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Theological Plunderphonics: Public Theology and "the Fragment"

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The amazing family of parishioners at Sojourner Covenant Church in Evanston, Illinois has been a consistent, loving, and sympathetic source of encouragement. Thank you for being the body of Christ to my family and me.

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to mel

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

In response to an observable, methodological vagueness in public theology, I construct a theory of "the fragment" that enables the public theologian to respond adequately to contemporary exigencies and appropriately to traditional self-understandings. After surveying four streams of public-theological thought (chapter one), I consider the debate between David Tracy (chapter two) and George Lindbeck (chapter three). The various observations of these three chapters give way to a suggested criteriology for public theology. I then turn to Paul Ricoeur (chapter four) and Walter Benjamin (chapter five) to assist in constructing a theory of the fragment (chapter six). The thesis defended by this dissertation runs as follows: by re-presenting the classics of their unique theological traditions as a montage-like collection of fragments, public theologians locate a means of navigating the various impasses in contemporary discussions of public theology.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCING PUBLIC THEOLOGY

Introduction

> At the start of the twenty-first century, it is clear that public theology has
> become the face of the theological world.
>
> — Mario Aguilar[1]

There is something of a consensus among theologians that the discipline of theology

should not be confined to an intellectual ghetto. This observation runs the gamut of theo-

logical and religious options. From the most adamant protectors of tradition to the most

creative architects of religious meaning, theologians increasingly desire to move the con-

cerns of theology beyond ecclesial parameters.

Since the 1970s, one instantiation of this outward-moving trajectory has been the

emergence of a discipline called "public theology." In its most basic form, public theolo-

gy references the engagement of theological with non-theological semantic domains, a

"theology" and a "public."[2] What is unclear among practitioners of public theology is

the specific manner in which publicness can and should be pursued. Political theory, eth-

ics,

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[1] Mario Aguilar, *Theology, Liberation, and Genocide: A Theology of the Periphery* (London: SCM Press, 2009), 55.

[2] Bernard Lonergan begins his classic *Method in Theology: Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, Vol. 14 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973; repr. 1990) with the following sentence: "Theology mediates between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of a religion in that matrix" (1). My definition of public theology—representing my attempt to encompass a variety of contemporary forms of public theology—is dependent on Lonergan's definition of theology. This dependence will become clearer in what follows.

history, methodology, phenomenology, and hermeneutics have all been utilized as a medium for constructing theologies that are public. Public theologians have analyzed the role of religion in public life; located theological insights in "public truths" like justice, morality, or peace; and attended theologically to the "signs of the times." Theologians associated with public theology have included Virgilio Elizondo, Josef Hromádka,[3] Martin Luther King,[4] Dorothy Day, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Karl Barth, Klaas Schilder, Ernst Troeltsch, Walter Rauschenbusch, Friedrich Schleiermacher,[5] Jane Austen, Martin Luther,[6] and the "Church Fathers,"[7] just to name a few. Martin Marty is typically consid-

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[3] Cf. E. Harold Breitenberg, Jr., "What is Public Theology?" in Deirdre King Hainsworth and Scott R. Paeth (eds.), *Public Theology for a Global Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 11. Breitenberg's bibliographical collection of public theology is impressively exhaustive. Elizondo, Hromádka, Day, Bonhoeffer, Barth, Schilder, and Austen are noted by Breitenberg. My list reflects a reverse chronological order. Robert Bellah, "Religion in America," Daedalus 96.1 (Winter 1967): 1-21, is also often placed at the beginning of the movement, but his work on civil religion should be considered an example of cultural-religious studies, not public theology per se. For a critique of Bellah's "biblically minimalist" vision of reality, see Linell Cady, *Religion*, 23: "The existence of an American civil religion has been a product of the symbiosis of the formal, minimal religiosity institutionalized in political discourse, and the more pluriform and concrete creedal beliefs and symbols of the Protestant denominations" (Cady, *Religion*, 23). See also Stackhouse, "Public Theology and Ethical Judgment," 167.

[4] Frederick Downing, "Martin Luther King, Jr. as Public Theologian," *Theology Today*, 44.1 (Ap 1987): 15-31.

[5] Richard Crouter, *Friedrich Schleiermacher: Between Enlightenment and Romanticism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 123-194.

[6] Antonia Szabari, "The Scandal of Religion: Luther and Public Speech in the Reformation," in *Political Theologies* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 122-136, 712-715.

[7] Max Stackhouse, "Public Theology and Ethical Judgment," 167: "For Christians, the 'Fathers of the Church' stand among the heroes of faith for their formation of a kind of thought, which we now call public theology, that saw in certain key religious insights the capacity to give new grounding and dimension to the most profound resources of philosophy and thereby also to the scientific, social, and legal reflection of their day." It should be noted that Stackhouse defends a certain social appropriation of theological categories that this dissertation will not, finally, endorse. Stackhouse also places Troeltsch among public theologians in Stackhouse, "A Premature Postmodern," *First Things* 106 (Oct 2000): 17-19.

ered the first scholar actually to use the term,[8] but the idea of offering a public accounting

of theological positions was percolating before Marty in thinkers like John Courtney

Murray[9] and just after Marty in David Tracy and David Hollenbach.[10] Since its inception,

the discipline has grown in popularity, presently boasting status as a centralizing topic for

academic conferences,[11] international journals[12] and networks,[13] university centers,[14]

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[8] Martin E. Marty, "Reinhold Niebuhr: Public Theology and the American Experience," *The Journal of Religion* 54.4 (October 1974): 332-359; "Two Kinds of Two Kinds of Civil Religion," in Richey and Jones, eds. *American Civil Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 139-157. Cf. Max Stackhouse, "Public Theology and Ethical Judgment," *Theology Today* 54 (July 1997): 165. E. Harold Breitenberg has done extensive work on the history of the term "public theology" in English-speaking circles. He contrasts the first use of the phrase "public theologian" in Marty's "Two Kinds" and the phrase "public theology" in "Reinhold Niebuhr." E. Harold Breitenberg, "To Tell the Truth: Will the Real Public Theology Please Stand Up?" *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics*, 23.2 (Fall/Winter 2003): 55-96; "What Is Public Theology?," 3. See also Max Stackhouse, "Public Theology and Ethical Judgment," 165. David Tracy also noted the "important studies" of Martin Marty on "public religion," "public theology," and the intertwining of religion and society in Martin Marty, "A Sort of Republican Banquet," *Journal of Religion* (1979): 383-406; and "Reinhold Niebuhr"; cf. David Tracy, *Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroads, 1981), 33, fn. 8. Hereafter *Analogical Imagination* will be referred to as "*AI.*"

[9] John Courtney Murray, SJ, "The Problem of Religious Freedom," in J. Leon Hooper, SJ (ed.), *Religious Liberty: Catholic Struggles with Pluralism*, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993): 127-197 (first distributed by mimeograph to the American bishops in 1964); *We Hold These Truths* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960): 109-123. Cf. Walter Lippmann, *The Public Philosophy* (Boston: Little Brown, 1955). I see in both Lippman and Murray an attempt to retrieve public reason in order to bridge public and private semantic domains. For a similar interpretation see David Tracy, *AI*, 36, fn. 26, and Breitenberg, "To Tell the Truth," 75, fn. 19.

[10] I will give extensive bibliographical information on Tracy in the next chapter. For Hollenbach, cf. David Hollenbach, "Public Theology in America: Some Questions for Catholicism after John Courtney Murray," *Theological Studies* 37.2 (June 1976): 290-303.

[11] The 2011 gathering of the "Liberal Theologies Consultation" at the American Academy of Religion serves as case in point. Its title specifically addresses "liberal" theology, but the content of the papers dealt with the possibility of pursuing "public" meaning inside of an explicitly theological context. "Post-Post-Liberalism: Constructive Proposals for Revitalizing Liberal Theologies and Liberal Institutions." Presenters included Michael Hogue, "Pragmatic Liberalationist Public Theology," Shelli Poe, "Friedrich Schleiermacher and the United Church of Christ: Reformed, Liberal, Public," William Myatt, "The (Non)Existence of Religious Rationality: David Tracy, 'The Fragment,' and Liberal Religious Discourse," and Joshua Daniel, "Posture and Discourse: The Perfectionism of Liberalism in H. Richard Niebuhr" (papers presented at the annual meeting for the American Academy of Religion, San Francisco, California, November 21, 2012).

[12] Consider the *International Journal for Public Theology* published by Brill, edited by Sebastian Kim, and now in its fourth issue.

popular media,[15] and discussions on the floor of the U.S. Senate.[16] Given its pliable use,

it is no wonder that public theology has been called "vague and difficult to define,"[17] "an

elastic and somewhat nebulous conception,"[18] a "concept whose contours have been hot-

ly debated,"[19] a project whose methods "vary from person to person,"[20] and a discipline

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[13] The Global Network for Public Theology is the international gathering whose momentum eventually gave rise to the *International Journal for Public Theology*. Presently, the Network is chaired by Rev. Professor James Haire and is run out of Charles Sturt University in Australia. See "The Global Network for Public Theology," http://www.csu.edu.au/special/accc/about/gnpt/home, accessed March 19, 2012.

[14] Examples include the Centre for Public Theology at Huron University College in the University of Western Ontario, the Abraham Kuyper Center for Public Theology at Princeton Seminary, the Manchester Centre for Public Theology at the University of Manchester, the Centre for Theology and Public Issues at the University of Otago in New Zealand, and the Centre for Public Theology at the University of Praetoria in South Africa. Centers not tied explicitly to a University include The Paideia Centre for Public Theology located in Ancaster, Ontario; the Theos Think Tank on Religion and Society in London; and the Faith in Public Life center in Washington, D.C.

[15] Harvey Cox, "The Warring Visions of the Religious Right," *The Atlantic Monthly*, 276.5 (November 1995): 59-68. In their biography of Cox (p. 6), the editors state that Cox "has pursued a career as a 'public theologian' in the tradition of Reinhold Niebhur."

[16] In 2001, the U.S. Congress posthumously awarded a Medal of Presidential Freedom to Dr. Benjamin E. Mays "in honor of his distinguished career as an educator, civil and human rights leader, and public theologian." "Congressional Record (February 14, 2001): S1434-1435. Bill S. RES. 23," accessed May 11, 2011, http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-107sres23is/pdf/BILLS-107sres23is.pdf. Again, I am in debt to E. Harold Breitenberg for his extensive historical and bibliographical research.

[17] Duncan B. Forrester, "The Scope of Public Theology: What is Public Theology?" in John R. Hinnells (ed.), *Forrester on Christian Ethics and Practical Theology: Collected Writings on Christianity, India, and the Social Order* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010), 441; originally published as "The Scope of Public Theology," in Elain Graham and Esther Reed (eds.), *The Future Christian Social Ethics: Essays on the Work of Ronald H. Preston 1913-2001*, a special issue of *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 17.2 (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 5-19.

[18] Benjamin Valentin, *Mapping Public Theology: Beyond Culture, Identity, and Difference* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002), 84-85.

[19] Deirdre King Hainsworth, introduction to *Public Theology for a Global Society: Essays in Honor of Max L. Stackhouse*, ed. Deirdre King Hainsworth and Scott R. Paeth (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), xviii.

[20] Charles R. Strain, "Walter Rauschenbusch: A Resource for Public Theology," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 34.1 (fall 1978): 23.

in which confusion "reigns" among its users.[21]

The dissertation that follows functions as a response to this confusion. It takes the plurality internal to public theology seriously, engaging sympathetically yet critically with a number of the theologians who have defined the discipline over the last thirty years. My study as a whole may be divided into two parts: the first engages solely with theologians, mapping the parameters of discussions within public theology and suggesting key, interpretive variations that determine the various forms public theology takes. After delineating four streams of thought operative in public theology, I highlight three questions that public theologians address (implicitly or explicitly) in their theologies (chapter one). These questions set the stage for a careful analysis of a particularly telling moment in the development of public theology in its U.S. American context, namely the debate between David Tracy (chapter two) and George Lindbeck (chapter three). In conclusion to this second analysis, I revisit the questions raised in chapter one, and suggest a five-part criteriology for the future of public theology that incorporates the major insights of the theologians studied in part one.

In Part Two I follow up this survey by offering constructive responses derived from two philosophers, Paul Ricoeur (chapter four) and Walter Benjamin (chapter five). Included in the criteriology concluding part one is the observation of a contemporary

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[21] Andries van Aarde, "What is 'theology' in 'public theology' and what is 'public' about 'public theology'?" *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 64.3 (15 January 2009). Available at: http://www.hts.org.za/index.php/HTS/article/view/81/77 (accessed: Apr 12, 2011). John de Gruchy has said, "There is no universal 'public theology,' but only theologies that seek to engage the political realm within particular realities." John de Gruchy, "From Political to Public Theologies: The Role of Theology in Public Life in South Africa," in William F. Storrar and Andrew R. Morton (eds.), *Public Theology for the 21ˢᵗ Century: Essays in Honour of Duncan F. Forrester* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 45; 45-62 inclusive.

sense of freedom to re-turn to the unique, theological traditions informing our global context. I thus turn to Ricoeur and Benjamin to construct a method for public theology enabling theological recognizability within an ecclesial public. In contrast to a handful of postsecular theologies advocating a fundamentalist return to tradition, however, the pursuit of theological recognizability I propose is deeply informed by the concerns with pluralism, liberation, and critique in our pluralistic context. Better and worse forms of public theology are adjudicated according to their ability to enable theological constructions informed by all such of criteria. My conclusion draws from recent developments in popular musicology to suggest that public theology may find a rhetorical analogue in "plunderphonics" (chapter six). Collecting the fragments of a religious tradition into a contemporary mashup allows the public theologian to engage a uniquely religious public in projects informed by the criteriology developed at the conclusion to part one. The public theologian collects and re-presents the fragments unique to her theological heritage for the disclosure of truth and the pursuit of liberation. Aware of the possibility that traditional appropriations may reify marginalizing frameworks, the public theologian likewise places a concern with pluralism and self-critique into the very infrastructure of her project. Aware of the potential her unique, ecclesial public has for generating societal change, the public theologian pursues these criteria without compromising the need to present her fragments in a theologically recognizable manner.

Mapping Public Theologies

To assist in simplifying the complexity characterizing public theology, I suggest delineating four streams of thought operative in contemporary forms thereof. We can

label these four streams "postsecular," "civic," "liberationist," and "fundamental." The

first is represented by theologians who use theology as a way to correct the disappearance

of a shared, religiously based morality in our secular society. Typical in this stream is

reflection on, if not a declaration of, the "end" of secularism. In our "postsecular" age, so

postsecular advocates argue, theologians retain a sense of freedom, if not obligation, to

resurrect a dead public morality by reclaiming Western society's Judeo-Christian heritage.

The second stream is represented by theologians who turn to political and cultural theory

to engage in publicness. The driving concerns of this group are diverse, ranging from

church-state relations to cultural anthropology; they may be considered as a piece in re-

sponse to their shared use of political and cultural theory as a means of discerning the

"publicness" of public theology. The third stream is represented by theologians who

view the very notion of tradition itself as a potential problem. Thinkers in this stream

critique systems of power, including those inside the church, from a marginalized point

of view. Given the observation that some groups are excluded from the table of discourse

by the most fundamental assumptions of tradition, liberationist theologians engage in

public talk to remember forgotten voices. The fourth stream is represented by theologi-

ans who make theology public by running their systematic-theological claims through

robust fundamental, methodological, or "prolegomenal" considerations. Based on the

assumption that publicness creates a sense of self-awareness, fundamental public theolo-

gians "found" their theology on shared principles, typically borrowing from disciplines

such as philosophy, sociology, or religious studies as a means of so doing. Of course,

most of the public theologians we will survey may be placed in more than one stream of

thought, but there remains enough difference in their respective emphases, concerns, historical narratives, and plausibility structures to warrant the observation of these four, unique streams of thought. Their nuances will become clearer in what follows. We begin our survey of contemporary forms of public theology with a consideration of postsecular theologians who endeavor to reconstruct the disjointed moral fabric of our culture by reclaiming a lost religious consciousness.

The Crisis of Morality: Postsecular[22] Public Theology

I was once a secularist.

– Hunter Baker[23]

Participants in the first stream of public theology consider the moral fragmentation of a secular society to be the primary issue facing religious communities. With the loss of a common religious framework comes the loss of a shared moral framework. Society is confronted by a "naked public square,"[24] which the theologian must "reclothe" by

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[22] The notion of "postsecularism" has been gaining significant momentum in recent years. A very small sampling of related works includes Anthony Paul Smith and Daniel Whistler (eds.), *After the Postsecular and the Postmodern: New Essays in Continental Philosophy of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2010), which offers a "postsecular" alternative to movements such as Radical Orthodoxy and the postsecular public theologies I will survey momentarily; Philip Gorski, David Kyuman Kim, John Torpey, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (eds.), *The Post-Secular in Question* (New York: NYU Press, 2012), which is a collection of essays given at a 2009 Yale University Conference entitled "Exploring the Post-Secular." Jürgen Habermas, "Secularism's Crisis of Faith: Notes on Post-Secular Society," in *New perspectives quarterly*, 25 (2008): 17-29 [see also Giovanna Borradori (ed.), *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, *The Dialectics of Secularisation: On Reason and Religion* (San Francisco, CA: St. Ignatius Press, 2007); Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2007); and Graham Ward, "Theology and Postmodernism: Is It All Over?" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80.2 (June 2012): 466-484. This list does not necessarily exemplify postsecular public theologians, but it does display a trend in philosophical and theological circles—the observation that we are presently in the "twilight" of secularism.

[23] Hunter Baker, *The End of Secularism* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2009), 11.

[24] Richard John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984). "The vaunted possibilities" of enlightenment rationality certainly

resurrecting religiously informed moral categories. Subsidizing and enabling this concern is the critical observation that theologies dependent on philosophical categories tend to ignore particularity and rest on non-Christian or, at least, non-theological modes of reasoning. Mediating the Christian fact by something like "a phenomenology of the 'religious dimension' present in everyday and scientific experience and language"[25] reduces the pluralistic experiences of particularity to an all-encompassing similarity which eventually disallows religious freedom. Further, given the pluralistic nature of "the public," the Christian theologian is free to embrace her or his unique theological tradition. If pluralism is an unchanging fact of our public society, each religious expression should be allowed to maintain its unique contribution to pluralism, indeed remaining "creative, critical guardians" of tradition and offering the tradition's unique "resources to the broader society, through education and nurture."[26] We may grasp the concerns of theologians in this first stream by considering the theologies of Robert Benne, Max Stackhouse, and Duncan Forrester.

<div style="text-align:center">Robert Benne</div>

Robert Benne's reflections on public theology represent the most radical version of our postsecular alternatives. Theology and theological ethics, for Benne, have been "expunged" from the public square, leaving "articulate members of living religious traditions" to watch "in anguish," as public life "has become increasingly impervious to the

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highlighted human capacities for progress, but they did "little to contribute to the task of guiding those capacities…to ennobling ends" (Benne, *Paradoxical Vision*, 22-23).

[25] The phrase is David Tracy's. Cf. *BRO*, 47.

[26] Forrester, "Education and Moral Values," 478.

contributions that these traditions can make to civic deliberations."[27] Claiming continuity

with Reinhold Niebuhr,[28] H. Richard Niebuhr[29] and Alexis de Tocqueville,[30] Benne

maintains that Calvinistic theology stood as the theoretical foundation to American public

life.[31] Gradually, this foundation was replaced by "Enlightenment values" of individual-

ism, self-expression, and plurality, an ironic upshot of the social optimism indicative of

Calvinism. Such values fostered a "transcendent hope" in the possibilities of history, but

when these expectations were shattered by the horrors of the twentieth century, the result

was "worldly despair"[32]:

> The Protestant mainstream turned against its own legacy. And it turned
> against it with such force that it seriously damaged the channels of com-
> munication it once had, not only to its own grassroots constituents, but al-
> so the broader society. Its estrangement severely damaged its public
> voice.[33]

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[27] Robert Benne, *The Paradoxical Vision: A Public Theology for the 21st Century* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).

[28] Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* (New York: Scribners, 1952).

[29] *The Kingdom of God in America* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1937), p. 193: "A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of Christ without a cross."

[30] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 1, trans. Henry Reeve, ed. Phillips Bradley (New York: Vintage Books, 1945), 316. Benne is also in the company of such thinkers as the Catholic social commentator Richard John Neuhaus (deceased) and the evangelical historian Mark Noll. Cf., for example, Mark Noll, "The Lutheran Difference," *First Things*, 20 (Feb 1992): 31-40; and Noll's Review of Martin Marty, *The Noise of Conflict*, *Christian Century*, 108.17(May 15-22, 1991): 552-553.

