

TILLICH'S CONTRIBUTION

By Art Parfitt and Karla Boyd



We are at a crossroads in our destiny as animal stewards. One road leads to traditional practices of death with animals; the other to a deep inquiry, forging a new relational destiny with animals and death. The article below is made up of various selections of the writings of Paul Tillich. In these selections he is inviting us to grapple with the impact of death in our lives and to engage the force of love. At Namaste Global Vision we think of love and death not only in the human arena but in the lives of animals as well. As you read this, we ask that you keep animals in mind and not focus strictly on just the untimely deaths of people. We invite you to extend your love to practices that honor all the untimely deaths of the animals too.

This excerpt is from:

LOVE IS STRONGER THAN DEATH from **THE NEW BEING** by Paul Tillich

In our time, as in every age, we need to see something, which is stronger than death. Death has become powerful in our time, in individual human beings, in families, in nations and in [humanity] as a whole.

Death has become powerful—that is to say that the End, the finite, and the limitations and decay of our being have become visible. For nearly a century this was concealed in Western civilization. We had become masters in our earthly

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household. Our control over nature, and our social planning had widened the boundaries of our being; the affirmation of life had drowned out its negation which no longer dared make itself heard, ... becoming fainter and fainter.

We forgot that we are finite, and we forgot the abyss of nothingness surrounding us. We had gathered into the barns the fruits of thousands of years of toil. All generations ... labored so that we, the generation of fulfillment, might tread death under our feet. It was not death in the sense of the natural end of life which we thought to have destroyed, but death as a power in and over life. We kept the picture of death from our children and when and there, in our neighborhood and in the world, mortal convulsions became visible, our security was not disturbed. For us these events were merely accidental and unavoidable, but they were not enough to tear off the lid which we had fastened down over the abyss of our being.

And suddenly the lid was torn off. The picture of Death appeared, unveiled, in a thousand forms. Our generation rediscovered the reality of death. [Many] such people carry in their souls, and often in their bodies, the traces of death, and they will never completely lose them. You who have taken part yourselves in this great migration must receive these others as symbols of a death which is a component element of life. Receive them as people, who by their destiny, shall remind us of the presence of [death's end] in every moment of life and history. Receive them as symbols of the finiteness and transitoriness of every human concern, of every human life, and of every created thing.

[We face] death of nations, the end of generations, the loss of childhood homes, the people with whom we grew up, the language that formed us, the goods, both spiritual and material, which we inherited or earned, the friends who were torn away from us by sudden death [all the animals who are discarded and die unloved, our own loved animal friends who die without enough ceremony or dear ones near].

Every death means a parting, separation, isolation, opposition and not participation. So it is, too, with the death of nations, the end of generations, and the atrophy of souls. Our souls become poor and disintegrate insofar as we turn coldly away from the physical and spiritual need of others. Love overcomes separation and creates participation in which there is more than that which the individuals involved can bring to it. Love is the infinite, which is given to the finite. Therefore we love in others, for we do not merely love others, but we love the Love that is in them and which is more than their or our love. In mutual assistance what is most important is not the alleviation of need but the actualization of love. Of course, there is no love which does want to make the other's need its own. But there is also no true help which does not spring from love and create love. Often very little external help is possible. And the gratitude of those who receive help is first and always gratitude for love and only afterwards gratitude for help. Love, not help, is stronger than death. But there is no love which does not become help. Where help is given without love, there new suffering grows from the help.

It is love, human and divine, which overcomes death in nations and generations and in all the horror of our time. Help has become almost impossible in the face of the monstrous powers which we are experiencing. Death is given power over everything finite, especially in our period of history. But death is given no power over love. Love is stronger. It creates something new out of the destruction caused by death; it bears everything and overcomes everything. It is at work where the power of death is strongest, in war and persecution and homelessness and hunger and physical death itself. It is omnipresent and here and there, in the smallest and most hidden ways as in the greatest and most visible ones, it rescues life from death. It rescues each of us, for love is stronger than death.

