire. The human being has lost its dignity and has become a mere instrument.[89]

Tillich, much like King, interrelates the symbol of justice on the individual, national, and international level. He believes that if one loses justice, one loses the other person, one loses the other nation, one loses humanity. Tillich called the German people to reclaim their rights and with their rights themselves. When a nation has become unjust and thus undignified, it no longer sees others as persons, but sees another nation as a power that must be met with power, as something which is strange and hostile. But when this happens the nation, just as it happens with a person, debases itself when it no longer acknowledges the rights of others.[90]

If one surrenders one's own dignity, one does not acknowledge the dignity of others either, because one ceases to be able to see the other as a human being, as a person, but can only see the other as an instrument for one's own aims and as an object for one's own fear or hate.[91] And thus, according to Tillich, the symbol of dignity is related to the doctrine of the human being even with regard to the foundations of human existence. And this symbol is related to and expresses the need for justice.[92]

Here, however, it is fitting to remember how symbolic theology must be done intersectionally and ask how we must therefore engage this symbol of Tillich's to avoid the fatal problem listed by Threadcraft and Terry with regard to the "qualified acceptance" approach according to which one treats the ideas to be recovered in someone's work as easily disentangled from sexism without adequate self-reflexive inquiry. Hilary J. Scarsella and Stephanie Krehbiel name Tillich one of the (many) theologians who have perpetrated sexual violence as evidenced by stories from Hannah Tillich as well as from Reinhold Niebuhr. To be able to still engage these theologians of sexual violence we must, with Scarsella and Krehbiel, recognize that sexual violence preserves itself through silence, which is why we must break this silence. This can be done by prioritizing pedagogical foci that contend with the implications of sexual violence in solidarity with sexual violence survivors through a hermeneutic of suspicion.[93] I believe it to be important to discuss the relationship between these theologians' personal lives and the symbols from their theology being used and reinterpreted in the various struggles against oppression structures today. As Tillich himself so often warned against, especially through his notion of the Protestant Principle,[94] the use and interpretation of symbols can turn demonic resulting in destructive elements in the use of the symbols. One such destructive element is Tillich's objectification of women and sexual violence, which we must be vigilant of not seeping into the use of symbols from his theology today.

7 Sin and Guilt: Collective Guilt

In the sermon *Collective Guilt*, Tillich likewise uses theologically, especially hamartiologically, grounded symbols in his call for resistance against the Nazi ideology and the Third Reich. In this sermon, he reflects

88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
90 Ibid., 28.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid.
93 Scarsella and Krehbiel, "Sexual Violence," 6–8. See furthermore Plaskow, *Sex, Sin, and Grace*; and Lowe, "Woman Oriented Hamartiologies," 119, for a feminist critique of Tillich's hamartiology.
94 See for example Tillich, *Systematic Theology III*, 245.

on the interplay between collective guilt and the particular German guilt of the war in a way similar to King's notion of the interrelatedness of reality expressed through the symbol of the Beloved Community and the realization of it.

Tillich begins his sermon as he always does with a "my German friends,"[95] already in the first few words expressing his connection to them and call for sharing in the resistance against the Third Reich. However, the sermon turns grim right after the greeting. With reference to the firestorm of Hamburg caused by the bombardments in the last week of July that same year,[96] Tillich draws a biblical parallel to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, the latter sharing its name with Operation Gomorrah causing the said firestorm. Tillich believes that the story of these cities has "become truth in one city."[97] This horror has caused the people of Hamburg, and the people affected by the war in general, to ask "what is our particular guilt?," "why our nation?," and "why have we become the victims and tools of the National Socialists[…]?"[98] This wondering is, according to Tillich, as old as humanity. People stuck by misfortune have always asked "am I, then, more guilty than others?"[99] The question can according to Tillich be answered by either exonerating oneself of any guilt and complicity in evil, by acknowledging collective guilt, or by blaming oneself – these three options are also the options of the German people during the war.[100]