[31] Benne notes, e.g., the "Protestant—mostly Calvinistic Puritanism—and enlightenment themes" that made up "the ethos of American life at its earliest inception" (*Paradoxical Vision*, 16). Carl Becker's *Heavenly City* argues a similar point.

[32] Benne, *Paradoxical Vision*, 42. Note the similarities with Benne's thinking in *Defining America: A Christian Critique of the American Dream* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), coauthored with Philip Hefner. There Benne critiques American optimism by suggesting American complicity in exploitation, colonialism, and systemic oppression.

[33] Benne, *Paradoxical Vision*, 42.

Along with the ambitions of modernity's "imperial self" came "the depletion of the moral capital of Western culture." American individualism was marked not by neighbor-love informing a covenantal understanding of culture but by egoism, utilitarianism, and self-centered expressivism. In turn, liberty became "chaotic and disordered," and the "Enlightenment project of rational, scientific progress seemed helpless."[34]

Benne's response is to counteract this despair by constructing an explicitly Lutheran[35] theology that can serve as a "basic theological-ethical framework for engaging the Christian vision with its surrounding public environment—political, economic, cultural, and intellectual."[36] Benne's postsecular public theology may thus be defined as "the engagement of a living religious tradition with its public environment."[37] Because the public culture has lost its moral compass, the theologian is responsible for determining to what extent religion should either critique or embrace cultural mores. In so doing, the theologian corrects the inability of "philosophical liberals and pragmatists" to engage in a moral evaluation of culture:

> The current inheritors of the Enlightenment project, the philosophical liberals and pragmatists, have difficulty both discerning the human good and stipulating the means—including rules—to move toward it. …they seem incapable of stemming the powerful downward tug of contemporary mass culture.[38]

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[34] Benne, *Paradoxical Vision*, 21.

[35] "I am now interested in collecting my thoughts on Christian social ethics, Lutheranly conceived" (Benne, *Paradoxical Vision*, ix).

[36] Benne, *Paradoxical Vision*, ix-x.

[37] Benne, *Paradoxical Vision*, 4.

[38] Benne, *Paradoxical Vision*, 22-23. Cf. also *Paradoxical Vision*, 54: Any public theology that adopts "secular ideologies of liberation," including "Marxist, feminist, gay, and ecological," is "not only adversarial to the general American Protestant heritage" but "corrosive…of the classical biblical and Christian tradition as well."

Religion has a certain "integrity," a "*sui generis* quality," indicative of its quest for ulti-

mate truth, which authentically shapes the lives of individuals. For Benne, religion is not

simply "a function of something else—a reflection of class interest, an irrational expres-

sion of unconscious psychological need, or an arbitrary but illusory imposition of mean-

ing on a meaningless reality."[39] Religion promotes humane values, because religious

people *really believe* in the worthwhileness of a life lived according to such values. It

was not sufficient for religious people merely to continue cultivating these values in a

sectarian manner. As a response to the collapse of "cultural coherence," religions must

articulate a comprehensible vision of the collective good. Doing so is imperative "not

only for the sake of their own communicants, but also for the sake of an unraveling pub-

lic world, a world that could well be moving toward dissolution."[40] If that world retains

any moral capacity, authentically religious subcultures must speak with a "credible public

voice" to reinvest in the moral capital of society.

<div align="center">Max Stackhouse</div>

Like Robert Benne, Max Stackhouse responds with concern to the separation of

theological reflection and civic discourse in secularism. The Western intellectual herit-

age itself emerged as an intersection of secular and Christian self-understandings.[41] To

ignore this historic correlation hinders society's ability to recognize the "inner moral and

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[39] Benne, *Paradoxical*, 4-5.

[40] Benne, *Paradoxical*, 25.

[41] "Certain influences from the classical Christian traditions…are at least partly responsible for the patterns and deeper dynamics that are driving globalization" (Stackhouse, *Globalization and Grace*, vol. 4: *God and Globalization*, 35).

spiritual content" of societal dynamics, thus also hindering the ability to "enhance what is right, good, and fitting" for society's members.[42] Theologians should embrace the observation of a religious *a priori* "intrinsic to human nature" and thereby correct overly suspicious sociological theories.[43]

When "alive," theology remains "in dynamic conversation" with its unique cultural, philosophical, existential, and social contexts. Correlatively, "every civilization, even a secular one, needs an intellectually plausible religious center or it will collapse for want of an inner moral architecture."[44] Such is the case not only for a postsecular society but was for a premodern one as well.[45] The best theologians have consistently been public intellectuals, thinkers who could compellingly combine the insights of a particular religious tradition with the philosophical, ethical, and sociological insights of a unique, historical milieu. They served as the moral guides of cultures perpetually in danger of losing their way. "These great synthesizers abandoned neither tradition and faith, as had the Enlightenment, nor the dynamic contributions of philosophical and cultural insight, as did

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[42] Stackhouse, *God and Globalization*, 36.

[43] Stackhouse, "A Premature Postmodern," 20.

[44] Stackhouse, "A Premature Postmodern," 20.

[45] "It is well known that Christians, Jews, and, later, Muslims in the Middle East and in the areas around the Mediterranean Sea combined the religious insight of the biblical traditions with the philosophical analysis of the Greeks and the legal theories of the Romans to form the basic assumptions on which the West developed. These assumptions became more important as it became clear that the ancient civilization was, for all its power and glory, beset by a metaphysical-moral disease. The classical, pagan world could not explain its own basis. For all the valid wisdom it contained in many areas, it could finally not hold thought or life together. It could not inspire the people to creative living, guide the leaders to the reasonable practice of justice, or explain why things were the way they were" (Stackhouse, "Public Theology and Ethical Judgment," *Theology Today*, 54.2 [1997]: 167 [165-179, inclusive]).

the dogmatists."[46]

Not unlike Robert Benne (though with more optimism in response to pluralism), Stackhouse urges theologians to embrace the irreducibility of their Christian, religious identity. The Protestant self-understanding was nothing less than the very impetus of secularity, meaning theologians have ample freedom to turn unapologetically to the Protestant theological heritage in order to construct a contemporary, public self-understanding.[47] Christians cannot be "resident aliens."[48] Those theologians who focus exclusively on the tensive dissonance between Christianity and "liberal" society are not appropriately sensitive to the Protestant, specifically Calvinist, claim that society remains under God's sovereign rule.

> Covenant holds that God sets forth terms and limits for our lives together, and that whatever authority we have and however we exercise our wills, we are to be subject to these terms. There are, as it were, objective mandates for living that require fidelity, obedience, and a willingness to live lovingly with those whom we at times cannot stand. Christians hold that particular covenants of our lives occur in a context that extends, finally, to all humanity, for we are bonded together in a mutuality of existence not of our own construction.[49]

The covenantal structure of society does not negate the complex stratification of society, but even a multifaceted societal framework remains under God's control.[50]

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[46] Stackhouse, "A Premature Postmodern," 20.

[47] Cf. also Deirdre King Hainsworh and Scott Paeth, "Introduction," Hainsworth and Paeth (ed.), *Public Theology for a Global Society*, viii-xx, for my understanding of these themes in Stackhouse.

[48] The opposing view is represented by Stackhouse's fellow Protestants Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989).

[49] Max L. Stackhouse, *Public Theology and Political Economy: Christian Stewardship in Modern Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 27.

[50] Here, Stackhouse is dependent on Abraham Kuyper, whose notion of differentiated institutions provided a theological framework for stubbornly complex societal realities, and Reinhold Niebuhr. Cf.

Differentiating Stackhouse from Benne is the manner in which covenantal theology (in the theological lineage of John Calvin) informs a "shareable" approach to theological construction. Informed by the notion of a shared humanity, Stackhouse proposes theological construals that are, in theory, recognizable to anyone. Christian beliefs are "not esoteric, privileged, irrational, or inaccessible."[51] They are "comprehensible and indispensable for all."[52] Insofar as Christians actually believe in the comprehensibility of their doctrines, they should not hesitate to express those doctrines in a way that remains understandable to "Hindus and Buddhists, Jews and Muslims, Humanists and Marxists."[53] It is only by expressing their theology with such universal availability in mind that theologians may provide religious guidance to public life.

Duncan Forrester

Concluding this initial group of postsecular public theologians is Duncan Forrester.[54] For Forrester, "we live in a morally fragmented society and culture," where an "ef-

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Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics* (New York: Scribner, 1960). Even the church's pursuit of the common good can be a mixture of idealistic moralism, collective egoism, and a masked desire for control. Stackhouse's respect for the irreducible uniqueness of religious and cultural particularity serves as an interesting contrast to the particularist critique of David Tracy offered by George Lindbeck, which we will discuss in chapter three. Stackhouse wants to protect uniqueness, but he is not concerned with protecting traditionalist understandings of religion.

[51] Max Stackhouse, *Pubic Theology and Political Economy*, xi. Also quoted in Benne, *Paradoxical Theology*, 4.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Forrester is regularly cited as a leader in the field of public theology. Consider the title to Storrar and Morton's *Public Theology for the 21st century: Essays in Honour of Duncan B. Forrester*. Among his many accomplishments in the field of public theology, Forrester is the founder of the Centre for Theology and Public Issues at New College, University of Edinburgh and is an advisor for the Centre for Public Theology in the Faculty of Theology at Huron University College, at the University of Western Ontario.

fective moral consensus"[55] has all but disappeared. The rise of secularism and the changing social reality of the twentieth century have created a space of "thoroughgoing relativism,"[56] where civil society and religiously based morality can no longer work together:

> The vaguely Christian consensus that had survived in many western nations, and which was a presupposition of much public theology, disintegrated rapidly after the 1960s, and these societies became increasingly fragmented and secular.[57]

This fragmentation placed society in a "state of crisis" without the resources necessary for proper sociability. Even in cultures where institutional religion flourished, it was impossible to protect a once-shared morality;[58] any attempts at reclaiming morality would

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[55] Duncan Forrester, "Education and Moral Values: Who Educates?" in *Forrester on Christian Ethics and Practical Theology: Collected Writings on Christianity, India, and the Social Order* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010), 475; also published as "Education and Moral Values: Who Educates?," *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 86.344 (Winter 1997): 370-379.

[56] Forrester, "Education and Moral Values," 476.

[57] Duncan Forrester, "Public Theology in an Age of Terror," in *Forrester on Christian Ethics and Practical Theology: Collected Writings on Christianity, India, and the Social Order* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010), 495. We should note, however, Forrester's later nuancing of his earlier, less nuanced response to secularism: "I would argue that from the angle of the Christian mission we should recognize that [the moral] fragmentation [of society] presents opportunities and challenges which are at the same time fresh and also have striking similarities to the situation in the ancient world when the Christian faith was born. We can learn from the early Church how to witness to the truth in a fragmented age. Whether fragmentation is a predicament or an emancipation, the gospel can be proclaimed in a fragmented age. That is the immediate task. Whether MacIntyre is right in suggesting that we should work towards a new Christian consensus on Aristotelian and Thomist foundations is a question we may leave aside for the while. *My own inclination is that the establishment or restoration of some general consensus based on Christian foundations is inconceivable for the foreseeable future, and probably in the light of historical experience undesirable.* Today we have to witness to the truth in a world in fragments" (Forrester, *Theological Fragments*, 10-11, italics mine). Forrester's attentiveness to the "world in fragments" is immediately amenable to my own interpretation of publicness as fragmentary. However, my theory of fragmentation is more heavily dependent on the amalgamation of reflexive philosophy which founds the Romantic notion of fragmentation and the hermeneutical approach to theology representative of the adverbial understanding of publicness, which I will introduce at the conclusion to this chapter.

[58] "Even in societies in which institutional religion appears to continue to flourish, there are major problems affecting the critical passing on of a moral tradition" (Forrester, "Education and Moral Values," 473).

"be seen as unacceptable indoctrination."[59] Families, schools, churches, and peer groups—once the "agents of moral education"—no longer served as the protective infrastructure of collective conscience. The result was the loss of a necessary partnership between public life and moral formation and the further loss of a moral center informing such collaborative efforts as public-educational strategy.[60] Further, in the wake of two world wars and the horrors of fascism,[61] there emerged "an abiding suspicion of social hope," the "resurgence of old antagonisms," and the "revival of historic bitterness."[62] In such a situation, it was not good and better arguments that defined virtue but the loudest and most powerful.

In response to such disintegration, the Christian community must work toward the reclamation of a religiously construed, moral center. In contrast to typically reactionary responses,[63] the theologian's task should be to utilize the Christian faith as a means of

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[59] Forrester, "Education and Moral Values," 475.

[60] Forrester, "Education and Moral Values," 474. Note, however, Forrester's opinion: "I simply want to make two points. Comprehensive education was a project in moral education and in social reform. And despite its achievements, which I believe to be considerable, it demonstrated that the hopes of its more enthusiastic votaries were excessive, and suggested that there are limits to what a modern educational system can achieve, both in terms of character formation and particularly as an instrument of social change" (475).

[61] Duncan Forrester, "Can Liberation Theology Survive 1989?," in *Forrester on Christian Ethics and Practical Theology: Collected Writings on Christianity, India, and the Social Order* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010), 405-410; also published as "Can Liberation Theology Survive 1989?," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 47.2 (1994); 245-254.

[62] Forrester, "Ethics and Salvation," 470-471.

[63] "All round the world" churches "devoted their energies to institutional survival…rather than seeking the good of the broader community in which they found themselves." Duncan Forrester, "Public Theology in an Age of Terror," in *Forrester on Christian Ethics and Practical Theology: Collected Writings on Christianity, India, and the Social Order* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010), 495.

renovating hope[64] and reconstituting self-worth.[65] Communities of faith cannot "confine themselves to a ghetto existence" but must become "creative, critical guardians of a tradition, concerned for its constant refreshment and the offering of its resources to the broader society, through education and nurture."[66] Like Stackhouse, Forrester believes the marriage of theological and social values is possible, insofar as the theologian energizes religious language to account for shared experience: from anger, frustration, sadness, despair, and bitterness on the one hand to reason, rationality, civility, expectation, and progress on the other.[67]

The Crisis of Civility: Public Theology and Political Theory

> Today's gods do not respect the neat divisions between state, civil society, and econmy.
>
> – William Cavanaugh[68]

Theologians in the second stream of public theology reflect on the possibility for

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[64] "In a society which has lost its grip on social hope, has ceased to seek a city, the Christian faith stands in all its obvious frailty and weakness as more than an empty husk of spent belief and unfulfilled expectation. It still gives shape to hope and sustains hope even here" (Forrester, "Ethics and Salvation," 471).

[65] "Worth is attributed by God to human beings independent of achievement; it is not something we earn. Human beings are accepted by God, beloved by God, their worth affirmed by God, apart from achievement, contribution, or even stakeholding! Christian character is gracious, generous, loving and just. And a decent society must do something to incorporate such values into its welfare provision." Duncan Forrester, "Welfare and Conviction Politics," in *Forrester on Christian Ethics and Practical Theology: Collected Writings on Christianity, India, and the Social Order* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010), 489; also published as "Welfare and Conviction Politics: A Response to Alan Deacon," in Andrew R. Morton (ed.), *The Future of Welfare* (Edinburgh: CTPL, 1997), 133-140.

[66] Forrester, "Education and Moral Values," 478.

[67] This role has become especially urgent since the turn of the 21st century, a time of coexistence between religious fundamentalism and "secular liberal rationalism." Our world, Forrester says, "is at the same time very new and very old" ("Public Theology in an Age of Terror," 493-496).

[68] William T. Cavanaugh, "Is Public Theology Really Public? Some Problems with Civil Society," *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* 21 (2001): 114.

religious individuals to locate domains of meaning and truth alongside fellow citizens.

Typical here is attention to theorists like John Rawls, Richard Rorty, Alisdair MacIntyre,

Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, and Thomas Nagel, each of whose reflections on liber-

al democracy—often in regard to the "American experiment"—deal with the

im/possibility of locating a shared space for political dialogue in a pluralistic context.

Parallel to the first group's response to the collapse of a shared religious morality is the

second group's response to the collapse of a shared political identity.

The public theologians I will survey in this section are Kathryn Tanner, Max

Stackhouse (revisited), Michael and Kenneth Himes, and William Cavanaugh. Each the-

ologian is U.S. American, and her or his writings reflect uniquely American formulations

of theological problems. In a U.S. context, where religious beliefs are often sacrificed

"on the altar of public expediency,"[69] the possibility of religious discourse in public de-

bate is of central importance. David Tracy (although not included in this group) reflected

the concerns of civic theologians, when he posited that the pressing need of "our dam-

aged public realm" was twofold:

> First, to clarify the character of rationality so that the genuinely public na-
> ture of the public realm may be defended; second to clarify the sociologi-
> cal realities that have weakened the public realm in societies like our own,

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[69] Rorty, "The Priority of Democracy," 258; cf. 257, 274, fn. 1. Rorty is referring to Thomas Jef-
ferson's famous quip, "It does me no injury for my neighbor to say that there are twenty Gods or no God."
Thomas Jefferson, "Notes on the State of Virginia," Query XVII, in A. A. Lipscomb and A. E. Bergh (ed.),
The Writings of Thomas Jefferson (Washington, D.C., 1905), 2:217. Jefferson's comment can be placed in
context by the following extended quote: "Truth is great and will prevail if left to herself, …she is the
proper and sufficient antagonist to error, and has nothing to fear from the conflict, unless by human inter-
position disarmed of her natural weapons, free argument and debate, errors ceasing to be dangerous when it
is permitted freely to contradict them" (Jefferson, "Notes on the State of Virginia," 302). I turn to Rorty
here and elsewhere merely as an illustration of the pluralism indicative of the contemporary intellectual
milieu.

in advanced industrial and postindustrial Western democracies.[70]

Typical approaches included in this stream are more explicitly ethical than theological,[71] and the respective appropriations of political theory are unique for each theologian. Even so, they can be considered as a piece insofar as they facilitate the religion-public conversation by reflecting on the nature of political discourse and the relationship between religious and political modes of discourse.

Each of the theological ethicists we will explore in this section likewise highlights an undeniable degree of fragmentation that has taken place in the civic, if not in the ecclesial, realm. Like the postsecular theologians we just surveyed, their reactions to civic fragmentation typically include a re-turn to ecclesiology as a means of engaging a morally pluralistic civic society. By focusing on the prospect of making disciples, these theologians aim to energize Christians toward the promotion of well-being, stability, and freedom.

Kathryn Tanner

Kathryn Tanner's study in culture functions as an exemplary interpretation of the fragmented reality facing late-twentieth-century theologians. In her 1997 work *Theories*

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[70] David Tracy, "Theology, Critical Social Theory, and the Public Realm," in *Habermas, Modernity, and Public Theology* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992), 24; cf. also Tracy, "Religion and Human Rights in the Public Realm," *Daedalus* 112.4 [Fall 1983]: 238: "From the viewpoint of the public realm the question is: Can the rest of us accept in principle some of the conclusions of the religions…even when we do not accept their explicitly religious or theological warrants? If we do, what reasons can we give one another for those agreements?"

[71] One finds more theologians in this stream participating in discussions at the Society of Christian Ethics than at the American Academy of Religion. E. Harold Breitenberg's observation is exemplary in this regard: "For more than three decades public theology has been the subject of much critical reflection, discussion, and ardent debate *within the field of Christian theological ethics*." Breitenberg, "What is Public Theology?," 3.

of Culture, Tanner critiqued various "post-Geertzian," anthropological understandings of culture that did not deal adequately with (1) plurality inside culture or (2) the dynamic interplay between freedom and culture as determining an individual's identity. Such theorists proposed that culture was determinative for an individual's religious, sociological, and emotional self-understanding:

> There is nothing to human life with any definite form or shape of its own that might exist outside culture so as to be so regulated or repressed. Culture makes human life from the first; it is in that sense its constitutive medium and not some secondary influence on it. Human beings get from culture all the shape, form, and definiteness their actions manifest.[72]

Culture did not redirect or constrain "already-established behaviors" but worked merely on "animal or bodily based capacities with an extensive and indefinite range of possible outcomes."[73]

In contrast, Tanner wanted to stress the dynamic interplay between cultures and the people who constitute cultures: "human beings may be made by culture, but they also make it." Cultures are human constructions and are thus no more static than people. As a theoretical construct, culture is finally "an abstraction drawn by the anthropologist from the concrete facts of socially significant behaviors."[74] Cultural values, norms, and patterns are radically contingent. To treat cultural elements as formal laws or grammatical rules,[75] therefore, is to use a mode of analysis inadequate to the object of study. It is

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[72] Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 27-28.