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NAMASTE GLOBAL VISION ON TILLICH

In our animal steward community we need a renaissance and to see something more powerful to help us shift our practices of animal deaths. Animals die daily, some unnecessarily, some in very bad ways and some very naturally and peacefully. In America, more than four million animals are euthanized in shelters every year, even though many shelters have found ways to stop killing any animals ever. Hospice care and pain management for elderly animals is becoming more and more popular across the country, even as veterinarians continue to face clients asking that their pets be euthanized simply because they have become inconvenient. Most people don't know that these things are happening and many who do know tend to look the other way.

We believed the myths that animals had to be hurt and tortured for us to learn in science. We pretended this did not hurt the animals and we were told that this was okay because it helped to save human lives. We closed our hearts and eyes to practices of brutality brought to animals in rodeos, zoos, bullfights, dogfights, racing dogs and horses. We decided that cats might become the next rodent. We decided that certain dogs were too violent and that only death could cure them. We believed that animal shelters were places of shelter for animals where they were loved until adopted. We did not let ourselves comprehend nor feel the last tragic moments of scared, caged animals awaiting death.

Because we as humans and animals are in a shared destiny, we all are impacted by these losses and outdated and often misguided practices surrounding animal deaths. The people most impacted perhaps are the ones caught in their work cultures of going along with the harm and destructive death practices of animals, while in their hearts feeling adrift with resignation and grief. It is time, at this crossroads and juncture, as we question the practices that lead to animal extinction and premature harmful deaths, to allow grieving and transformation of exploitation of animals into a new relationship that honors them.

We need to support bringing new life to both the animals and ourselves. We need to embrace those on the front lines asked to hurt and kill animals. We need to want to hear the stories that their hearts pour out, the vows and promises to find better answers and more humane ways not to kill life but to preserve it. We need better ways of learning and better ways of being stewards.

Hospice work for humans opened the door to a new renaissance in medicine. It bridged east and west; it allowed for guided imagery, mindfulness and spirituality, yoga, and many disciplines to enter mainstream society. It opened the door to a kindness and dignity in our final hours and days with family near, in loving and open ways. Hospice care for animals is opening the way for a similar transformation that will let us be more tender about the lives we love.

We start out in love with babies and puppies. We grow up sharing those sacred bonds. We can engage a new possibility with our animal friends, and move more consciously to help them, as they grow closer to ending their journey. As we have the medical means to ease their pain and keep them comfortable, we are afforded devoted time with them in their final days, months and sometimes years.

It is possible that hospice and more conscious end-of-life care for animals can lead to supporting "no kill shelters" in the United States, to open the hearts of more humans to value all life and not see animals as expendable. It may invite us all

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to dream more deeply to discover better ways for our animal friends to flourish. It can allow for more grief rooms to be set up and supported in veterinarian schools, sanctuaries and shelters. It can help us create breakthroughs in technology so we do not need to rely on the harm of animal life to learn how to provide the best care for animals.

We are on the brink of a new era, with new and old generations alike of grounded humanitarians who love animals and love life, who are willing to be at the frontier of a new culture where love will displace numbness. Namaste knows that there are many of you dreaming of this new world. There are the legacy givers who have already pioneered and forged exceptional breakthroughs and there are the "young bloods" hungry to make the world a better place. Namaste knows that your dreams are significant and of great value for animals and humans. We honor and welcome you and your dreams to come into our work so that we might empower your bold steps born of love, unleashed into grounded possibilities that better the lives of us all.

People become animal stewards because they love animals. They volunteer to work in shelters; they become veterinarians and become teachers of veterinarians. They start sanctuaries for all manner of animals large and small. They foster pets in their own homes as those pets await adoption into their forever homes. Animal lovers take time away from their busy lives to stay home and hospice their beloveds. All of these, and many others, feel the love from and give to so many animals that they are with either long or short term. At Namaste we believe in that love and know it to be a source of great change around the globe. From love will come the end of bad practices. The animal stewards who know that love are the ones who are making, and will continue to make, the change that needs to happen for the animals. It rescues each of them, for love is stronger than death.