The question of guilt is, however, not merely concerned with a religious problem but with a political one as well according to Tillich. It is not just something everyone has to sort out for themselves or go to Church to hear about in sermons.[101] In accordance with Ronald H. Stone, politics for Tillich should be seen as always being done with reference to the depth or essence of humanity.[102] While Tillich understands political existence to be a necessarily threatened existence, he understands the human nature as in part utopian, which expresses the situation of humanity as finite freedom.[103] And thus both human existence and political existence is seen as an amalgamation of anxiety and courage. Tillich sees the symbol of utopia as having the function of social criticism and therefore as theologically grounded through eschatological elements, as he believed that the biblical social utopias sought to remove the social evils and sought "the reconciliation of the human with nature, of men with women, of nature with nature."[104] And this is by Tillich related to the theologically grounded symbol of the Kingdom of God which contains elements of historical as well as trans-historical renewal and individual as well as social renewal. However, if this is not combined with the power to change reality – and this power is used – it can fall prey to terrorism and other demonic forces. Further, the symbol of utopia does not show the estrangement of humanity.[105] Thus, it is not enough to use an eschatologically grounded symbol, a hamartiological grounded symbol must be used as well.

In *Collective guilt*, Tillich lifts the question of guilt from being merely on the individual plan to the international plan, just as King does. The symbol of collective guilt expresses, according to Tillich, something "in which everyone shares, even if the doom that follows the guilt does not strike everyone the same way."[106] Even if someone is not in a responsible position in one's nation, one does still share in this collective guilt. It is a collective guilt which the Germans must acknowledge their share in.[107]

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95 For a further analysis of Tillich's work for his "German friends" during his time in USA during the war, see Stone, "On the Boundary," 214f.

96 During this bombardment, Jürgen Moltmann was on the ground working with anti-aircraft battery, cf. Robin, *Human Suffering*, 19.

97 Tillich, "Collective Guilt," 178.

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid., 179.

100 Ibid.

101 Ibid.

102 Stone, "On the Boundary," 208.

103 Ibid., 209. Stone defines this finite freedom in Tillich in the following way: "freedom means the possibility to act as a whole, centred person; finitude means that in all actions the threat of non-being is discovered." cf. ibid.

104 Ibid.

105 Ibid., 209–10.

106 Tillich, "Collective Guilt," 179.

107 Ibid., 179f.

This symbol of collective guilt is by Tillich additionally described hamartiologically, namely with regard to collective sin. The collective sin is sin when it is "a wicked social order," "the world wars of the twentieth century," or "the indigence and desperation of the unemployed."[108] And it is the collective guilt of the world "to have such a social order in which the Thirty Years War of the twentieth century could develop."[109] The nation must resist national self-righteousness and acknowledge the collective guilt.[110]

Tillich understands, as already mentioned, sin as estrangement. And this must be seen in relation to Tillich's understanding of kairos, as kairos is understood as fulfillment that recognizes the problems of finitude and estrangement.[111] Thus, the earlier-mentioned problem of the symbol of utopia being eschatologically grounded without a hamartiological element is overcome. Furthermore, estrangement cannot according to Tillich be ontologically ultimate, as estrangement is seen as falling away from the original oneness. This existential, but not essential, separation will be overcome ontologically by the power of Being, actualized in life through love, which is the drive to unify the separated. Justice, in turn, is the power of Being actualizing itself and preserving the independence and integrity of that which is reunited. And this too can be expressed through a theologically grounded symbol in Tillich's theology, namely the cross as it is a symbol of divine love participating in the destruction of that which is against love.[112] Through the use of the symbols utilized by Tillich in his resistance against injustice, the liberative theologies of today can also resist that which is against love and justice.

8 The Need for the Use of Symbols in Resisting Oppressing Structures and Ideologies Today

As the world changes over the course of time, so do some struggles against oppressing structures and ideologies, while some stay the same. However, the responsibility to and call for acting against these oppressing structures and ideologies never leave us. This is in Christian theology seen today in Christian feminist theology,[113] Christian ecotheology,[114] and the various Christian liberation theologies among others.[115] All hear the call for resisting oppressing structures and ideologies. And in this resistance, an intersectional symbolic theology can play an important role in forming the task of theology.