[73] Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 28.

[74] Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 31-32.

[75] In using this terminology, Tanner is referring to Lindbeck, whose analysis of culture we will consider in some detail in chapter three. See also Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 33: "The anthropologist can

more appropriate to further "the humanistic project of social criticism" by recognizing

cultural contingency. So doing allows the anthropologist to "widen the scope of human

possibility by suggesting that no one culture, however taken for granted it might be by its

participants,"[76] is necessary.

> In such a way the anthropologist approximates in a new idiom the Enlight-
> enment project of freeing human society from the dead weight of tradition
> or custom—be that tradition one's own or that of others. There is no es-
> cape from the social inheritance of culture; culture is an inevitability, a
> human universal. But no particular culture has a similar inevitability; any
> culture can conceivably be escaped—into some other. Reflection on cul-
> tural differences hereby replaces culture-free reflection as a means to so-
> cial change.[77]

Stressing "cultural consensus" reproduces the same "gambit by which high cul-

ture was used by intellectual elites in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to justify

their own social and political importance."[78] Consequently, sociologists should attend to

"the novel way" cultural elements are placed together by "complex and ad hoc relational

processes [such] as resistance, appropriation, subversion, and compromise."[79] Homoge-

neity, consistency, and order are no longer *a priori* assumptions but "temporary and pro-

visional results." "By uncovering and giving sense to the internal contestations of a cul-

ture, by disputing the homogeneity and consistency of a culture, and by resisting the

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[inappropriately] discuss the interrelatedness of cultural elements in terms of formal laws or *structures*. In so doing, beliefs, values, and so forth are related syntactically rather than semantically. Analogous to the way linguistic elements are organized according to grammatical rules, cultural elements become values in quasi-mathematical, abstract codes."

[76] Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 37.

[77] Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 37.

[78] Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 48.

[79] Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 58.

temptation to assume unified cultural totalities,"[80] sociologists place self-criticism into the very substructure of their projects.

Tanner adopted this "chastened, postmodern view of culture"[81] as a basis for exploring Christian theology, which is itself a cultural product:

> The most basic contribution that an anthropological understanding of culture—postmodern or not—makes to theology is to suggest that theology be viewed as a part of culture, as a form of cultural activity. …Theology is something that human beings produce. Like all human activities, it is historically and socially conditioned; it cannot be understood in isolation from the rest of human sociocultural practices. In short, to say that theology is a part of culture is just to say in a contemporary idiom that it is a human activity.[82]

In turn, the theologian approaches her project in a way that protects against reification. Adopting a differentiated view of theological cultures, the theologian pursues an "exploratory" goal, constructing theology as a "task" or "style," instead of a set of rules inherited from a tradition. Given the contextualized nature of cultural identity and, thus, of theological reflection, the theologian sees herself participating in an ongoing pursuit, the task of which is Christian discipleship. In response to the pluralism internal to Christianity, the disciple cultivates such virtues as exploration, dialogue, argumentation, and a willingness to confess mistakes.

Tanner's public theology, therefore, represents a unique, postsecular alternative to theologians like Robert Benne. Benne's response to the observed moral fragmentation of

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[80] Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 58.

[81] Even so, Tanner's own view of culture "has no sacrosanct status" in her exploratory project. "It forms no uncriticizable basis for a simple unilateral reevaluation of theology. This view of culture may turn out to be theologically unserviceable or in insurmountable tension with commitments of a religious nature that many Christian theologians would be loathe to compromise" (Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 61).

[82] Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 63.

society was to resituate the Christian theological heritage as the moral foundation for public life in the United States. Tanner's response, on the other hand, is to suggest that such assumptions "fail to do full justice to the pluralistic character of public debate." Instead of respecting difference, such theologies attempt to revitalize a specific religiosity as *the* primary religious matrix or to presume that "all participants in the debate share all the religious materials at issue."[83]

In continuity with her focus on cultural difference, Tanner bases her definition of public theology on a "weak" understanding of "publicness"—publicness as a loose association guaranteed by certain, inalienable, civil rights:

> Instead of agreeing on a comprehensive doctrine or political theory, partic-
> ipants in [public] debate share merely a weak, constitutional consensus,
> and governmental procedures of a polity and the values and principles up-
> on which that polity is founded. The latter involves basic agreement on
> fair decision-making procedures, a commitment to the values and princi-
> ples embodied in such procedures…and assent to the authoritative charac-
> ter of a certain body of values according to which decisions are to be as-
> sessed.[84]

Not unlike the unified-yet-pluralistic associations characterizing Tanner's notion of church, the notions characterizing "weak" associations in civil society reflect a plurality of religio-cultural norms. The guiding principles enabling their creation are more notice-ably ethical than religious, but the weak consensus is sufficient for the purpose of civil unity.[85]

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[83] Tanner, "Public Theology…Public Debate," 84.

[84] Tanner, "Public Theology…Public Debate," 89.

[85] "Such forms of weak consensus are sufficient to establish political and argumentative communi-ty." Tanner, "Public Theology…Public Debate," 89.

Representing only one group (itself pluralistic within its unity) in this community, Christian theologians should neither thrust their unique self-understanding on all participants nor retreat into a private, marginal existence. The Christian theological community surveyed the resources of its own tradition in order to form disciples sensitive to the plurality internal to their own religion.

> One may sum up what Christianity stands for in the process of judging what one must do here and now. But since the Word of God is a free Word, the meaning of discipleship—what it really means to be a Christian—cannot be summed up in any neat formula that would allow one to know already what Christian discipleship will prove to include or exclude over the course of time.[86]

Analogous to the theologian's sensitivity to ideological distortion within the Christian community, the public theologian likewise explored creative expressions of faith that might engender "cultural materials with the capacity to shake up established forms in surprising ways."[87] The theologian becomes a "bricoleur."

> [She] works with an always potentially disordered heap of already existing materials, pulling them apart and putting them back together again, tinkering with their shapes, twisting them this way and that. It is a creativity expressed through the modification and extension of materials already on the ground.[88]

In her most recent work, *Christ the Key*, published thirteen years after her early study on culture, Tanner exemplifies this form of theology in her creative appropriation of Hans Urs von Balthasar and Gregory of Nyssa. In a preemptive defense against theologians who would accuse Tanner's creative appropriation of historical inaccuracy, she writes:

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[86] Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 155.

[87] Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 167.

[88] Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 166.

> While I do not believe I have distorted any of the material I directly or in-
> directly quote, my thinking often pushes that material in directions beyond
> its own explicit statement, without any great defense of the uses to which
> it is thereby put. While I welcome specialist interest in the question of my
> faithfulness to the sources, my main intent is simply to show the fruitful-
> ness of a kind of internalizing of the history of Christ thought [*sic*] for its
> creative redeployment.[89]

As in her work on culture, Tanner does not move carelessly from creativity to relativity.

Theological construction is not a "'pure,' freewheeling expression of creative drives."[90]

Informed by the internalization of the theological community's Scripture, the creative

theologian expresses a unique re-presentation of the religio-cultural memory that is, in

fact, informed and motivated by an experience with the Christ of her faith.[91] A public

theology informed by Tanner's theory of culture, therefore, embraces the possibilities of

both pluralism and discipleship. It moves from a robust but humble faith in the claims of

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[89] Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), ix. I will re-visit this unique theological methodology in my last chapter, arguing that a postsecular public theology should be a creative and revisionist re-membering of the theological "sound bites" making up a unique reli-gious culture's self-understanding. For a primary resource, see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Presence and Thought: An Essay on the Religious Philosophy of Gregory of Nyssa*, trans. Mark Sebanc (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1995). For an evangelical counterpart to Tanner's cultural and theological sensitivities, see the various texts associated with "theological interpretation of Scripture" in, e.g., by Dan Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008); Kevin J. Vanhoozer et al, ed., *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005); and Stephen Fowl, "The Role of Authorial Intention in the Theological Interpretation of Scripture," in Joel B. Green and Max Turner (eds.), *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000). Note, however, that Tanner differentiates her pro-ject rather substantially from any "theological interpretation" dependent on a historical-critical method of reading the Bible. The latter examples are in many ways still tied to a historical-critical reading.

[90] *Theories of Culture*, 166.

[91] In this regard Tanner claims a precursor in the "way scripture (particularly the Psalms) was in-ternalized (through repeated direct reading, liturgical recitation, and theological commentary) and rede-ployed in earlier Christian thought—for example, in Anselm's poetry and prose meditations, which for all their prayerfulness took a quite analytical and rigorous form not unlike this book." Tanner, *Christ the Key*, ix. Cf. Benedicta Ward, "Introduction," in *The Prayers and Meditations of St. Anselm with the Proslogion*, trans. Benedicta Ward (London: Penguin, 1973), 28-29, 43, 46.

its tradition to a sympathetic engagement with the multiple voices constituting its unique,

civic realm.

Michael and Kenneth Himes

Like Kathryn Tanner, Michael and Kenneth Himes celebrate the role religion

plays in the moral and spiritual formation of individuals.[92] Though acting publicly in

civic circles, religious individuals find their "basic orienting attitudes" shaped by explicit-

ly religious symbols and thus reflect these symbols in their public expression.[93] Reli-

gious terminology should thus be allowed in the public forum, even among those not

sharing a religious identity. Even so, because participants in that public forum do not

share religious convictions, it is inappropriate to assume that the theological reasoning

representing a particular faith community would be recognizable to those outside of it.

The public theologian is thus urged to consider how theological expression reflects uni-

versally recognizable "truths." In broad continuity with the notion of the religious classic

in David Tracy's theology (which we will consider momentarily), the Himeses posit that

the "basic orienting attitudes" reflected by a particular theological tradition may indeed

point to orienting attitudes indicative of all participants, regardless of religious identity.

In order to translate the specificities of a particular tradition's expression, the theologian

adopts certain ethical vocabulary, including theories of justice, the state, or relationality

which are derived secondarily from the explicitly theological vocabulary of a worship-

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[92] Michael and Kenneth Himes, *The Fullness of Faith: the Public Significance of Theology* (New York: MacMillan, 1993).

[93] This observation is also made by William Cavanaugh, "Is Public Theology Really Public?," 108.

ping community (such as, say, the incarnation, soteriology, or the immanent Trinity).

Public theology for the Himeses thus builds on the interrelationality of religious and non-religious identities by utilizing religious language to assist all people in understanding their deepest identity. Public theologies like those of Michael and Kenneth Himes have been problematized by theologians sympathetic to Tanner's observation of difference. We can supplement our previous summary of Tanner by revisiting Max Stackhouse and engaging his notion of the multiple "publics" informing theological expression.

Max Stackhouse (revisited)

Stackhouse proposes delineating four publics that constitute unique loci of conversation and thus uniquely inform the construction of theological projects. He labels these publics "academic," "political," "religious," and "economic." Each public is identified according to the types of questions guiding its respective participants. Participants in the religious public ask, "What can and should be preached and taught among those who seek faithful living and thinking according to the most holy, and thus the most comprehensive, righteous, and enduring reality to which humans can point?"[94] Participants in the political public ask, "What can provide those in authority with a vision of and motivation for just institutions in society so that the common life can flourish?"[95] Participants in the academic public ask, "What can offer reasons and withstand critical analysis, offering convincing arguments, warrants, and evidence for the positions it advances in the

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[94] Stackhouse, "Public Theology and Ethical Judgment," 166. Note the continuity with Tanner's stress on Christian discipleship. We will see this stress repeated momentarily in William Cavanaugh and other public theologians who highlight the importance of ecclesiology in confronting the needs of public theology.

[95] Stackhouse, "Public Theology and Ethical Judgment," 166.

context of serious dialogue among scholars?"[96] And, finally, participants in the economic public ask, "What allows human life to flourish, to be relieved of drudgery, and to contribute to material well-being by encouraging creativity in production and distribution?"[97]

In an interview with Ken Chase of Wheaton College, Stackhouse called these publics "spheres," "powers," or "dominions." Without correction by religious self-understanding, these powers may negatively shape the lives of their members.[98] In each public the theologian must correct the demonic ambitions that would overwhelm participants if left unchecked. The potential for sin in the religious public is corrected by cultivating the virtue of holiness, the potential for sin in the political public is corrected by cultivating the virtue of justice, the potential for sin in the academic public is corrected by cultivating the virtue of truth, and the potential for sin in the economic public is corrected by cultivating the virtue of creativity. We thus find Stackhouse's postsecular tendency tempered by his observation of difference. A public theology informed by Stackhouse's

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[96] Stackhouse, "Public Theology and Ethical Judgment," 166.

[97] Stackhouse, "Public Theology and Ethical Judgment," 166.

[98] Eros, as an example, "is the drive of desire, sexual desire," which "needs guidance, containment, and celebration, so that it gives glory to God and serves the well-being of the human community and neither masters nor distorts these." Max Stackhouse, "Publics, Apologetics, and Ethics: An Interview with Max L. Stackhouse," conducted by Kenneth R. Chase on March 16, 2001, p. 3; http://www.wheaton.edu/CACE/resources/onlinearticles/publicsapologeticsethics.pdf; accessed March 22, 2011. "Public" for Stackhouse also involves the possibility of mutual participation, as in a publicly traded corporation: "One example we can use is the simple notion of a publicly owned corporation. Arabs, Japanese, Westerners, and Europeans can own it. All kinds of combinations of people can participate in that, and that is, in a sense, more public than any government." Families and the internet are also given as examples. In distinction from the understanding of "public" as a negative concept, defined over against "private," Stackhouse's notion of "public" is not conflated with "political." In a global society, no government is fully public, insofar as no singular government can boast the unification of everyone. A family, the internet, cable TV (e.g., watching CNN in China), or, in the best-case scenarios, a church or other religious gathering are all more authentically public, since they enable the unification of people from a variety of backgrounds and ethnicities.

definition of multiple publics will pursue virtue with "intelligibility, moral integrity, and respect for others."[99]

William Cavanaugh et al

Like Tanner and Stackhouse, William Cavanaugh moves through political and civil difference into a call for a robust ecclesiology.[100] Analogous to our evaluation of Tanner, our evaluation of Cavanaugh begins with a consideration of his civic theory. Cavanaugh argues for a clear distinction between civil society and state citizenship, thereby effecting a clear distinction between civil society and ecclesial citizenship. Although all citizens of a state are joined together by laws facilitating their civic identity, unique ecclesial identities should not be reduced to shared, civic identities. The idea of "civil society" includes such benefits as the protection of checks and balances and the cultivation of free discourse, but civil identity does not encompass the totality of one's participation in her community. The lack of authentic autonomy for civil society, state, and church, respectively, is especially problematic for the Christian, since it reduces theologically rich ideas to their publicly available concepts.[101]

The recent attention given by theologians to the notion of civil society is indicative of the church's desire to avoid the extremes of "mere privatization" and "Constantin-

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[99] Stackhouse, "Public Theology and Ethical Judgment," 166-167.

[100] Cavanaugh disapproves of John Courtney Murray's view of civil society because of its "anemic ecclesiology." Cf. Cavanaugh, "Is Public Theology Really Public?" 116.

[101] If Christian children's "public identities" are being formed to citizenship in the nation-state, those same students could perhaps be forgiven for forgetting that by baptism their 'citizenship is in heaven'…and that their fellow citizens are the saints. Cavanaugh, "Is Public Theology Really Public?," 114.

ian coercion."[102] Chastened by the awareness of ecclesiastical abuses of power, yet desiring not simply to fall into private enclaves of religious speech, the church seeks "to speak clearly in the public arena without carrying a big stick."[103] In trying to become public, theologians have forgotten how to let churches "be public." The public has "reduced the church to its own terms,"[104] terms where citizenship displaces discipleship as the church's unique contribution to civil society. By reacting strongly to the exclusion of theological thinking in the public sphere, theologians find it difficult "to speak with theological integrity even within the church."[105]

Alongside Cavanaugh, the most outspoken proponents of ecclesiastical public theology typically represent some form of narrative theology[106] and are often apprecia-

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[102] Cavanaugh, "Is Public Theology Really Public?," 106.

[103] Cavanaugh, "Is Public Theology Really Public?," 106.

[104] Cavanaugh, "Is Public Theology Really Public?," 115.

[105] Cavanaugh, "Is Public Theology Really Public?," 115. Cavanaugh adds, "The flows of power from church to public are reversed, threatening to flood the church itself" (115). Cavanaugh's version of church-state relations is not unlike that of Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Social Theory* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1981). MacInture advocated for local communities of faith in which "civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages upon us" (*After Virtue*, 44-45; cited also in Duncan Forrester, "Education and Social Policy," 478). Robert Benne makes a similar observation, when he says, "Many subcultures are devoted to humane values and practices, but a struggle is on. The older cultural coherence is gone. New interest groups practice their hermeneutic of suspicion on whatever is left of it. Individuals are free to find their own way in this confusing maelstrom of possibilities. In this context, religious traditions are called to find their public voice" (Benne, *Paradoxical Vision*, 25).

[106] I use "narrative theology" according to the Protestant, U.S. American form associated with Hans Frei and George Lindbeck. cf. Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974); George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age, 25th Anniversary Edition* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2009), 112. Hereafter *Nature of Doctrine* will be referred to as "*ND*"; page numbers will refer to the 2009 edition.
   For a Catholic, more typically European model of narrative theology, cf. Hille Haker, *Moralische Identität: Literarische Lebensgeschichten als Medium ethischer Reflexion: mit einer Interpretation der Jahrestage von Uwe Johnson* (Tübingen: Francke, 1999); Dietmar Mieth, *Moral und Erfahrung, Bd. I: Grundlagen einer theologisch-ethischen Hermeneutik* (Freiburg: Herder, 1999); *Moral und Erfahrung, Bd. II: Entfaltung einer theologisch-ethischen Hermeneutik* (Freiberg: Herder, 1998).

tive of John Milbank,[107] Alasdair MacIntyre,[108] Michele de Certeau,[109] and Karl Barth.[110]

Like the postsecular public theologians, each of these thinkers mourned the loss of religious particularity that accompanied the rise of secularism in Western consciousness. In response to movements towards global commonality,[111] for example, J. Todd Billings questions "whether the language of 'universal values' can really lead us where we need to go."[112] If the church is not willing to critique public discourse by way of its own self-understanding, it betrays "the pursuit of the God-given call rooted in its identity." Those who understand themselves as members of the body of Christ "bring much to the table that persons restricted to the language of the 'public arena'" do not.

> In a eucharistic vision, we approach those in need not out of pity but because clothing the naked and visiting the prisoner is tied up with our identity in Christ. …In opposing the forces that continue to perpetuate injus-

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The desire to protect a Christian identity is exemplified in Lindbeck's concern that rationalism, pluralism, and mobility "dissolved the bonds of tradition and community," compelling members of society "to embark on their own individual quests for symbols of transcendence." Churches enabled this trend. Instead of socializing their members within "coherent and comprehensive religious outlooks" that can enable ethical living, they were all too quick to embrace the individualistic approach to morality and self-understanding (*ND*, 112).

[107] Milbank's sense of nostalgia for a time when "there was no secular" is particularly informative. John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 1-50. For a recent collection of definitive writings, see John Milbank and Simon Oliver (eds.), *The Radical Orthodoxy Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

[108] Beyond *After Virtue*, see also Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1988).

[109] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press , 1984); cited in Cavanaugh, "Is Public Theology Really Public?," 123, fn. 54. Cf. also Barry Harvey, "Insanity, Theocracy, and the Public Realm: Public Theology, the Church, and the Politics of Liberal Democracy," *Modern Theology* 19.1 (Jan 1994): 27.

[110] Cf. J. Todd Billings, "The Lord's Supper and the Church's Public Witness," *Theology Today* (2010): 120.

[111] *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time* (New York: Penguin, 2005).

[112] Billings, "The Lord's Supper," 120.

tice, we are not making an idealistic attempt to force the rein of God upon the earth. Rather, we are simply living into our true identity in Christ.[113]

The Crisis of Existence: Liberationist Public Theology

> The vitality of any public square ultimately depends on how much we care about the quality of our lives together.
>
> – Cornel West[114]

For theologians in the third stream of public theology, theoretical concerns are suspect, since they typically derive from positions of comfort and do not reflect the perspective of the suffering. When the existential point of departure is one of survival,[115] the concerns with theoretical appropriateness are held only to the degree that they enable the pursuit of life. "Political theologies," "liberationist theologies," "practical theologies," and "contextual theologies" all reflect, to one degree or another, the desire not to allow theory to trump experience in a "methodological hierarchy."[116] In order to focus our discussion of exemplary public theologians in this stream, I will turn to two liberation theologians who use the phrase "public theology"[117] to reference their own projects:[118]

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[113] Billings, "The Lord's Supper," 120.

[114] *Race Matters* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993; repr. 2001), 6. I will cover the "post-contextual" concerns West engages in this book in my conclusion to chapter one.

[115] Cf., e.g., Yolanda Tarango, "La Vida es la Lucha," *Texas Journal of Ideas, History, and Culture*, 12.2 (1990) and Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, *En La Lucha / In the Struggle: A Hispanic Women's Liberation Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

[116] Rebecca Chopp, "Practical Theology and Liberation" in Lewis Mudge and James Poling (eds.), *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1987; repr. 2009).

[117] In his chapter entitled "Public Theology from the Periphery" (in *Theology, Liberation, and Genocide*), Aguilar turns to "non-European theologies that *could be labeled* public" (55), as opposed to non-European theologies which call themselves "public." Italics mine.

[118] Typically, self-entitled "public theologies" are European, for it is in Europe (as in America) where theologians can boast sufficient comfort to be concerned with differentiating public theology from, say, historical, ecclesial, or political theologies. European public theologies addressing political issues on

Mario Aguilar and James Cone.

Mario Aguilar

In *Theology, Liberation, and Genocide*, Mario Aguilar explores "what liberation theologians in Latin America, Africa, or Asia have not done": reflect on the "'negation' or absence of God."[119] In contrast to so many latino/a theologies of liberation "filled with God," Aguilar proposes a shift: moving "God" from the center to the periphery, from a place of vocalization to a place of silence. Not unlike the manner in which European theologians "engaged deeply with the experience of God's absence" in a post-Auschwitz situation, liberation theologians of the twenty-first century can only continue their reflections on poverty by confronting the very "shift of God from the centre [*sic*] to the periphery during and after the 1994 Rwandan genocide."[120]

> The skeletons of Rwanda tell the story of a fallen institutional Christianity and the presence of a crucified and loving God who gets killed and raped many, many times because the leaders of his own institutional church could not be there to defend him.[121]

For Aguilar, the atrocities of Rwanda exposed the insufficiency of theologies using post-colonial critique as their sole point of departure. In conditions of absolute despair, the hope of liberation was more adequately facilitated by reflecting on the absolute silence of

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behalf of the poor also functioned as a response to the modern, sacred-secular divide. According to Mario Aguilar, European churches facilitated "participatory alignments" between social-political and historical-theological points of view, thereby cultivating "fresh dialogue" between the church, the state, and other religions. But this is not the case in Latin America, where a more robust connection remains between personal faith and public identity, and where political commentary (especially in the late, twentieth century) is a matter of life and death.

[119] Aguilar, *Theology, Liberation, and Genocide*, 1.

[120] Ibid.

[121] Aguilar, *Theology, Liberation, and Genocide*, 43.

God, symbolized quintessentially by the victims and killers of Rwandan genocide. More adequate to the exigencies of the post-Rwandan, liberation-theological situation is a return to Europe. But this is not the Europe of colonialism. It is the post-holocaust Europe of profound theological anxiety.

One way to enable this pursuit is to insist that the "place" of theology be moved from the center to the periphery—from a place of triumph, blessing, and certainty reminiscent of the victory of resurrection to a place of doubt, emptiness, and silence reminiscent of the experience of encountering an empty tomb. In traditional constructions the "centre/periphery axis" ran from Europe as the assumed center to Latin America and Africa as the assumed peripheries. More recently, the contrasting ecclesial clout of European and Latin-American ecclesial structures reveals an analogous decentralization of theological reasoning in Europe and a centralization of institutional Christianity in Latin America. Although the churches in Europe remain "engaged fully in political discussions about particular public policies,"[122] their political influence is significantly different in the twenty-first century than it was even in the twentieth. Churches in Latin America and Africa have "become ever more central to the conversations between the state and the public," making Latino/a and African theology "a centre-stage [*sic*] partner of democratic conversations"[123] and encouraging a shift in center-periphery assumptions.

In the context of late-twentieth-century Latin America, theologizing was a political act. Military leaderships escalated in concert with the cold war, and relations between

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[122] Aguilar, *Theology, Liberation, and Genocide*, 56.

[123] Ibid.

the church and state were determined by a decline in the democratic way of life. Exemplified by the 1968 meeting of Latin American bishops in Medellín, Colombia, churches were forced "to develop a public profile in which all doctrinal statements had to be conceived in terms of a violent situation and the possible restoration of democratic systems."[124] Given the centrality of the Christian faith among Latin Americans, bishops felt free to call for a "full reinvention of the nation state in line with gospel values."[125] Public theology was not merely about an engagement with the public but a concern with the survival of the poor and oppressed in a violent situation.

Aguilar suggested that the quintessential example of an African, theological change-agent could be found in Desmond Tutu, whose unapologetically theological point of departure was instrumental in confronting structural sin and facilitating national reconciliation in his native South Africa.[126] Under Tutu's leadership nonviolent protest led to the resignation of President P.W. Botha, the end of apartheid, the release of Nelson Mandela, and the eventual holding of South Africa's first democratic, non-racial elections in April of 1994. Aguilar used these events to highlight the contrast between Tutu's activ-

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[124] Aguilar, *Theology, Liberation, and Genocide*, 61.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Tutu wrote, "It is precisely our encounter with Jesus in worship and the sacraments, in Bible reading and meditation, that force us to be concerned about the hungry, about the poor, about the homeless, about the banned and the detained, about the voiceless whose voice we seek to be. How can you say you love God whom you have not seen and hate the brother whom you have? He who loved God must love his brother also." Desmond Tutu, "We Drink Water to Fill Our Stomachs: Address to the Provincial Synod of the Church of the Province of Southern Africa," in John Allen (ed.), *Archbishop Desmond Tutu: The Rainbow People of God* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 26. Quoted in Aguilar, *Theology, Liberation, and Genocide*, 57-58.

ism and the sobering silence of ecclesial leadership in Rwanda.[127] Assuming that public theology was the facilitation of theology's "public relevance" focused on the "coming of God's kingdom in the public world of human history,"[128] Aguilar proposes that public theologians should transpose their loci of reflection from the center to the periphery, from the desk to the parish, from the place where God is thought to be to the place where God is difficult to find.[129]

Aguilar's form of public theology is thus a "process of theologizing, centred [*sic*] on the values of the Kingdom of God." In situations of divine silence, where the poor and oppressed remain entrenched in situations robbing them of existence, the theologian must challenge societal structures and preach the "Kingdom of God as anti-poem, anti-market, and anti-value."[130] Criticizing contemporary forms of injustice and looking with hope toward the possibility of change, the public theologian directs society toward the "utopian values of the Kingdom of God." Remaining in solidarity with "the crucified

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[127] "As South Africa proclaimed a new liberation for all, the Rwandan genocide started. Hence, the need to address the centrality of theology as…a narrative about God that needs to be heard in the public places." Aguilar, *Theology, Liberation, and Genocide*, 58.

[128] Here, Aguilar is depending on Storrar and Morton, "Introduction," in Storrar and Morton (eds.), *Public Theology for the 21st Century*, 1 (1-21 inclusive). Storrar and Morton reach this understanding of public theology by combining the insights of Jürgen Moltmann, for whom "a *theologia publica*" is political "in the name of the poor and the marginalized in a given society," and Duncan Forrester, for whom public theology "offers convictions, challenges, and insights derived from the tradition of which it is a steward, rather than seeking to articulate a consensus or reiterate what everyone is saying anyway." Cf. Jürgen Moltmann, *God for a Secular Society* (London: SCM Press, 1999), 1; Duncan Forrester, *Truthful Action* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000): 127-128. Both cited in Aguilar, *Theology, Liberation, and Genocide*, 71, fn. 13. Note the trajectory from the theological tradition to the *res publica*. As will become more evident in what follows, this approach to public theology is significantly different from that of David Tracy, for whom the public serves as a reference point enabling critique of the tradition. I call the former an "objectival" approach to publicness—the public as an "object" to be addressed and the latter an "adverbial" approach to publicness—the public as a locus for criteria of relative adequacy.

[129] Aguilar, *Theology, Liberation, and Genocide*, 60.

[130] Aguilar, *Theology, Liberation, and Genocide*, 65.

people"—the victims of globalization, economic injustice, war, and global warming[131]—

the theologian energizes the symbols and terminology of her own faith toward the pur-

pose of hope, equality, life, and freedom. In societies where theologians are brave

enough to engage political leaders in moments of prophetic judgment, the voiceless—

including God—will be given a voice, and the eschatological hope of utopia will meet

reality.

<div align="center">James Cone</div>

Like Aguilar, James Cone insists that no theological claims can be made without

accounting for the radicality of suffering, particularly the suffering of black folk in the

United States. Like so many of the theologians we will survey in this chapter, Cone's

long and prestigious writing career covers a variety of scholarly nuances, making a brief

foray difficult, if not inadvisable. We may risk an entry into Cone's public theology by

way of a text specifically engaging the "public" nature of "black theology," an essay enti-

tled "Looking Back, Going Forward: Black Theology as Public Theology."[132] Originally

presented at a conference celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of Cone's *Black Theology*

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[131] Aguilar, *Theology, Liberation, and Genocide*, 64-65. Aguilar later defines "globalization" as "a network of international communication that provides better cooperation between peoples of the world" but which is "nevertheless regulated by laws on trade and exchange and rules of cooperation…set up from above, by certin powerful nations, in order to regulate their economic growth and their view of the world, rather than the needs or aspirations of the two-thirds of the global population that still live in poverty" (66). He continues, "The values of the Kingdom as portrayed in the Gospels show Jesus of Nazareth welcoming all, particularly the poor and the marginalized, comforting the victims and providing ever more food when needed, not for a few friends but for all those listening to him" (67).

[132] James Cone, "Looking Back, Going Forward: Black Theology as Public Theology," in Dwight Hopkins (ed.), *Black Faith and Public Talk* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999).257, fn. 6. I am aware that Cone himself says that his "most developed theological position" is presented in *God of the Oppressed* (New York: Seabury, 1975); cf. "Preface to the 1997 Edition" in *God of the Oppressed* (New York: Seabury, 1997). I draw from "Looking Back, Going Forward" in response to the centrality of publicness therein.

and Black Power,[133] this essay recalls two apparently incommensurable ideas that con-

verged in a "metaphorical moment"[134] that would eventually determine the trajectory of

Cone's theological career.[135] The first idea was "black theology," a mode of thinking

paradigmatically associated with Martin Luther King and the theology preserved by the

black church. The second idea was "black power," paradigmatically expressed by Mal-

colm X,[136] for whom "the meaning of black" was defined by the menacing presence of

whites and the radically disruptive attempt to escape white supremacy in its seemingly

infinite number of forms.[137] The convergence of these two sources gave way to a project

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[133] New York: Seabury, 1969. Of course, this seminal work is now in its forty-third year. The conference, entitled "Black Theology as Public Discourse: From Retrospect to Prospect," was organized by Dwight Hopkins and held on April 2-5, 1998, at the University of Chicago Divinity School, Chicago, Illinois.

[134] I am thinking here of Paul Ricoeur's theory of metaphor, which I will explore more fully in chapter four. Ironically, I will use Cone's own thought to challenge the adequacy of metaphor to account for the black experience. For now, however, Ricoeur's theory assists us in observing an interesting, semantic innovation that occurs, when Cone juxtaposes Martin King and Malcolm X. In the words of Ricoeur, Cone establishes a new sense "on the ruins of the literal sense abolished by impertinence" (Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Vol. 1, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984], 80). Hereafter *Time and Narrative* will be referenced as "*TN*."
    We should immediately nuance our use of Ricoeur to interpret Cone, however. The assumption of a kind of mutuality between "Christianity" and "the black experience" that could be connoted by way of metaphor does not adequately account for the priority Cone gives to the black experience. Consider this quote: "The black experience and the Bible together in dialectical tension serve as my point of departure today yesterday. The order is significant. I am *black* first—and everything else comes after that" (James Cone, "Preface to the 1997 Edition," xi.

[135] Cone's most sustained project on this dialectic may be found in James Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America: A Dream or a Nightmare* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991).

[136] To be exact, the coining of the phrase "black power" is typically attributed to Stokeley Carmichael. Even so, Malcolm X typifies the sense of injustice felt by so many black Americans. Cone recalls that Malcolm X was called "the angriest black man in America." See Malcolm X, *Autobiography* (New York: Ballentine Books, 1965), 366. Cited in Cone, "Looking Back, Going Forward," 257, fn. 6.

[137] It should not be assumed that "the black experience" is merely the "negative" to the "positive" of "black theology." Both are marked by the profound ambiguity of tragedy and hope. In his most recent book-length project, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (New York: Orbis, 2011), Cone recalls the influence that the "black experience, with all its tragedy and hope," had on his childhood: "If I have anything to say to the Christian community in America and around the world, it is rooted in the tragic and hopeful reality

in which the cross of Christianity met the black struggle for justice, where Civil Rights

met Black Power:

> *Black Theology and Black Power* was written in the context of the Civil
> Rights and Black Power Movements. Martin Luther King, Jr. was the
> most powerful symbol of the Civil Rights Movement and Malcolm X was
> the voice behind the Black Power Movement. … I wanted to make Martin
> King and Malcolm X *one* voice because each spoke a truth that was essen-
> tial in the Black freedom struggle. The "Black" in Black Theology came
> from Malcolm X, and the "Theology" in the phrase came from Martin
> King. Malcolm gave Black Theology its blackness, and King gave it its
> Christian identity. I wanted to show that there was no real conflict be-
> tween Martin and Malcolm, no real conflict being Black and Christian.[138]

In more recent reflections on this text, Cone continues his earlier concerns by in-

sisting that theology must remain sensitive to the demands of both black theology and

black power.[139] Theologians still have no choice but to engage "theology's great sin,"

silence in the face of white supremacy.[140] Only by continuing the "persistently radical

race critique of Christian theology"[141] will white amnesia be diagnosed and black

memory reconstructed. Failing to address the reality of white supremacy and its perpetu-

ation in any disembodied theological reflection today (as nearly all theology in the West-

ern tradition has done) is to stop short of the theologian's most profoundly imperative call:

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that sustains and empowers black people to resist the forces that seem designed to destroy every ounce of dignity in their souls and bodies" (xv).

[138] Cone, "Brief Reflections," 265.

[139] "In Black Theology, I wanted to make Martin King and Malcolm X *one* voice because each spoke a truth that was essential in the Black freedom struggle. For the last four decades, I have been explor-ing what the Christian gospel means in the context of Black people's struggle for justice in the United States." James Cone, "Some Brief Reflections on Writing *Black Theology and Black Power*," *Black The-ology*, 8.3 (Nov, 2010): 264-265.

[140] "White supremacy shaped the social, political, economic, cultural, and religious ethos in the churches, the academy, and the broader society" ("Looking Forward, Going Back," 253).

[141] "Looking Forward, Going Back," 255.

to make theology public by addressing the "radical contradiction that racism creates for Christian theology."[142] While the cross proclaims justice and freedom in the face of oppression, America remains a nation of two societies: "one rich and middle class, the other poor and working class."[143] Still reeling from "two hundred forty-four years of slavery and one hundred years of legal segregation, augmented by a reign of white terror that lynched more than five thousand blacks," the black community remains disadvantaged, and the ethical call to remember its suffering remains ignored. If theologians wish to construct a soteriology of freedom and justice, they cannot but publicly remember the systemic and violent injustices of America's past and publicly seek to repair them. There can be "no justice without memory—without remembering the horrible crimes committed against humanity and the great human struggles for justice."[144] In Cone's black theology, therefore, publicness and critique engage in the hope for restorative justice. Like Aguilar's kingdom-of-God public theology, Cone's juxtaposition of black theology and black power emerges as a public statement made from an unapologetically theological perspective.

> Whatever else we may say about the gospel of Jesus, it is first and foremost a story of God's solidarity with the poor, empowering them in the fight for freedom. Anybody who talks about the gospel and omits God's liberation of the poor is not talking about the gospel of Jesus. That was and remains my central theological point.[145]

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[142] "Looking Forward, Going Back," 252.

[143] "Looking Forward, Going Back," 252.

[144] "Looking Forward, Going Back," 254.

[145] Cone, "Some Brief Reflections," 265.

In the cross God is revealed as the "Liberator of the oppressed from bondage."[146] Any

theology that compromises the irreducibility of suffering, shies away from the prophetic

declaration of injustice, or ignores the hopeful anticipation of liberation is not an authen-

tically public theology.

The Crisis of Rationality: Fundamental Public Theology

> For the Enlightenment, whatever does not conform to the rule of computa-
> tion and utility is suspect. So long as it can develop undisturbed by any
> outward repression, there is no holding it. In the process, it treats its own
> ideas of human rights exactly as it does the older univer-
> sals…Enlightenment is totalitarian
>
> – Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno[147]

Analogous to the postsecular response to moral fragmentation, the political re-

sponse to civic fragmentation, and the liberationist response to existential fragmentation,

our final stream of public theology offers a philosophical response to rational fragmenta-

tion. The thinkers I include here—John Courtney Murray, David Tracy, and Linell Ca-

dy—interpret "publicness" as a way of doing theology, a manner of thinking that satu-

rates the theological project. We may summarize this way of thinking as an insistence on

using "publicly available warrants and criteria" in the construction of a theology. For

Courtney, Tracy, and Cady, such warrants and criteria are accessed by engaging in care-

ful, prolegomenal thinking that "founds" theological claims according to philosophical,

or "grounding" modes of thought. Trusting in the potential of shared reason to open

promising vistas of understanding, these theologians trust that laying such theoretical

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[146] James Cone, "Preface to the 1997 Edition," ix.

[147] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Seabury, 1972), 6.

groundwork may set the stage for engaging in self-critical conversation. For this reason,

each of the fundamental theologians we will survey here may also be considered "revi-

sionist" theologians.

John Courtney Murray

John Courtney Murray has been called "the father of public theology."[148] Theo-

logians familiar with Murray's thought may be surprised to see him included in our "fun-

damental" stream. Indeed, commentators typically rush to Murray's conclusions on reli-

gious freedom, assuming his moniker as the "father of public theology" derives from his

attention to civic matters. Such a reading fails to see the manner in which Murray was

not only concerned with political theory but with reflecting on theology in a "publicly

available" manner.

In his carefully argued "The Problem of Religious Freedom,"[149] Murray high-

lighted "two views" held inside the Roman Catholic Church that could be differentiated

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[148] William Cavanaugh, "Is Public Theology Really Public?," 106. Cavanaugh says, "In Catholic circles the father of public theology is John Courtney Murray." Murray's role in the early development of public theology is also noted by David Tracy, *AI*, 13; and E. Harold Breitenberg, "What is Public Theology," 9, 11. Gaspar Martinez suggests that two models of public theology have come to the fore in Roman Catholic circles: "the republican," in which Martinez places John Courtney Murray, David Hollenbach, and "to some extent," John Coleman; and "the prophetic," in which Martinez places Matthew Lamb, Gregory Baum, Rosemary Radford Ruether, and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. The former works critically within the framework of Vatican II and the American experiment and seeks to foster dialogue between society and the Catholic community by locating shareable modes of discourse. The latter is more thoroughly critical, challenging existing frameworks in both the Catholic Church and U.S. society by amalgamating a critical social theory with a "radical-biblical interpretation of the Catholic tradition." Gaspar Martinez, *Confronting the Mystery of God: Political, Liberation, and Public Theologies* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 175-176. In the terminology I will adopt at the conclusion of this chapter, republican public theology is based on an "adverbial" interpretation of publicness, while prophetic public theology is based on an "objective" interpretation of publicness.