The symbols analyzed in this article, which I propose, can be advantageously utilized in the resistance against oppressing structures and ideologies, recognize the structure of sin, the eschatological hope and appeal for action, the ontologically grounded call for justice, and the kairotic urgency of the Now through their theological foundations. The interpretation of these symbols must, in keeping with Nevillean symbolic engagement, include the specific context in which they are to be utilized. Thus, the symbol of estrangement expressing the structure of sin might find a different interpretation in feminist theology than in queer theology. However, as I believe this interpretation must be done intersectionally, the different interpretations in different contexts – where one might focus more on gender, another more on sexual identity – do

108 Ibid., 180.
109 Ibid., 182.
110 Ibid., 181.
111 Stone, "On the Boundary," 210. See furthermore Petit, "Wahrheit und Kairos," 214; Dorrien, "Abyss of Estrangement," 439.
112 See here furthermore ibid. 447–8.
113 For the use of Tillich's theology in feminist theology, see for example Baldwin, "Erotic Play;" or Baard, "Tillich and Feminism." For the use of King's theology in feminist theology, see for example Guth, "Reconstructing Nonviolence;" or Threadcraft and Terry, "Gender Trouble."
114 For the use of Tillich's theology in ecotheology, see for example Chan, *Life as Spirit*. For the use of King's theology in ecotheology, see for example Bock, "Ecotheology of Critical Hope" or O'Brien, *Violence of Climate Change*.
115 For the use of Tillich's theology with regard to liberation theologies, see for example Morales, "Science and Religion." For the use of King's theology with regard to liberation theologies, see for example Day, "Pacifist Liberation;" or Boesak, "Network of Mutuality."

not remain mutually exclusive. This, I believe, is a result of the Nevillean acknowledgment that all of life is filled with symbols, the Tillichian idea of the multidimensional unity of life and the mutual immanence of all symbols, and King's notion of the interrelatedness of all life.

Here, Tillich's method of correlation can coordinate the question and answers, the situation and message, and the human existence and divine manifestation.[116] One example of the use of Tillich and King in liberative theologies today is that of O'neil Van Horn who was influenced by both. Van Horn's notion of a dark hope, which honors contextuality and creativity as well as situatedness and novelty, is described by Van Horn as "a contextual, courageous struggle – a courage to become in the face of seemingly insurmountable oppression."[117] This dark hope can be strengthened by the theologically grounded symbols in Tillich and King in the resistance against oppressing structures and ideologies, especially the symbol of the Beloved Community of King which too calls for action and resistance for the betterment of the future.[118]

Furthermore, the intersectional aspect might help symbolic theology avoid the "fatal problem" described by Threadcraft and Terry encountered when working with sexist and sexual abusive theologians and their theology. Through an intersectional approach to symbolic theology, a self-reflexive inquiry is added to the evaluation of the symbols to be engaged. Therefore, the symbols must be evaluated with regard to their reflections on race, gender, sexual orientation, and other forms of social multiplicity as well as the power hierarchies marked by these intersections. An intersectional symbolic theology must, in the terminology of Scarsella and Krehbiel, break the silence when evaluating the symbols to be engaged and thus safeguard against demonic and destructive elements that might be found in the lives of the theologians from whose theology the symbols are taken.

To conclude, the resistance against oppressing structures and ideologies can, from an intersectional symbolic theology, gain the language to express the need and call for action. Much like the creative maladjustment from Adams et al., the symbols used by King and Tillich can be utilized and reinterpreted in the various struggles today against old and new oppressing structures and ideologies. These symbols should through their theological foundation recognize the structure of sin, the eschatological hope and appeal for action, the ontologically grounded call for justice, and the kairotic urgency of the Now. And by utilizing these symbols, theology might avoid sleeping through great revolutions.

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116 This is done in e.g. queer theology by Ivy Helman, cf. Helman, "Queer Systems," 46. Helman calls for a systematization of queer theology building on Tillich among others. Helman believes that the unifying principle in systematic theology can strengthen and develop queer theology and thus corroborate and broaden its message of "a more just, humane and liberating manifestation of Christianity for all humanity, queers and non-queers alike" (ibid., 45).

117 Van Horn, "Dark Hope," 285.

118 As hooks answered when asked what we should be doing in our daily lives to combat the power and influence of White supremacist capitalist patriarchy: we should look to King and build the Beloved Community in every way that we are able to (Threadcraft and Terry, "Gender Trouble," 206). In this very concrete way, we can utilize the theologically grounded symbol of the Beloved Community in the resistance against oppressing structures and ideologies.

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