[149] John Courtney Murray, S.J., "The Problem of Religious Freedom," *Theological Studies* 25.4 (1964): 503-575. See also Murray, *Religious Liberty: Catholic Struggles with Pluralism*, ed. J. Leon Hooper, S.J. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993); and "The Origins and Authority of the Public Consensus," in *We Hold These Truths* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960), 109-123.

according to their respective understandings of theological construction. The method of

the first, Murray said, was to evaluate theological construction according to more and less

"accurate" interpretations of tradition. The possibility of allowing either full partnership

or full exclusivity between church and state, for example, depended on the theologian's

ability to "prove" his position by aligning it with the church's theological tradition. The

method of the second approach, which Murray himself adopted, was to develop an ap-

propriation of tradition more robustly appreciative of historical consciousness (a theme

we will see repeated by David Tracy). Here, the theologian engages in a "creative return

to the sources of the tradition" on the way to constructing a creative correlation between

contemporary consciousness and historical expressions of the faith:

> The Second View makes its affirmation of religious freedom in full
> awareness that this affirmation is at once new and traditional. It represents
> a growth in the understanding of the tradition, which corresponds to the
> growth of the personal and political consciousness of men [*sic*] today….
> Therefore the Second View speaks to the ancient constitutional question of
> public care of religion in a new historical state of the question. The an-
> swer must be new, because the question is new. The answer must also be
> traditional, because it is the answer of the Church. However, only the el-
> ements of the answer are to be found in the tradition, not the answer itself
> in explicit and systematized form. There are therefore two tasks: (1) to
> present the arguments for the affirmation of religious freedom; (2) to re-
> view the tradition, within the new perspectives of today, in order to show
> that the affirmation represents a valid growth in the understanding of the
> tradition.[150]

Aware of the complexities involved in making any theological statement, Murray refused

to adopt the teachings of the Catholic Church in a way that ignored the radically histori-

cal, uncomfortably finite nature of theological expression. Especially when responding

to the complex question of church-state relations, the theologian could not merely propo-

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[150] Murray, "The Problem of Religious Freedom," 523.

gate ideal solutions "settled *a priori*, *more geometrico*, down to the last detail."[151] The

more appropriate response was to view theological development as a *ressourcement*, a

"creative return to the sources of the tradition…within a new perspective created by his-

tory."[152] Each new interpretation instantiates "a valid and necessary growth in the under-

standing of the tradition."[153]

Using this revisionist methodology as his point of departure, Murray posited a ra-

ther sharp distinction between church and society. Society referred to that area of per-

sonal and corporate freedom, where citizens could engage in shared, open, and honest

dialogue. Joined together by civic association, participants were guided in their discus-

sion by shared rules of engagement, established by the state as an outcome of previously

facilitated debates. The state, as the legal body protecting the right of dialogue, only en-

gaged its might when such rules were violated, or when discourse was based on coercion,

not persuasion.[154] The church enjoyed the freedoms protected by the state and remained

an autonomous participant in civic dialogue. It retained the right to preserve its unique

faith by engaging in inner-ecclesial discussions, unhindered by civic constraints, and to

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[151] Murray, "The Problem of Religious Freedom," 523.

[152] Murray, "The Problem of Religious Freedom," 539.

[153] Murray, "The Problem of Religious Freedom," 557. Cavanaugh and Tracy (*AI*, 13) both note the "natural law" theology guiding Murray's conclusions. Although something like a Thomistic understanding of the Creator-creature distinction is certainly present in Murray, my interpretation places more emphasis on his theological method, which is informed by historical consciousness more than explicitly theological categories. In this sense, Murray's public theology departs from a publicly available observation: the confession of radical finitude which characterizes all thinkers, regardless of religion. For Cavanaugh's interpretation, see "Is Public Theology Really Public?," 106.

[154] Theologians sharing Murray's understanding of church and state include Richard John Neuhaus, *Naked Public Square*; and George Weigel, *Catholicism and the Renewal of American Democracy* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989).

engage in civic discussions from this freely held point of view. Theologians informed by Murray's analysis were thus "public" in two ways: their theological constructions derived from a "publicly available" and revisionist foundation, and their engagement in civic matters derived from a freely chosen, religious point of view. Public theology, for John Courtney Murray, therefore, was revisionist, pursuing theological recognizability within its unique ecclesial parameters and trusting in the state to protect its freedom to do so.

The Collapse of Enlightenment Rationality

It should be immediately noted in response to the rational optimism we could attribute to Murray that the promise of Enlightenment rationality has been assumed irreparably deconstructed by post-Enlightenment thinkers. Analogous to our stress on differentiation in political public theology and suffering in liberationist public theology is the stress on rationality's differentiation in the discussions surrounding fundamental theology. Richard Lints is exemplary:

> In contemporary theology it is no longer acceptable to think of knowledge like a pyramid built upon some unshakeable foundation. The search for this foundation…has been abandoned. The dream of finding self-evident or even plainly empirical truths which could serve as an epistemic foundation has been revealed as simply that—a dream. Certainty is no longer a virtue but a vice, a mere chimera of earlier conceptual systems. Every belief is potentially (and ought practically to be) revisable. The epistemological enterprise is less like building a house than it is like engaging in a conversation or telling a story.[155]

Consider these similar observations: for J. Wentzel van Huyssteen, "Even the briefest overview of our contemporary theological landscape reveals the startling fragmentation

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[155] Richard Lints, "The Postpositivist Choice, Tracy or Lindbeck?" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 61.4 (1993): 664 (655-677, inclusive).

caused by what is often called 'the postmodern challenge' of our times."[156] For Gary

Comstock, "In the evaluation of any competing frameworks—such as those now availa-

ble in the field of theological hermeneutics—there are no 'objective' criteria to adjudicate

among alternative conceptions of reality."[157] For Linell Cady, in our "pluralistic situa-

tion," common discourse is precluded, "reinforcing the assumption that theological re-

flection bears little relation to the public realm."[158] For Peter Berger, the fragmented

world condemns us to choose among religious options, thereby forcing one to become a

heretic;[159] and for Max Stackhouse, "Today…it is doubted that you can do anything

cross-culturally or 'cross-group.' Everything is highly specific and so radically contextu-

alized and particularized that there is doubt whether there is a common humanity as well

as a common Divine."[160] In such a situation theology must rethink its starting point:

> In a radically pluralist world where epistemological foundationalism has
> been so successfully deconstructed, will it still be possible for theology to
> join other modes of knowledge and reasoning strategies in some form of
> interdisciplinary, public discourse? Or is the only coherent and consistent
> way to defend theological truth claims to fall back massively on our re-
> spective traditions, and to hope that some form of local consensus will
> emerge there and pave the way to whatever we see as the truth?"[161]

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[156] J. Wentzel van Huyssteen, "Tradition and the Task of Theology," *Theology Today* 55.5 (July 1998): 213. For a survey of van Huyssteen's reflections on rationality and theology see F. LeRon Shults (ed.). *The Evolution of Rationality. Interdisciplinary Essays in Honor of J. Wentzel van Huyssteen*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

[157] Comstock, "Two Types of Narrative Theology," 701.

[158] Linell E. Cady, "A Model for Public Theology," *Harvard Theological Review* 80.2 (1987): 193. As we will see momentarily, Cady discounts this assumption.

[159] Peter Berger, *The Heretical Imperative* (New York: Doubleday, 1979).

[160] Max Stackhouse, "Publics, Apologetics, and Ethics."

[161] van Huyssteen, "Tradition and the Task of Theology," 213.

All these voices represent to one degree or another the assumption that the "rationalist justification" of Enlightenment ambitions has been discredited. Religion, symbol, and tradition can no longer be opposed to something ahistorical, common to all human beings. Anthropologists have blurred the distinction between innate rationality and acculturation, while critical historians see "human beings as historical all the way through."[162] Analytic philosophers have "blurred the distinction between permanent truths of reason and temporary truths of fact," and psychoanalysts have "blurred the distinction between conscience and the emotions of love, hate, and fear, and thus the distinction between morality and prudence."[163] The result remains a radical erasure of the pristine self "common to Greek metaphysics, Christian theology, and Enlightenment rationalism: the picture of an ahistorical nature center, the locus of human dignity, surrounded by an adventitious and inessential periphery."[164]

Observations such as these have combined to convince theologians that there is now no longer a phenomenon called "postmodernity." There are only "postmodernities."[165] Our monolithic definitions even of pluralism "need to be rethought according to the variety of repressed narratives which make up the plurality of voices that are the mo-

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[162] Richard Rorty, "The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy," 258.

[163] Ibid.

[164] Ibid.

[165] Also, note Richard Lints' quip, "postmodernism (like modernism) is a beast which is not so easily described." Richard Lints, "The Postpositivist Choice," 657.

dernities and postmodernities,"[166] causing a number of theologians to give up the search

for a shared publicness.

> Whether it is a mere failure of nerve or a genuine and seismic shift in the
> intellectual landscape, today we have trouble finding our way around in
> the world of ideas. In the past, it was always *terra firma*. True, there
> might have been potholes, swamps, and even dragons, but there were
> maps to designate the precise locations in which these and other dangers to
> the traveler might be found. In our age, there can be no maps, because
> there is no agreement on what the terrain looks like, or even if there is any
> terrain at all. From the Copernican revolution that substituted the sun for
> the earth as the center of the universe, through the discoveries of modern
> physics and astronomy, we know now—cosmologically, philosophically,
> and culturally—that there is no center.[167]

David Tracy

Such observations have played a crucial role in determining critiques of public

theologians like David Tracy, whom we will consider in detail in the following chapter.

Although unique, analyses from narratival,[168] liberationist,[169] pluralist,[170] and deconstruc-

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[166] David Tracy, "African-American Thought: Discoverers of the Fragment" in Dwight N. Hopkins (ed.), *Black Faith and Public Talk* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999), 29-30.

[167] Paul Lakeland, "Foreword," in Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), vii.

[168] The early narratival response to Tracy is Hans Frei, "The 'Literal Reading' of Narrative Tradition: Does It Stretch or Will It Break" in Peter Ochs (ed.), *The Return to Scripture in Judaism and Christianity: Essays in Postcritical Scriptural Interpretation*, (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1993). Frei is followed by Lindbeck, *ND*; William C. Placher, *Unapologetic Theology: A Christian Voice in a Pluralistic Conversation* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), "Revisionist and Postliberal Theologies and the Public Character of Theology," *The Thomist* 49 (1985); and William Werpehowski, "Ad Hoc Apologetics," *Journal of Religion* 66 (1986) 282-301; Owen C. Thomas, "Public Theology and Counter-Public Spheres," *Harvard Theological Review* 85.4 (1992): 453-466

[169] Exemplary of a Latin-American critique is Juan Luis Segundo, *Faith and Ideologies*, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1984), 34-40. For a feminist example (both critical and appreciative), Rebecca Chopp, "Practical Theology and Liberation" (op. cit.; cf. fn. 116); Kathryn Tanner, "Public Theology and the Character of Public Debate," The Annual: Society of Christian Ethics (Washington, D.C.: Goergetown, 1996), arguing against David Tracy's "Particular Classics, Public Religion, and the American Tradition," in Robin Lovin (ed.), *Religion and American Public Life* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986). See also Susan B. Thistlethwaite, "A Schleiermacher for Our Time: A Review of David Tracy's *On Naming the Present: God, Hermeneutics, and Church*," *Theology Today*, 53.2 (July 1996): 225-227. Cf. David Tracy,

tionist[171] prespectives respond negatively to Tracy's attention to reason in fundamental theology. At issue is the concern that any attempt to construct a shared, metaphysical framework compromises the irreducible particularity of some experience.

Especially in his earliest writings (though the themes we will summarize are also continued in his more recent writings) Tracy pursued publicness by reflecting on theological thinking. If a theologian could prove that theological thinking was not unique, then she could likewise prove that theology itself was not arbitrary. In this approach to public theology, "publicness" was typically defined in contrast to its binary, "privateness."[172]

On Naming the Present: Reflections on God, Hermeneutics, and Church (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994). Hereafter *On Naming the Present* will be cited as *ONP*.

For Tracy's discussion with feminists, see David Tracy, "Theoria and Praxis: A Partial Response [to E. Farley and R. W. Lynn]," *Theological Education* 17 (Spring 1981): 167-174; "Reply to 'The Influence of Feminist Theory on my Theological Work,' by F.S. Fiorenza, pp. 95-105," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, 7.1 (1991): 122-125; "Concilium Round Table: The Impact of Feminist Theologies on Roman Catholic Theology" in *Feminist Theology in Different Contexts* 1996; "The Holocaust as Interruption and the Christian Return to History," in *ONP*; David Tracy and Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, "Editorial," in *Concilium* 1984/5.

For a survey of works written in response to Tracy's earlier writings, see T. Howland Sanks, "David Tracy's Theological Project: An Overview and Some Implications," *Theological Studies* 54.4: 698-727 (1993).

[170] Younhee Kim, "From 'limit' experiences to God: a Critical Appraisal of David Tracy's Analysis of Religious Experience from the Perspective of Religious Pluralism," in Lieven Boeve, Hans Geybels, and Stijn van den Bossche (eds.) *Encountering Transcendence: Contributions to a Theology of Christian Religious Experience* Annua Nuntia Lovaniensia, 53 apers presented at the 4th International Leuven Encounters in Systematic Theology Conf, Nov 5-8, 2003 (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 225-240; Younhee Kim, *The Quest for Plausible Christian Discourse in a World of Pluralities: The Evolution of David Tracy's Understanding of 'Public Theology'* (Peter Lang, 2008); David Brockman, "Linguistic Through and Through? The Challenge of Yogâcâra to David Tracy's Epistemology," *Koinonia* 15 (2003): 1-22.

[171] Jacques Derrida, "Response by Jacques Derrida," in John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (ed.), *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism* (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), 181-184.

[172] This point was made by John McCarthy, "The Public Character of Naming God," unpublished paper presented at a conference entitled "The Public Character of Theology: Prospects for the 21st Century: In honor of Dr. David W. Tracy," Loyola University Chicago; Chicago, IL (April 9, 2011). Note also Linell E. Cady's observation that the notion of private vs. public in civil society was born out of the religious wars of post-Reformation Europe. See Cady, "Identity, Feminist Theory, and Theology," *Horizons in Feminist Theology: Identity, Traditions, and Norms* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1997), 19.

That which was public, or shareable, was—in its best forms—reasonable,[173] while that which was private, or not recognizable, was potentially unreasonable. Motivated by the possibility that private theological thinking could become irrational and thus irresponsible or even violent in its worst forms, fundamental public theologians turned to method as a way of settling down the potentially chaotic use of the theological imagination.

Tracy saw himself participating in a group of theologians who pursued publicness by attending to the theologian as a thinking, feeling, intending, cognitive subject. Such theologians maintained that the experience of theological construction reflected a kind of shared religious experience.[174] Especially in contexts where disciplinary respectability was dependent on one's ability to objectify and universalize a scholarly project, fundamental public theologians proved the respectableness of their discipline by proving its "shareability." In previous theological generations, this attentiveness to subjectivity typically led theologians in one of two directions. They either engaged in careful and deliberate analysis of the theologian qua human, as in Schleiermacher's ternary rendering of

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[173] Tracy has consistently problematized the assumption that reason is monolithic. In a recent lecture given at Loyola University Chicago, Tracy highlighted dialogical, dialectical, spiritual/contemplative, and loving as forms of rationality. David Tracy, "The Necessity and Character of Fundamental Theology," lecture given at Loyola University Chicago, Chicago, IL, upon conferral of the Doctor of Humane Letters, Honoris Causa (April 8, 2011); video available at http://webapps.luc.edu/ignation/video_detail_flash.cfm?id=2120034320 and http://webapps.luc.edu/ignation/video_detail_flash.cfm?id=1206034756 (both accessed May 10, 2011).

[174] See, e.g., David Tracy, "The Christian Understanding of Salvation-Liberation," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 7 (1987): 132; or "Religion and Human Rights in the Public Realm," *Daedalus* 112.4 (Fall 1983): 237, which says, "A colleague of mine, a historian of religion, once said, 'I can't define religion, but I know it when I see it.'" See also, "God as Trinitarian: A Christian Response to Peter Ochs," in Tikva Frymer-Kensy, David Novak, Peter Ochs, David Fox Sandmel, and Michael A. Signer (eds.), *Christianity in Jewish Terms* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), 79.

humanity as knowing, willing, and feeling[175] or Karl Rahner's "supernatural existen-

tial."[176] Or, they attended carefully to theological method as an outflow of human cogni-

tion, as in Bernard Lonergan's "transcendental method"[177] and Tracy's eventual uptake

of Lonergan's methodological concerns.[178]

Tracy's observation of the capricious, indeed chaotic use of theological language

and symbols in mid-twentieth century Catholicism motivated him to locate a means by

which the discipline could be controlled. He consequently turned to grounding, reflexive

philosophies to give theological expression a level of publicly defensible objectivity.

This concern eventuated in the phenomenologically named "religious dimension to com-

mon human experience" in *Blessed Rage for Order* (1975) and the hermeneutically locat-

ed Christian classic of *Analogical Imagination* (1981). Our consideration of Tracy will

serve as an in-depth summary of fundamental public theology, stressing the dialogical

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[175] See, e.g., Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith: English Translation of the Second German Edition*, ed. H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 5-12.

[176] To be exact, Rahner's "supernatural existential" refers to God's self-communication as the horizon of mystery encompassing humanity in their "supernaturally elevated" status as free individuals. I use it here merely to reference the similar starting point between Rahner and others who begin their "fundamental" theology from an existentialist point of departure. For Rahner's anthropology, cf. Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 24-137.

[177] Cf., *Method in Theology*, 3-25. To be sure, Lonergan concludes this opening chapter of *Method* by noting, "Transcendental method is only a part of theological method. It supplies the basic anthropological component. It does not supply the specifically religious component" (25). My intention is to point out the priority Lonergan gives to method as transcendental (i.e., human) critique.

[178] See fns. 257 and 273 below. For an accessible point of entry into Tracy's connection between method and publicness, see David Tracy, "The Task of Fundamental Theology," *Journal of Religion*, 54.1 (1974): 13-34, which functions as a summary of the method laid out in *Blessed Rage for Order*. Tracy says, "The task outlined here is a fundamental theology insofar as it attempts to articulate the criteria and evidence for theology itself" (13). That is, Tracy's concern is to locate publicness by way of deliberate and authentic engagement with the (at least unstated, at most presuppositional) criteria utilized on the way to any theological claim. Cf. David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1975). Hereafter *Blessed Rage for Order* will be referred to as *BRO*.

and self-critical posture that so many critics of Tracy seem to ignore. Before turning to

Tracy, however, we will complete our survey of fundamental public theology by intro-

ducing a final U.S. American theologian, Linell E. Cady. Cady's reflections represent a

more recent version of foundational public theology in a U.S. American context.

Linell Cady

Linell Elizabeth Cady offers an impressive appropriation of the Enlightenment ex-

igency without succumbing to the ahistorical, disembodying tendencies of Enlightenment

rationality. The foil to Cady's project are scholars of various stripes who discount theol-

ogy and its legitimacy in the public realm in response to theology's typically parochial

character. The narrative generally runs as follows:

> Instead of employing discourse that all share, theology appropriates the
> symbols and motifs of a particular tradition. Rather than engage in open
> inquiry, theology appears to take as axiomatic certain 'truths' as the givens
> of its reflection. Theology is parochial in the sense that it not only ad-
> dresses a particular religious community but it appeals to the symbols, ex-
> periences, and texts of that community for its justification. This rooted-
> ness in a particular religious tradition is thought to preclude the public na-
> ture of theological argumentation. Indeed, from this perspective, theology
> is more aptly construed as a product of faith, not reason, as a confessional
> exercise that does not embody genuine argumentation at all. Far from un-
> dertaking objective, open inquiry, theology resorts to citation through its
> appeal to religious authorities.[179]

Cady does not deny the appropriateness of this critique for many forms of theology—

many of which also (illegitimately) consider themselves "public." Not unlike many other

forms of cultural self-understanding, a theological self-understanding depends heavily on

inherited narratives and symbol-systems that inform how one construes reality. Yet this

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[179] Cady, *Religion*, 31-32. See also "Comparative Secularisms and the Politics of Modernity: An
Introduction," in Linell E. Cady and Elizabeth Shakman Hurd (eds.), *Comparative Secularisms in a Global
Age* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010).

dependence need not eventuate merely in a literary-critical interpretation and application of historical, doctrinal expressions. It is possible for theologians to remain deeply dependent on their respective traditions to locate terminology and concepts for self-understanding and even public debate while also engaging in the critical and constructive reappropriation of said tradition in a publicly recognizable manner.

Cady illustrates this point by delineating two forms of "parochialism": "The first sense of parochial refers to theology's appropriation of and engagement with the texts, symbols, and experiences of a particular tradition."[180] In this sense of parochialism there is not an expressed need to perpetuate certain philosophical categories associated with the originary expressions of the tradition. Carefully aware of the *historical* nature of theological and philosophical construction, theologians reflecting the first form appropriate their tradition without feeling pressured to remain in a form of rational discourse more appropriately situated in a distinct era. In so doing, such theologians are free to open traditions to revisionary projects not unlike those of John Courtney Murray. The second form of parochialism stresses "theology's dependence upon certain first principles or authorities that have traditionally circumscribed" theological argumentation.[181] Unable to harmonize these philosophical patterns with shifting historical situations, this parochial form does not allow room for a critical moment in the process of theological reflection. It is not open to revisionary considerations and must finally be considered only partially public. It may engage in public discourse, but its mode of presentation remains private. To

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[180] Cady, *Religion*, 32.

[181] Cady, *Religion*, 32.

the degree that theologians admit their own interpretational role in theological construc-

tion, this type of public theology does not reflect an adequately public self-understanding.

However, Cady is also quick to point out the problems associated with an uncriti-

cal uptake of Enlightenment rationality. Still present in modern constructions of public-

ness, Enlightenment rationality limited shared dialogue to "nontraditioned inquiry and

argumentation."[182] Such a proposal essentially served to disembody the dialogue's par-

ticipants. In response to the "serious impasse over the question of legitimate authority"

in post-Reformation Europe, Enlightenment thinkers sought a space that would transcend

sectarian strife.[183]

> The need was to establish a sphere and an appropriate form of discourse
> that would avoid the seemingly unresolvable religious controversies that
> were tearing apart the very fabric of society. The immediate impetus, then,
> was to develop a secular vocabulary that would be free from divisive reli-
> gious commitments. To reestablish social peace, religion was increasingly
> relegated to the sphere of the private, and a secular discourse was devel-
> oped to articulate the nature of political and social strife.[184]

What often went unrealized in such a narrative was the incumbent association of

an individualistic approach to reason with an individualistic approach to free-market eco-

nomics. Enlightenment rationality "placed primary emphasis upon the autonomy and

freedom of the individual,"[185] attempting to free the individual not only from economic

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[182] Cady, *Religion*, 33.

[183] Cady, *Religion*, 9.

[184] Cady, *Religion*, 9-10.

[185] Cady, *Religion*, 11. Also, "the liberal expectation that the pursuit of private gain, economically and socially, will produce the optimal society has to many ears taken on a naïve, utopian ring whose destructiveness has become progressively more evident in the social pathologies it has spawned (Cady, *Religion*, 16-17).

fetters but also from the control of heteronomous religious and philosophical authorities.

As was expressed classically by Immanuel Kant in his seminal essay, "An Answer to the

Question: What is Enlightenment?," "enlightenment" was achieved to the degree that one

may mature into independent thinking:

> Enlightenment is humanity's exit from its self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to make use of one's own understanding without the guidance of another. Self-incurred is this inability if its cause lies not in the lack of understanding but rather in the lack of the resolution and the courage to use it without the guidance of another. *Sapere aude!* Have the courage to use your *own* understanding! is thus the motto of the Enlightenment.[186]

Because reason was ubiquitous—shared by all—and because its scope was not limited by

time and space, one could assume that it would lead all rational persons to the same con-

clusions. Such a construal of public reasoning—the effects of which were evident in the

growing individualism of Western society—did not lend itself readily to contextualized

renderings of reality. It precluded "those aspects of individuals that ma[d]e them dis-

tinct," reducing "the individual to a least common denominator of personhood," and

"separating the self from the characteristics and roles that determined personal identi-

ty."[187]

This bifurcation consequently led to a separation of religion and public life that

Cady, along with the postsecular theologians we surveyed above, laments. The "public

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[186] Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" trans. James Schmidt in James Schmidt (ed.), *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). Kant's essay was originally written in 1784 in response to questions raised by Johann Karl Wilhelm Möhsen concerning the nature of enlightenment. Kant's response was the second of fifteen articles he wrote for the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* between 1784 and 1786.

[187] Cady, *Religion*, 13.

virtue" expounded by America's founding figures—according to which the common weal

was pursued "even at significant cost to the self"[188]—has eroded in the wake of secular-

ism. In the zeal to preserve religious freedom, theologians have "increasingly lost an ap-

propriate vocabulary to examine and evaluate our public policies and commitments."[189]

Aware of the need to reengage the public's religious imagination, public theologians

should "sustain, interpret, critique, and reform a particular religious worldview and its

concomitant way of life," so that their respective religious traditions may "contribute to

the upbuilding and the critical transformation of our public life."[190] In contrast to so

many postsecular attempts at "*civil* religion," however, Cady urges the critical appropria-

tion of a "*public* religion":

> Public religion…does not necessarily mean a shared set of religious sym-
> bols and beliefs that inform a society, thereby conferring a common identi-
> ty and self-understanding upon a people. Rather than requiring a common
> religious vision, public religion refers to the way in which a specific reli-
> gious tradition or community appropriates its distinctive resources to con-
> tribute to the upbuilding of the common life.[191]

Public religion does not pursue "a common religious vision" to unite a national or global

society but attends to "the way in which particular religious traditions cultivate and nur-

ture a common life within the society at large."[192]

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[188] Cady, *Religion*, 17.

[189] Cady, *Religion*, 20.

[190] Linell E. Cady, "the Task of Public Theology," in Ronald F. Thiemann (ed.), *The Legacy of H. Richard Niebuhr* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 119.

[191] Cady, *Religion*, 23.

[192] Cady, *Religion*, 23.

The public theology coinciding with public religion is critical reflection upon the unique religious identity informing that theology.[193] The public theologian's role is not simply to apply historical doctrines to a contemporary situation but to offer a critical appropriation of those doctrines for the purpose of enhancing a shared, public life. The public theologian endeavors not merely to critique the public, therefore, but her own religion and her religion's unique tradition. Theology is a "reflective practice, involving the critical reflection upon and transformation of religion."[194] It is, in fact, in its critical, self-reflective practice that public theology contributes to the upbuilding and critical transformation of public life.

Public theologies, in other words, are not merely political, "despite the important similarities" between public and political theologies. They are genuinely confessional, "appealing to theological authorities to defend their positions,"[195] but they are certainly not dogmatic. Public theologians appreciate the Enlightenment differentiation between citation and inquiry, or arguments from authority versus arguments from critical rationality. In this sense, public theologians address Enlightenment concerns from a post-Enlightenment perspective. They do not assume the possibility of disembodied reason, "unaffected by historical and social location,"[196] and they are careful to critique the "pub-

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[193] Cady, *Religion*, 24.

[194] Cady, *Religion*, 25. If public theology were indistinguishable from public religion, it would quickly devolve into "indoctrination and coercion" (Cady, *Religion*, 31).

[195] Cady, *Religion*, 25.

[196] Cady, *Religion*, 27.

lic/private paradigm" informing so many Enlightenment forms of religious studies.[197] In fact, public theologians reconfigure this paradigm by emphasizing the common goals of a religiously differentiated society and tempering the residue of individualism that informs so many postsecular theologies. The theologian of public religion appropriates her theological tradition in a shareable or "genuinely public"[198] manner in order to cultivate virtues informing a religious entry into common life.

> The reconfiguration of the public realm points the way toward a global identity that is formed in and through more local communities rather than in opposition to them. Public life, from this perspective, is not an abstract vessel containing separate units but the inclusive fabric of interconnections binding individuals into a common life.[199]

Questions for Consideration

> One sometimes hears the public being spoken of as if it were somebody with whom one had lunch at the Hôtel de Saxe during the Leipzig Fair. Who is this public? The public is no object, but an idea, a postulate, like the Church.
>
> – Friedrich Schlegel[200]

In conclusion to our survey of public theology, we may raise three questions that serve as crucial moments in determining which stream of public-theological thought a theologian will join. Whether expressed implicitly or explicitly, the answers theologians offer to these questions shape their respective approaches to the debates we have introduced above.

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[197] Cady, *Religion*, 28.

[198] We will see momentarily how this perspective informs Cady's critique of liberationist public theologies.

[199] Cady, *Religion*, 28.

[200] Friedrich Schlegel, Critical Fragment 35, in Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 4.

Borrowing terminology from David Tracy, I suggest that we construct our questions according to the notions of meaning, meaningfulness, and truth.[201] All three of these notions are informed by Tracy's phenomenological-transcendental[202] uptake of traditional metaphysics. (We will further unpack this metaphysic in the following chapter.) All three notions, therefore, move in two "directions," which we could tentatively label "internal" and "external," thus creating a kind of tension between concreteness and universality that guides the philosopher's pursuit of truth. The meaningfulness of a source is associated with the theologian's ability to disclose an expression's reflection of "actual, lived experience." Because Tracy engages religion as the quintessentially human type of experience informing shared self-understanding, his analysis of meaningfulness is directed toward an expression's ability to disclose shared experience as religious. "Meaning," reflecting a limitation of the analysis, engages the question of an expression's "logical internal coherence."[203] Tracy calls this coherence "less radical than the criterion of 'coherence with experience,'" but he likewise maintains that it is of special importance for the investigation of religious meaning in the Christian tradition.[204] "Truth" is a re-

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[201] For Tracy on "meaning," "meaningfulness," and "truth," see, *inter alia*, *BRO*, 172-203.

[202] As elsewhere, Tracy is quick to point out that the transcendental-phenomenological approach is not an "an 'exclusive' formulation of the possibilities of 'philosophical reflection'" (*BRO*, 83, fn. 26), but he does appreciate the ability of a transcendental-phenomenological approach to approximate metaphysical status by way of shared experience.

[203] *BRO*, 70.

[204] *BRO*, 83, n. 24; cf. 175-187. On this latter question, Tracy appreciates process theology for its more adequate internal coherence than classical theism. Process theology presents a God whose "dipolar" relationality is not only more consistent with our own lived experience (and thus more adequately meaningful) but more internally coherent, since God is believed to be "supremely" perfect in both poles. God is both absolute "as the one whose *existence* depends on no other being" and relative "as the one whose *actuality* is relative to all other beings" (*BRO*, 179). God alone is absolute and relative to all. God is love. Here Tracy is following the lead of process thinkers like Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*

flection of an expression's adequacy to transcendental experience. Here, the theologian considers "how a particular concept (e.g., time, space, self, or God) functions as a fundamental 'belief' or 'condition of the possibility' of all our experience."[205] An expression's "truth," therefore, is its consistency with criteria of adequacy to all experience.

Our questions, likewise, derive from the notion of "publics" that we will highlight further in Tracy's theology and that we have already observed in the public theology of Max Stackhouse. For both Tracy and Stackhouse, the term "public" is used to reference a "social locus,"[206] wherein unique questions constitute unique conversations. For Tracy, theologians typically address one of three primary publics: society, academy, and church; for Stackhouse, theologians typically address one of four primary publics: society, academy, church, and economy. The assumptions, relative criteria, concerns, vocabulary, and symbols informing the conversations occurring in these publics give way to distinct conversations and distinct theological "models."[207] In an attempt to categorize the multiple publics informing theological discourse, I have chosen the qualifiers "theological" and "public" in continuity with the discussions we have surveyed thus far. For the purposes of our discussion here, I assume that theological expression is primarily informed by the discussions occurring in an ecclesial public ("church" in Tracy and Stackhouse), while

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(New York: Harper, 1967); Charles Hartshorne, *Man's Vision of God and the Logic of Theism* (Chicago: Willet, Clark, 1941); John B. Cobb, *A Christian Natural Theology Based on the Thought of Alfred North Whitehead* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), et al (cf. *BRO*, 166, fn. 35; 193, fn. 12, 18).

[205] *BRO*, 71.

[206] *AI*, 4.

[207] Tracy's notion of a theological "model" is derived from Bernard Lonergan. Cf. Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 1-22. For Tracy on "model," cf. *BRO*, 22-32; *AI*, 62-63.

public expression is primarily informed by the discussions occurring in non-ecclesial publics (such as academy and society in Tracy and academy, society, and economy and Stackhouse). Although the various publics mutually inform theological and public expression, it is nevertheless possible to suggest along with Tracy that some publics more constitutively form the self-understanding and consequent expression that develop in theological and public domains, respectively.[208]

The questions I propose as constitutive for determining the various forms public theologies take run as follows: (1) How does a theologian locate meaning, meaningfulness, and truth in dialogue with the publics informing theological expression? (2) How does a theologian locate meaning, meaningfulness, and truth in dialogue with the publics informing non-theological, or public expression? (3) How does a theologian facilitate an interrelation of the meaning, meaningfulness, and truth disclosed in both theological and non-theological conversational domains?

How Does a Theologian Locate Meaning, Meaningfulness, and Truth in Dialogue with the Publics Informing Theological Expression?

The first question I suggest as a way of navigating the debates within public theology concerns the manner in which a theologian pursues meaning, meaningfulness, and truth in dialogue with the publics informing uniquely theological expression. Although there are multiple publics involved in the construction of theological expression, we may point to the ecclesial public as particularly constitutive here. Consider the contrasting ecclesiologies of William Cavanaugh and James Cone.

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[208] Cf. *AI*, 3-46.

Cavanaugh maintains that the church is not simply a "private" institution that is understood over against its "public" counterparts. The church, as *ekklesia*, those "called out," rests somewhere between the public sphere of the *polis* and the private sphere of the *oikos*.[209] Drawing from the Jesuit philosopher Michel de Certeau, Cavanaugh posits that the church is not a "place" (*lieu*) mapped onto the "two-dimensional grid" of the nation-state but a narratively located "space" (*espace*),[210] where stories are told which "organize the play of changing relationships between spaces and places."[211] To speak of the church as a "public space," therefore, means "that Christians perform stories which transform the way space is configured."[212] The church need not define itself according to one political theory or to a "publicly available" mode of discourse but according to its own, uniquely theological expression. The church may boast a significant variety of political options among its members,[213] but opening up the church's message to evaluation by those who do not share the same story-space does not allow for an adequate formation of the uniquely Christian story and, consequently, for the confident participation in societal improvement.

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[209] "In using the term *ekklesia* the early church understood itself as the eschatological gathering of Israel. In this gathering those who are by definition excluded from being citizens of the *polis* and consigned to the *oikos*—women, children, slaves—are given full membership through baptism" (Cavanaugh, "Is Public Theology Really Public?" 117).

[210] "A space takes into account the vector of time, such that different spaces are created by the ensemble of movements and actions on them. Space is produced by people performing operations on places, using things in different ways for different ends" (Cavanaugh, "Is Public Theology Really Public?" 118).

[211] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press , 1984), 35; cited in Cavanaugh, "Is Public Theology Really Public?" 123, fn. 54.

[212] Cavanaugh, "Is Public Theology Really Public?" 119.

[213] "Alternative stories about [for example] material goods are told, and alternative forms of economics are made possible" (Cavanaugh, "Is Public Theology Really Public?" 120).

For James Cone, the primary question to ask of such a theology is, "Whose story gets to be told?" When the desire to protect a particular religious-narratival identity ignores the role that mainline religious stories have played in the marginalization of minorities, that desire is violent.[214] Especially in America, where the Christian story has enabled the crime of racism, theologians who fail to address the interrelatedness of white supremacy and American theology become accomplices to the crime of systemic oppression. A more carefully sensitive public theology is aware of the possibility that the theological tradition informing a religious identity may, in fact, perpetuate sins prohibited by the tradition itself. It will thus place a protection against reification into the very core of its project.

For Cone, that protection is enabled by reading the tradition from the "underside" and utilizing contemporary forms of expression to enliven this marginal perspective. In his most recent work, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, Cone places the symbol of the cross in semantic collocation with the symbol of the lynching tree. Mediating "the great symbol of the Christian narrative of salvation" by the unspeakable atrocities of lynching protects theologians from lazy and harmless soteriologies, detached from real experiences of suffering among "the crucified peoples of history." Mediating the black experience by the symbol of the cross protects American Christians from adopting a "fraudulent perspective of society and of the meaning of the Christian gospel for [their] nation."[215]

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[214] In an interview with Bob Scott of the Trinity Institute, James Cone said, "Any group that has institutional power, they are violent." "If you are a part of the dominant group in this country, you are being violent." "A Conversation with James Cone," 38th Institute National Theological Conference. Available online http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1X5sZ6Q4Fw. Accessed October 15, 2011.

[215] Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (op. cit.), xiv.

In their unique ways, both narratival and liberationist public theologies are concerned with preserving the uniqueness of a particular religious identity. Our consideration of the future of public theology, therefore, must allow for the respectability of uniqueness, or "particularity," in the move toward publicness, or "universality."[216] Any theology that compromises the integrity of a unique theological story must be considered suspect. On the other hand, any theology whose concern with self-preservation compromises the integrity of an other's identity—especially in cases of systemic marginalization—must also be critiqued, radically, on the way to new constructions of traditional theological symbols

How Does a Theologian Locate Meaning, Meaningfulness, and Truth in Dialogue with the Publics Informing Public Expression?

It is also possible to divide the public theologians we have surveyed thus far according to two interpretations of "publicness." I differentiate these interpretations grammatically. In the first interpretation, publicness functions like an adverb. Publicness is a way of doing theology, a manner of thinking and of explanation the theologian uses to achieve public respectability through a robust accounting of the type of rationality involved in theology. As was exemplified by Stackhouse, Forrester, Cady, and Tracy, the adverbial approach to publicness surveys possible modes of discourse to engage in theological argumentation that is, at least in theory, available to all. In the second interpreta-

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[216] Tracy's observations on the interpretative openness engendered by the Christian classic is illustrative here: "Any claim to final adequacy [in the construction of a systematic theology] masks a manipulative spirit which does justice to neither the irreducibility of the original religious event nor the real but finite powers of critical, discursive reason" (*AI*, 421). We may posit an analogy between the irreducibility of the original event and the irreducibility of a contemporary religious experience which gives way to a claim to truth. Both require a consistent openness to dialogue that is preserved by protecting the irreducible uniqueness of the classic/conversation-partner.

tion of publicness, the public is interpreted as an object. The public is a thing, a *res publica* that is addressed, critiqued, analyzed, or engaged from a theological standpoint. It remains in need of moral and religious critique and is thus *acted upon* by the theologian. In our increasingly pluralistic society, objective-public theologians are confronted by the im/possibility of shared civil discourse. The role of religion in these public conversations is of particular importance to the postsecular and civic public theologians we surveyed.[217] In typical pursuits of civic commonality, "individualistic," or "private" construals of ultimate reality, what John Rawls called "comprehensive doctrines,"[218] are prohibited from the public construction of reason and morals. The key issue addressed by public theologians who define publicness as a thing, then, is how theology might play a role in talking to, about, within, of, and for this object. Unlike their adverbial counterparts, objectival public theologians do not use grounding philosophies to make their theologies public. They turn, instead, to political and social theory, ethics, civic policy, or even ecclesiology on the way to a statement *from* a theological viewpoint *toward* the public "thing."[219]

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[217] We may include Kent Greenawalt's question here: "What grounds are proper for people making political decisions and arguments within a liberal democracy?" Kent Greenawalt, *Private Consciences and Public Reasons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 4.

[218] John Rawls,"The Idea of Public Reason Revisited," *The University of Chicago Law Review*, 64.3 (Summer, 1997): 765-807. We may grasp the content of Rawls' notion by way of its opposite, "political reason." Rawls says, "A basic feature of democracy is the fact of reasonable pluralism—the fact that a plurality of conflicting reasonable comprehensive doctrines, religious, philosophical, and moral, is the normal result of its culture of free institutions. Citizens realize that they cannot reach agreement or even approach mutual understanding on the basis of their irreconcilable comprehensive doctrines. In view of this, they need to consider what kinds of reasons they may reasonably give one another when fundamental political questions are at stake. I propose that in public reason comprehensive doctrines of truth or right be replaced by an idea of the politically reasonable addressed to citizens as citizens" (765-766).

[219] It should be noted that I am considering an interpretation of "publicness" specifically as this interpretation functions as a key determinative moment in the construction of various public theologies. It could be defensibly observed that all public theologians utilize both types of interpretations of publicness. Those who interpret the public as an object still do operate according to some sense of publicly recogniza-

How Does a Theologian Facilitate an Interrelation of the Meaning, Meaningfulness, and

Truth Disclosed in Both Theological and Non-theological Conversational domains?

These latter observations suggest a further layer of interpretation involved in the

formation of a public theology. At the risk of continuing our oversimplification, we may

label that layer the "interrelationality" between theological and public expression.[220]

Consider the differences between adverbial and objectival understandings of publicness.

In the adverbial camp, Francis Schüssler Fiorenza defines public theology as the submis-

sion of theological claims to public scrutiny in a community "constituted by open conver-

sations, plural discourse, and diverse communities."[221] Likewise, Deirdre King Hains-

worth maintains, "Public theology is the claim that one can present theologically rooted

arguments concerning human identity, norms, and society in ways that can be considered

and understood beyond one's particular confessional context."[222] Because public theolo-

gy is concerned with issues, institutions, and processes shared by all, the public theologi-

an must interpret common life by using "forms of discourse and argument that are in the-

ble objectivity, while those who interpret publicness adverbially are concerned with the way their publicly rendered construction eventuates in a statement toward or on behalf of the public as an object. Even so, there are obvious differences in the degree to which objectival and adverbial publicness function in the formation of different public theologies. My brief survey in the first half of this chapter assists us in observing those differences.

[220] Ronald Thiemann references a "relationship" between a particular religious community's "convictions" and "the broader social and cultural context" in which that community resides: "Public theology is faith seeking to understand the *relation* between Christian convictions and the broader social and cultural context in which the Christian community lives." Ronald Thiemann, *Constructing a Public Theology: The Church in a Pluralistic Culture* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), p. 21 (italics mine).

[221] Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, "Introduction: A Critical Reception for a Practical Public Theology," in Don S. Browning and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza (eds), *Habermas, Modernity, and Public Theology*, 5. Also cited in Barry Harvey, "Insanity, Theocracy, and the Public Realm: Public Theology, the Church, and the Politics of Liberal Democracy," *Modern Theology* 19.1 (Jan 1994): 27.

[222] Hainsworth, "Introduction," xviii, summarizing the public theology of Max Stackhouse.

ory available and open to all."[223]

> A *theos logos* (the profound coherence of the true divine reality) has a cer-
> tain capacity to communicate if done with care. Or course, you don't toss
> immediately to a nonbeliever complex debates about the relationship be-
> tween apocalyptic imagery and eschatological probability. This is not
> how you talk in public. But you can carry on a conversation with the idea
> that you live under certain absolute principles and toward certain ultimate
> purposes that are beyond our capacity to discuss or accomplish without
> reference to God.[224]

The vision behind such a project includes the conviction that any authentic conversation

involves the possibility of evaluation and correction. As public theologians push their

faith into ever increasing parameters, the dialogue may result in a need to revise the tradi-

tion,[225] and the tradition itself will be defined through conversation with "contemporary

consciousness."[226] David Tracy is especially indicative. For Tracy, any modern Chris-

tian theology must attempt "ever new formulations" of theological language and termi-

nology, which represent relatively adequate, Christian interpretations of the fundamental

religious questions asked by all reflective individuals.[227]

Narratival and postsecular forms of public theology, on the other hand, are typi-

cally less concerned with theoretical and methodological self-critique. Here, public the-

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[223] Breitenberg, "What is Public Theology?," 5.

[224] Max Stackhouse, "Publics, Apologetics, and Ethics."

[225] Thus, Tracy's "revisionist" methodology. Werner Jeanrond follows the example of David Tra-
cy: "From a theological perspective all references to divine revelation require a thorough critical and self-
critical examination" ("Hermeneutics and Revelation," *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift*, 79.4 [2003]: 187).

[226] John Courtney Murray, *Religious Liberty*, 233. Again, to be precise, Murray conducted his
theological reflections in an era prior to the rise of the term "public theology."

[227] David Tracy, "The Christian Understanding of Salvation-Liberation," 134. Cf. also *AI*, 80:
"There will ordinarily exist some way of establishing mutually critical correlations between the interpreta-
tions of tradition and situation or church and world: explicitly in fundamental theologies, implicitly and
sometimes explicitly in systematic and practical theologies."

ology tends toward political and social commentary. The theologian's expression becomes "public" to the degree that she or he engages public issues from a unique, uncompromised theological standpoint. As we have just observed, in objectival interpretations of publicness, the theologian speaks *to* a public instead of being in dialogue *with* it. Postsecular theologians may insist that the church is not immune to the type of critique leveled against society. The church must show "in action and in the way it structures its own life the validity of the courses it commends to governments and to the nation."[228] Yet, insofar as the public functions primarily as an object to be addressed, the conversational direction moves in an "inside-out" trajectory. This unidirectional movement is especially notable in postsecular theologians, for whom religion has an internal integrity, or a "*sui generis* quality."[229]

Lest the reader associate this unidirectionality only with narratival or postsecular approaches, however, it should also be noted that various liberationist versions of public theology have been critiqued from a similar standpoint. When the contextualization of theology becomes exclusive, as in solitary attention to the liberation of *a* particular people group, dialogue can be inhibited and the liberative potential of public theology minimized. Consider Benjamin Valentin's critique of his many Latino/a theologies (keeping in mind Valentin's self-identification as a Latino):

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[228] Forrester, "The Scope of Public Theology," 447. Forrester is also sensitive to praxis, or the connectivity between theory and practice. Thus, Forrester: "The ethical positions are not so much consequences which flow from the confession, or implications of the confession, as integral to the doctrinal stance. Here doctrine is ethics, and ethical action is inseparable from doctrinal confession" (444). And, "the integrity and *esse* of the Church are deeply implicated in the taking of positions on ethical issues" (448).

[229] Benne, *Paradoxical Vision*, 4.

> Latino/a theology has tended to focus predominantly on discussions of symbolic culture, identity, and difference, and has, therefore, given too little attention to the critical scrutiny of the multifaceted matrices that impinge upon the realization of a broader emancipatory political project and energy. As important as it is, I believe that the emphasis on specific localization that undergirds much of our liberationist discourse, which lends itself to an insular enchantment with matters of culture, identity, and difference, is too narrow to foster the kinds of overarching and harmonizing emancipatory visions that the goal of social justice requires in our time.[230]

Duncan Forrester likewise notes this potential problematic. Although liberationist public theologies are "far more concerned with the grassroots, with giving a voice to the voiceless, and with questions of empowerment," the typical "impatience with complexities" expressed by such theologians and their easy "tendency to simplify complex issues" does not enable theologians to reach "the heart of the matter." At worst, these types of expression are "just plain naïve."[231] Such contextualized "fire alarms" must remain urgent and vital, and they must be heard by all those resting comfortably in the majority culture (as, for example, the author of this dissertation). When dialogue is no longer functionally connected to the liberative, self-correcting power of authentic dialogue, the conversation has lost its moorings and must be interrupted.[232] However, as has been recently pointed

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[230] Cf., Benjamin Valentin, *Mapping Public Theology*, xiv.

[231] Forrester, "The Scope of Public Theology," 447. Speaking of the World Council of Churches, he also says, "The WCC [*sic*] has…an ability to speak for the voiceless, to express the anger, outrage and expectation of the victims of oppression and exploitation. It is not at present good at developing at the intellectual level a public theology which can articulate critically these cries. But that may come. Meanwhile, it is important to recognize that the Christian Church is one of the few institutions which is capable of speaking for the voiceless, and has a positive mandate to do so. This voice, even if disjointed, angry and simplistic, must surely be a major ingredient in any serious Christian involvement with social, economic and political issues today" (448).

[232] We may observe one such interruption in the recent reception of Elizabeth Johnson's *Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God* (New York: Continuum, 2007) as it is expressed in the **"**Statement on 'Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God,' By Sister Elizabeth A. Johnson Issued by the Committee on Doctrine, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, http://www.usccb.org/doctrine/statement-quest-for-the-living-god-2011-03-24.pdf (accessed May

out by leading members of such communities, a focus solely on the culture, identity, and

difference of one particular people group tends to create newly privatized conversa-

tions.[233] One hopes such interruptions need not happen as a matter of course but in re-

sponse to egoistic distortions disabling dialogue.[234] As we highlighted in our survey of

Mario Aguilar and James Cone, conversational distortions are certainly present in both

theological and public expression, but one must also observe that if public theology is

accurately construed as an attempt at appropriating "the emancipatory and public charac-

ter of critical reason" through "public discourse, genuine communication, [and] authentic

conversation,"[235] then contextualized theologies run the risk of remaining only partially

public. Linell Cady puts the matter this way:

> Are the theologies of the new Christian evangelical right genuinely pub-
> lic? Are the Latin American liberation theologies appropriate models of a
> public theology? I think not. Although both of these types seek to over-
> come the privatization and marginalization of theological reflection, their
> methods of argumentation are, for the most part, not public. They general-
> ly remain confessional theologies, appealing to theological authorities to
> defend their positions. Hence, a public theology is not merely a synonym
> for a political theology, despite the important similarities between them.
> A public theology not only must address itself to the wider social and po-

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10, 2011). Cf. Susan Ross, "The Role of Gender in Public Theology: The Feminist Theologian as Inter-
rupting Voice," paper presented at conference entitled "The Public Character of Theology: Prospects for
the 21st Century: In honor of Dr. David W. Tracy," Loyola University Chicago; Chicago, IL (April 9,
2011).

[233] Cornel West's attention to Americans' mutual participation in the "one garment of destiny"
(*Race Matters*, 6) is exemplary: "We must acknowledge that as a people—*E Pluribus Unum*—we are on a
slippery slope toward economic strife, social turmoil, and cultural chaos. If we go down, we go down to-
gether" (*Race Matters*, 4).

[234] This point was made by David Tracy in the public lecture entitled "The Necessity and Charac-
ter of Fundamental Theology" (op. cit.; cf. fn. 173 above).

[235] David Tracy, "Theology as Public Discourse," *The Christian Century* 92.10 (March 19, 1975):
281.

litical issues, but it must appropriate a form of argumentation that is genuinely public.[236]

Public theology must remain prophetic, interrupting easy narratival structures on behalf of those whose voice has been silenced, but it is also the case that the purpose of theological revision and social liberation will be best served when contextual theologians reflect on their own potential toward ideology—toward a reduction of all particulars into their own point of view. Overlooking the totalizing ambitions of liberative projects on the way to a burgeoning use of the theological imagination can be detrimental to the project as a whole.[237] Although such self-critical reflections need not devolve into the "disinterestedness," "objectivity," and "serenity" often associated with careful them,[238] I posit that, when done with a sensitivity to particularist critiques, the construction of a recognizable methodology will serve the project of liberation by making its concerns shareable.[239] Its exigencies will no longer be merely "contextual" but "public."

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[236] Cady, *Religion*, 26.

[237] The difference may be one simply of "doing" public theology and "reflecting on" public theology. This point is also made by Andries van Aarde, "What Is 'Theology' in 'Public Theology' and What Is 'Public' about 'Public Theology?'"

[238] cf. Bernard Lonergan, "St. Thomas' thought on *Gratia Operans*," *Theological Studies* 3.4 (Dec 1942): 573-574.

[239] Linell Cady defines public theology as having just such a dual approach, when she says that the public theologian seeks to "sustain, interpret, critique, and reform a particular religious worldview and its concomitant way of life," thus enabling a public/revisionary approach, while *also* "contributing to the upbuilding and the critical transformation of our public life" (Linell E. Cady, "The Task of Public Theology," in *The Legacy of H. Richard Niebuhr*, ed. Ronald F. Thiemann [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991], 119), thus enabling an ethical-liberative approach. The dual goal here is simultaneously critical and ethical. Max Stackhouse's observation is similar. He says that theology achieves publicness, when theologians refuse to treat their subject matter as "esoteric, privileged, irrational, or inaccessible" (Max Stackhouse, *Public Theologyand Political Economy* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987], xi), thus opening up the discipline to discussion "with Hindus and Buddhists, Jews and Muslims, Humanists and Marxists" (ibid.). Although not explicitly methodological, such an approach is obviously based on the expedience of shared reason. Yet also, Stackhouse maintains, "such a theology will give guidance to the structures and policies of public life," being "ethical in nature" (ibid.). Ronald Thiemann's nicely suggestive definition may also serve as an ex-

Segue to Chapter Two

It is with these initial observations in mind that we can turn to our analysis of a

particularly telling moment in the history of American public theology, the debate be-

tween revisionist theologians at the University of Chicago and narrative theologians at

Yale University. At issue in this fascinating debate were the questions we have just

raised (though asked in distinct ways). We will enter the Yale-Chicago debate by con-

sidering "the early David Tracy," whom I locate in Tracy's writings up to and including

Analogical Imagination (1980). Tracy's understanding of both theological and non-

theological expression—and the transcendental-theological genealogy of Lonergan and

Rahner Tracy embodied—was problematic for the narratival theologian, George

Lindbeck.

Although Lindbeck himself is not considered a public theologian, his narratival

understanding of theology—adopted from that of his mentor Hans Frei[240] and dependent

on a narratival approach to theology claiming Karl Barth as its genealogical forebear[241]—

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ample of this dual idea: "Public theology is faith seeking to understand the relation between Christian con-
victions and the broader social and cultural context in which the Christian community lives." Ronald
Thiemann, *Constructing a Public Theology*, p. 21. Cady, Stackhouse, and Thiemann are all cited in Benne,
Paradoxical Vision, 4.

[240] *ND*, xxxviii: "I owe more than I can tell both to his [Frei's] encouragement and to his thought."
See also 123, fn. 7, where Frei's *Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, esp. 1-39, is credited for Lindbeck's under-
standing of typological interpretation.

[241] For a reference to Lindbeck's dependence on Barth see *ND*, 135: "Karl Barth's exegetical em-
phasis on narrative has been at second hand [because Lindbeck relies "at first hand" on David Kelsey, *The
Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 39-50; and David Ford, *Barth and
God's Story: Biblical Narrative and the Theological Method of Karl Barth in the 'Church Dogmatics'*
(Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1985)] a chief source of my notion of intratextuality as an appropriate way of
doing theology…" He then concludes, however, "But I have learned to think about Barth in this way above
all from conversations with Hans Frei" (138, fn. 35). Note Tracy's evocative summary of Lindbeck: "The
hands may be the hands of Wittgenstein and Geertz but the voice is the voice of Karl Barth. …Like Karl
Barth (of the *Church Dogmatics* rather than *Romans*) and like some of his colleagues at Yale," Lindbeck's
"real problem" is theological: "he wants theology to be done purely from 'within' the confessing communi-

informs a number of the postsecular and ecclesiological approaches to public theology we

surveyed in chapter one. William Cavanaugh and Barry Harvey studied with Lindbeck

and, in many ways, continue his narratival concerns, while Kathryn Tanner's work on

culture functions as a sustained critique of Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic assumptions.

In his groundbreaking *The Nature of Doctrine*, Lindbeck defined "the task of de-

scriptive (dogmatic or systematic) theology" as "a normative explication of the meaning a

religion has for its adherents."[242] He called this type of theology "intratextual." Reli-

gious meaning in this paradigm was "immanent…constituted by the uses of a specific

language."[243] Like the manner in which the phrase "the 8:02 to New York" garners

meaning from its participation in the semiotic system we call the "Metropolitan Transpor-

tation Authority," religious symbols gain their meaning from participation in a specific

cultural-linguistic framework. Theology, as second-order reflection on doctrinal state-

ments made within this framework need not be concerned with opening up its tradition to

correlation with common experience. Since theological meaning is immanent, such cor-

relational endeavors pluck theological terminology from its meaning-creating context and

are disclosed as meaningless.

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ty." Tracy, "Lindbeck's New Program for Theology: A Reflection," *Thomist* 49 (1985): 465. Richard
Lints calls Lindbeck's narrative theology "distinctly Barthian," inasmuch as Barth "rejected an appeal to
common religious experience as a ground or a means of justification for the truth of the gospel" ("The
Postpositivist Choice," 659). Lints also calls Tracy's theology "apologetic" here. I am hesitant to equate
Tracy's public theology with "apologetics," as that discipline is typically understood; thus I would hesitate
to associate Tracy with Lints' understood apologetic foil to Barth in this comment. I cite Lints as support
for my labeling Lindbeck with the "Barthian" label and its connection with Barth's classic rejection of ex-
perience as locus for theological truth.

[242] *ND*, 100.

[243] Ibid.

Using Lindbeck's "intratextual" term as our point of reference, we may label Tracy's public theology "intertextual."[244] Julia Kristeva's term "intertextual" and its post-structuralist allusions more accurately reflect the analogical imagination of a theologian like David Tracy. Kristeva's idea of intertextuality implies that a text's meaning is mediated through conversational participation with other texts.[245] For Tracy, the theologian genuinely "open to the challenge of Christianity" must be open as well "to the challenge of all other insights into who those listening, questing, questioning, interpreting selves might be."[246] The authority of the religious classics informing theological expression rests not in the "authority" of a religious tradition but in "the authority of those authentic, indeed inevitable fundamental questions about the meaning of the whole"[247] addressed directly by the classics and shared as a common concern among all people. By addressing such shared fundamental questions,[248] the classic becomes public. Because the classic enables universal engagement with the deep questions of existence, the classic cannot

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[244] Lindbeck does use this term once as a reference to what he calls "deconstructionism." See *Nature*, 122, fn. 5. However, Lindbeck's preferred moniker for Tracy and his Roman Catholic colleagues is "extra-textual."

[245] Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980). I am not implying a direct relationship between Tracy and Kristeva but am simply using her terminology as a relatively adequate placeholder to highlight the divergent interpretations of the tradition-theologian relationship we will explore in chapter two.

[246] David Tracy, "The Role of Theology in Public Life: Some Reflections," *Word & World* 6.3 (Summer 1984): 235. Gary Comstock's summary is helpful: Whereas Frei "insists on the absolute independence of the narratives—their autonomy—Tracy views their meaning and justification as dependent on other forms of discourse." Gary L. Comstock, "Two Types of Narrative Theology," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 55.4 (Winter 1987): 697.

[247] *AI*, 155

[248] When confronted by a classic, interpreters experience a sense of resonance between their own experience and that captured by the classic. In this moment there is a recognition of something the interpreter cannot help but call "true," for here—where "only the paradigmatic is the real"—there is a deeply seated mutual engagement with the fundamental aspects of existence. Cf. *AI*, 112.

be confined to merely private reflection, and its potential for meaning can only be

plumbed by interaction with the multiplying experiences of particularity which are simi-

larly—though always differently—caught up in its portrayal of truth.

   As with an adverbial interpretation of publicness, a potential problem with Tra-

cy's model is the tendency toward rational totalism underlying its claim to a realm of

shared truth,[249] even in its concern with pluralism. By running Tracy's public theology

through the critique offered by Lindbeck, we will see whether this criticism holds true.

Central to Lindbeck's evaluation is a suspicion that Tracy's "experiential-expressivism"

is based on a universal framework of reason: "Most experiential-expressivist theologi-

ans," Lindbeck says, "assume…that the scholarly study of religious phenomena on the

whole supports the crucial affirmation of the basic unity of religious experience."[250] Be-

cause the underlying experience is considered common to a *diversity* of religions, "it is

difficult or impossible to specify its distinctive [religious] features, and unless this is done,

the assertion of commonality becomes logically and empirically vacuous."[251]

   Although we will gradually reveal a handful of problems tied up with Lindbeck's

interpretation of Tracy, we will also attempt to move our renewed understanding of Tracy

(and, consequently, our understanding of the fundamental approach to public theology)

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[249] Coincidentally, Lindbeck maintains that experiential-expressive approaches to religion are at-
tempts at apologetic "defenses" of religion. This interpretation is not adequately attentive to Tracy's writ-
ing, where we find an "ethical" imperative for publicness internal to Christianity itself (cf. *AI*, 57). Instead,
the motivation is a more simple trust in the worthwhileness of sharing "truth" with those who are not of a
particular faith and running the faith of Christianity through the gauntlet of this shared locus of truth. For
Lindbeck's observations on apologetics, see *ND*, 113-114, 129, 130, 132

[250] *ND*, 20. For Tracy's response to this charge, cf. fn. 581 below.

[251] *ND*, 20.

through this particularist critique by reengaging the universal-particular dynamic and

pushing intertextuality to its fragmentary conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO

FUNDAMENTAL PUBLIC THEOLOGY IN "THE EARLY DAVID TRACY"

The Search for Objectivity in "The Early David Tracy"

Publicness is not a luxury for theology; it is intrinsic to the whole task.
                                                                    – David Tracy[1]

David Tracy is among the first theologians actually to use the word "public" and

its derivatives to highlight a central methodological concern for theology. His earliest

references date to the mid-1970s,[2] but publicness as a mode of theological reflection has

informed the totality of his writing career.[3] This chapter is devoted to a careful analysis

of the type of publicness reflected in the works of "the early Tracy."[4]

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[1] "The Role of Theology in Public Life," 239.

[2] See, e.g., "Theological Table-Talk: Modes of Theological Argument," *Theology Today* 33 (Jan 1977): 395 – "Any theological curriculum can so focus on the modes of argument, the relevant criteria and evidence in the several specialties and disciplines comprising theology, that it serves to foster both truly public discourse and consistently collaborative practice. In a situation where theologians are in some danger of being added to the list of endangered species, I realize that a plea for public discourse and collaborative practice may seem to possess all the excitement of a stifled yawn. Yet seething beneath that great grey western virtue of reasoned public discourse is, I believe, the desire really to hear one another once again."

[3] Tracy later reflects on the "1973 book" (see 1996 preface), *Blessed Rage for Order*: "All the books and articles I have written since [writing *BRO*, his first "constructive book"] both continue the basic argument of *Blessed Rage for Order* and qualify, update, develop, correct, challenge…various aspects of the book," such as "the need to develop a genuinely public theology—available, in principle, to all intelligent, reasonable, responsible persons" (xiii). The main text itself contains a reference to "public discussion" (p. 81), used to characterize Langdon Gilkey's *Reaping the Whirlwind* (New York: Seabury, 1976), Paul Ricoeur's *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston: Beacon, 1967), John Cobb, *The Structure of Christian Existence* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), and Reinhold Niebuhr, "Coherence, Incoherence and Christian Faith," in *Christian Realism and Plitical Problems* (New York: Scriber's, 1953). Other mentions of "public discourse" occur in footnotes (*BRO*, 250, fn. 1; 87, fn. 57) or indirectly, as when Tracy distinguishes between the "community of inquiry exemplified but surely not exhausted by the contemporary academy and to that community of religious and moral discourse exemplified but surely not exhausted by [the theologian's] church traditions" (*BRO*, 239). For a later statement by Tracy on method, see *PA*, 33: "Method, explanation, and theory, modeled largely on their presumed nature and success in the

Locating "The Early David Tracy"

Tracy's writings can be separated into four recognizable periods. The first, which

I locate in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, can be characterized as an attempt to

stabilize the discipline of Roman Catholic theology after the Second Vatican Council. In

response to the uncontrolled use of the theological imagination and with the theology of

his mentor Bernard Lonergan[5] as a guide, Tracy located a methodological center for

theology by constructing a transcendental critique of religious expression. This early

natural sciences, must be developed in ever discipline." He immediately qualifies this claim by observing the "postpositivist stage" of science: "Science has become again both historical and hermeneutical" (*PA*, 34).

We may also point to the "methodological exigency" that has characterized the entirety of Tracy's writing career. Cf. Andreas Telser, "Theologie als öffentlicher Diskurs: Zur Relevanz der Systematischen Theologie David Tracys" (2009 dissertation presented to the faculty at Katholisch-Theologischen Privatuniversität Linz) defends the thesis that Professor Tracy's career can be described as a sustained reflection on method. Gaspar Martinez notes Tracy's gradual turn away from method: "Method has decreased in importance not only because, in the last analysis, there is no suitable method unless there is a substantive theology that uses it but also, more radically, because Tracy has become increasingly aware of the limitations of modern theology, of which method is but a part" (177).

[4] Tracy's elusiveness serves as a worthwhile reason to utilize him as a case study. Among other labels, he has been called un-Christian, a "Schleiermacher," an "Erasmus," an Averhoeist, and a rationalist. See "Prolegomena to a Foundational Theology," *Criterion* 9 (1986): 12; and *Plurality and Ambiguity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 130 for his own reflections.

[5] Tracy notes, for example, "Lonergan's extraordinary achievements in methodology" (*AI*, 15). Tracy's dependence on Lonergan has also been made by Gaspar Martinez, *Confronting the Mystery of God*, 176-178. Martinez stresses the fact that Lonergan's hermeneutical enterprise was especially influential for Tracy, since "The core of the Lonerganian enterprise is clearly hermeneutic" (177). One may want to nuance Martinez's interpretation by pointing to Tracy's continued but critical appreciation of Lonergan in the later work, *Plurality and Ambiguity*, where Tracy says readers "will recognize [Lonergan's] presence here and elsewhere in this work—a presence for which I remain all the more thankful despite the obvious differences on 'language' and understandingand thereby interpretation" (115, fn. 5). Cf. Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understandin* (London: Longmans, Green, 1957).

For Tracy on Lonergan, see David Tracy, "The Development of the Notion of Theological Methodology In the Works of Bernard J. Lonergan, S.J." (a dissertation presented to the faculty of the Gregorian University, Rome, 1969) and David William Tracy, "Lonergan's Interpretation of St. Thomas Aquinas: The Intellective Nature of Speculative Theology: excerpta ex dissertatione ad Lauream in Facultate Theologica Pontificaiae Universitatis Gregorianae" (Rome: Pontificia Universitate Gregoriana, 1969), where Tracy says, "It would be difficult to find another contemporary theologian who has kept both needs [of contemporary adequacy and historical appropriation] so clearly in mind as has Father Lonergan from his earliest to his latest work" (5). See also *Achievement of Bernard Lonergan* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 232-269; "Lonergan's Foundational Theology," 216.

period culminated in his publication of *Blessed Rage for Order* in 1975, in which he

called for "an explicitly transcendental or metaphysical mode of reflection" to determine

the "truth-status" of the theological project.[6]

The second period, which I locate in the late 1970s and the 1980s, can be

characterized by an increasing attention to "publicness" as a nuanced continuation of his

earlier concerns with transcendental critique. The explicit mentioning of "public

theology" began appearing almost immediately after the publication of *Blessed Rage for

Order* and culminated famously in Tracy's longest project to date, *The Analogical

Imagination*. Here, the public trajectory of theology was mediated by way of Tracy's

theory of the "religious classic." The concern not only with meaning (internal

coherence), meaningfulness (continuity with lived experience), and truth (continuity with

shared experience) expressed in *Blessed Rage for Order* was still noticeably present here

but mediated less by founding philosophies. Borrowing from H.-G. Gadamer, Tracy

suggested that a theological retrieval of conversation with "the classic,"[7] informed

theologically by an inclusivist Christology, may found a systematic theology on the

earlier fundamental-theological reflections of *Blessed Rage for Order*.[8]

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[6] *BRO*, 52-56.

[7] For Tracy on Gadamer, see esp. *AI*, 99-153. Of primary importance for Tracy is H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Seabury, 1975). Gadamer's attention to the "question of truth as it emerges in art" (*Truth and Method*, 1-171) and his "theory of hermeneutic experience" (*Truth and Method*, 267-382) are especially important.

[8] Tracy originally published *BRO*, anticipating that it would be the first of a three-volume series covering fundamental, systematic, and practical theologies. Tracy says of *BRO*, "The task outlined here is a fundamental theology insofar as it attempts to articulate the criteria and evidence for theological argument. It is a task that can be distinguished from dogmatic theology proper, historical theology, and practical theology" (*BRO*, 56, fn. 1; cf. 64). For a helpful self-critique of the differences between these two works, see *AI*, 84-85, fn. 28, where Tracy references the "alternative" and "more relatively adequate" understanding of historical theology constructed in *AI*; and *AI*, 337-338, where Tracy differentiates the "particular" point of entry for *AI*, namely "the actuality of Jesus made possible by a systematic theological

The third period began immediately after his publication of *Analogical Imagination* and continued into the 1990s. As with the second, the concerns of this third period were not new developments for Tracy but do represent shifts in vocabulary and emphasis. The concerns of this third period can be located according to the notion of conversation,[9] an idea that guides his third major work, *Plurality and Ambiguity* (1987).[10] Although a willingness to enter deeply and vulnerably into conversation with others was demonstrated in Tracy's earliest writings[11] and is certainly present in his first two major works,[12] *Plurality and Ambiguity* brings criticism through conversation to a determinative position in theological expression. The centrality of conversation is also

focus," from the "fundamental" point of entry for *BRO*. Tracy continued, "The present christological formulations [*AI*] are continuous with and expansions upon those of that earlier fundamental theology [*BRO*]" (338); also cf. *AI*, 96: "I hope to return to these issues [the interrelationality of fundamental, systematic, and practical theologies] in a future volume on practical theology—a volume intended to complete the 'trilogy' initiated by *BRO* by addressing the more fully concrete concerns of practical theology."

[9] I am not saying that the unique foci of each period are exclusive. Instead, they represent relative points of stress that stand out as uniquely representative concerns guiding Tracy during the period under consideration. Stephen Okey, Ph.D. Candidate in Theology at Boston College, is presently working on a dissertation which traces key aspects of Tracy's theological anthropology throughout Tracy's career. Okey's thesis is that the points of stress relative to the eras highlighted above are a result of the respective conversation partners Tracy had in mind during each period.

[10] The German translation of this work connotes its dependence on the idea of conversation. Cf. David Tracy, *Theologie als Gespräch. Eine postmoderne Hermeneutik*, trans. Susanne Klinger (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald Verlag, 1993).

[11] Cf. especially Tracy's critique of Bernard Lonergan in "Lonergan's Foundational Theology: An Interpretation and Critique," in Philip McShane, ed. *Foundations of Theology: Papers from the International Lonergan Conference 1970* (Dublin: Gill and McMillan, 1971),

[12] *BRO*, 237-258, where Tracy engages in dialogue with various instantiations of what he calls the "Hegelian-Marxist notion of *praxis*" (243); *AI*, 69-72, where Tracy considers Lonergan's notion of "conversion" and "'self-transcending' subjectivity," or *praxis* as a corrective to the merely theoretical appropriation of foundational theology, 339-370, where Tracy engages with the "emergence of the uncanny" in his contemporary "situation."

discernible in Tracy's last major project, *Dialogue with the Other*.[13] Informed by the

Christian-Buddhism dialogue in which Tracy was participating at the time of its

composition, this work brings a phenomenology of conversation to the very forefront of

the theological task.[14]

 The fourth period, which began in the mid-1990s and has continued into Tracy's

present writings, lectures, and graduate courses, can be characterized by two noticeable

themes: First, the trajectory toward "truth" that was present in *Blessed Rage for Order*

and *Analogical Imagination* reaches its culmination not in "christocentric," but

"theocentric," "christomorphic" categories[15] mediated by a theory of the "fragment" as

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[13] David Tracy, *Dialogue with the Other: The Inter-Religious Dialogue* (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1990; Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1991).

[14] To be exact, Tracy's theory of conversation is constructed by way of critical psychoanalysis in, for example, Tracy's dialectical appropriation of Freud and Lacan and the mystical and prophetic. Cf. *Dialogue with the Other*, 17-26, 110-122.

[15] For early versions of Tracy's christological culminations, cf. *BRO*, 204-236; *AI*, 421-429. (In this dissertation I follow Tracy's uncapitalized formatting of "christological" and "christology.") The locating of "God" at the center of theological reflection is typical of other public theologians. Mario Aguilar argues a similar point in *Theology, Liberation, and Genocide*, 68-69. The statement published by the "Seventh International Conference of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians" reflects a similar sensitivity (though a bit less nuanced): "Jesus reveals God, but does not limit or exhaust the divine. In the light of the risen Jesus and the cosmic Christ, nothing prevents God's self-revelation to all God's people. It is liberating to confess that God is not confined to Christian traditions, churches, and scriptures. Wherever God makes self-disclosure and self-gift, the word enters the earth, becomes embodied in history, participates in people's struggles for justice and freedom, and helps propel them toward their (up)rising and liberation." See ""Commonalities, Divergences, and Cross-Fertilization among Third World Theologies: *A Document Based on the Sevent International Conference of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, Oaxtepec, Mexico, December 7-14, 1986*" in K.C. Abraham (ed.), *Third World Theologies: Commonalities and Divergences: Papers and Reflections from the Second General Assembly of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, December, 1986, Oaxtepec, Mexico* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1990), 195-214.207-208. This paper was the result of the aforementioned international conference of third world theologians, held December 7-14, 1986 in Oaxtapec, Mexico. I am thankful to Mario Aguilar, *Theology, Liberation, and Genocide*, 73 for these observations. It is worth noting in our context that this collection includes an essay by James Cone. Cone reflects on the similarities between U.S. black theologians and EATWOT (Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologies) theologians, saying, "We, the U.S. minorities have more in common with the Third World peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America than we do with the ruling classes and races in the United States. For we must not forget that the great majority of U.S. minorities come from Africa, Asia, and Latin America" (129). "A Statement from the U.S. Minorities," 129-131.

theological form. We will consider the fragment more fully in chapters five and six. For now, it is helpful to note the following: paralleling the nuanced uptake of *Blessed Rage for Order*'s metaphysics with publicness in *Analogical Imagination*, the fragment represents a nuanced uptake of *Analogical Imagination*'s "classic," especially when the notion of the classic is run through a robust and deep appropriation of critical conversation, as expressed in *Plurality and Ambiguity* and *Dialogue with the Other*.

My analysis will begin with Tracy's earliest writings, primarily articles and lectures, which provide a historical snapshot into the factors that resulted in his attentiveness to publicness-as-method. Our survey will be limited to the first two periods I summarized above: his early attention to transcendental critique and his turn to "publicness" as a way of expressing such concerns. The present chapter is divided into two parts. part one surveys the transcendental method of Tracy's earliest writings (pre-*Blessed Rage for Order* and *Blessed Rage for Order*). Part Two considers the continuation of these concerns in *Analogical Imagination*.

1960s-1970s: The Search for Theology's Cognitive Accessibility

External Factors: "Historical Consciousness" and the Challenge of Relativism

Tracy's turn to method, or "fundamental theology," began with a twofold observation made in the post-Vatican-II era. "External" to typical, inner-theological conversations, Tracy considered "historical consciousness" to be the key problematic facing twentieth-century theologians. "Internal" to the concerns of theologians was his observation of a "mystic alchemy" in Roman Catholic theology. These two observations gave way to a concern with method that reached a kind of apogee in *Blessed Rage for*

Order. Attending to the type of thinking that was involved in theology would provide a

shareable framework and protect the integrity of the theological guild.

In a course Tracy taught at the Catholic University of America in 1968,[16] he

highlighted three historical factors that converged and gave way to the "post-

Enlightenment" milieu informing twentieth-century theology. We can consider them

briefly here (reflecting the relative brevity of presentation in a classroom setting). First,

"the very meaning of science" shifted in the 17th century from an "Aristotelian notion,"[17]

concerned with finding "certain knowledge through causes" to the explanation of data "in

terms of mutually intelligible relationships." Having its origins in Newtonian physics,

this shift "culminated in the relativity theory of the twentieth century"[18] and involved a

reconfiguration of scientific explanation. Proof was not achieved in terms universality,

necessity, certainty, or causality, but relationships, statistical probability, development,

and process.[19] Second, surrounding the development of the *Geisteswissenschaften* in the

19th-century German context was an increasing awareness that "the purely empirical data

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[16] *The Oneness of God*. Ed. Jerome F. Filteau et al. prepared by Theological College Class of 1971 at Catholic University of America School of Theology. Based on notes from the lectures of David Tracy during Spring, 1968. Published privately by Theological College Publications. Washington, D.C. 1970. Prior to beginning his post at the University of Chicago in 1969, Tracy taught for two years at the Catholic University of America. He was forced to leave this post in 1968, after he, Bernard McGinn, and several of their colleagues rejected an encyclical of Pope Paul VI. For a personal accounting of this event, see David Tracy, "Tribute to Bernard McGinn," *Continuum* 42 (Autumn 2003): 41-42.

[17] Tracy revisited this collapse in *AI*, 20: "Most former models of theology (for example, theology as an Aristotelian science and thereby as a 'compact' discipline) are as clearly spent as is the Aristotelian paradigm in science."

[18] *Oneness*, 1.

[19] As we will see in more detail later, this observation would be important for Tracy's understanding of horizon as knowledge-in-process. A fun point of entry into Tracy's relationship with process theology, particularly that of Schubert Ogden, is Tracy's "Response to Dr. Ogden," *Thesis Theological Cassettes* 3.9 (1972). (Apart from the theological aptitude this lecture presents, one may also appreciate Tracy's thick Yonkers accent, only remnants of which can be discerned after his forty-plus years in Chicago.)

of external behavior" were "insufficient to explain human activity."[20] Attention was paid

to intentionality, or factors of meaning-creation in the fully human action of

understanding, and the necessary notion of human subjectivity that served as a

foundational means of grasping the complexities of this intentionality.[21] Third, Tracy

was convinced of the "breakdown of the naïve realism of classical philosophy"[22] and the

necessary consequence that theology could no longer begin with metaphysical "first

principles" and work "down" from them.

Together, these three factors led to a collective awareness of what Tracy

eventually called "one of the great discoveries and achievements of modern thought,"[23]

"historical consciousness."[24] Associated with Tracy's mentor, Bernard Lonergan,[25]

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[20] *The Oneness of God*, 2.

[21] The motivations for this development in the human sciences informed Tracy's understanding of what Karl Rahner called "the turn to the subjective at the beginning of modern times" (Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, IV [Baltimore, 1966], 324). The "transcendental Thomism" of Lonergan and Rahner (which would become so important for Tracy's understanding of theological method) was essentially a theological instantiation of this important university debate. For a source informing Tracy's understanding of Cartesian epistemology in transcendental Thomism, see Bernard Lonergan, "Lectures in Existentialism and Mathematical Logic" (1967) delivered at Boston College, where Lonergan defines the "subject" of Transcendental Thomism as "Descartes' *cogito* transposed into concrete living." See Tracy, "Horizon Analysis," 169, fn. 9 and 171, fn. 14.

[22] *Oneness of God*, 2.

[23] "The Return of God in Contemporary Theology," in *ONP*, 42. Originally in Werner Jeanrond and Claude Geffré (ed.), *Why Theology? Concilium*, 1994/6 (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994), 37-46.

[24] Given the regularity with which one can find this term in Tracy's writings, it is surprising that he seldom offered a clear, or consistent definition. Later, Tracy noted, e.g., its "arrival" (*BRO*, 67) or its "problematic" status for the theologian (*BRO*, 66); yet a clear definition is not provided. I offer my own summary of Tracy's meaning by culling together a variety of texts where he references the idea.

[25] Cf. *BRO*, 44. Tracy called Lonergan the Gregorian professor who was "excellent…above all." "Tribute to Bernard McGinn," *Continuum* 42 (Autumn 2003): 42. Tracy's dissertation, *The Development of the Notion of Theological Methodology in the Works of Bernard J. Lonergan, S.J.*, defends the following thesis: "That the problematic of theological method is present in the work of Father Lonergan from the very outset of his mature thought, and that an analysis of his thought on the question bears witness to a steady and complex development." Tracy posits four stages in the development of Lonergan: (1) with special attention to Aquinas, an analysis, "from a methodological viewpoint" of the "scientific intellectualist nature

historical consciousness referred, in brief, to an awareness of the historically situated

identity of all expression. As a collective recognition within "Western consciousness,"[26]

historical consciousness highlighted the active role the historical subject played in

determining meaning. The upshot of this collective recognition was a turn to analysis of

the thinking subject—first by way of history, philology, culture, and social location, and

second by way of reflexive philosophy.[27] The type of discourse that arose in response to

such awareness was a qualitative "explicitation"[28] of the cognitive processes involved in

self-constitution:

> In the technical sense in which we are using the term here, historical
> consciousness means "the self-constitution of the subject and the mutual
> self-mediation of the subject in the community." This refers to a certain
> qualitative level of discourse which is more than a dynamic exteriority: it

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of systematic (speculative) theology"; (2) the establishment of a transcendental method "open to and relevant to the further question of a strictly theological method" (especially as it is developed in Lonergan's *Insight*); (3) a properly theological treatment of Trinitarian and Christological problems—the development of a "contemporary, methodological notion of the nature of dogmatic theology in reference to both systematic theology and the recently evolved discipline called positive theology"; (4) "explicit work on theological method" (1959-1965) – a "complex development of concerns, categories, and methods climaxing in the critical insight of February 1965 at which point the transcendental method developed in *Insight* is transformed into the strictly theological context in order both to interrelate what are determined to be the eight functional specializations operative in the contemporary theological task…and to ground the entire theological enterprise by a theologically transformed transcendental method." Each chapter discussed "one major period of Lonergan's thought and the major conclusions for theological method resulting in and from that period" ("Lonergan's Interpretation of St. Thomas Aquinas," 6).

[26] Cf. "Why Orthodoxy in a Personalist Age," *Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings*, 25 (1970): 81 (78-110, inclusive). The pressing issue for theologians was not the emergence of "personalism" but that of "historical consciousness into the Western consciousness and the resultant problematic status of all classical traditions and authorities." "Why Orthodoxy" was a lecture delivered at the 1970 gathering of the Catholic Theological Society of America. Tracy would later become president of the Catholic Theological Society of America in 1976-1977.

[27] See Tracy's review of *A New Catechism: Catholic Faith for Adults* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), in *Theology Today* (Oct 1968), 402.

[28] This somewhat cumbersome word was used extensively by the "early Tracy" in reference to Lonergan's transcendental method; especially in *The Achievement of Bernard Lonergan*. In "Holy Spirit as Philosophical Problem," *Commonweal* 89 (Nov. 8, 1968): 207 (reprinted in Daniel Callahan [ed.], *God, Jesus, and Spirit* [New York: Herder & Herder, 1969], 309-329), Tracy defines "explicitation" as a "relatively simple explanation…of the matter of fact…behavior of all rational activity."

is an interiority and the explicitation [*sic*] of this interiority. It is a further realization that *meaning* is the chief reality to be dealt with in human science.[29]

Of specific concern for the theologian sensitive to this development was the awareness that historical consciousness highlighted the distance between the contemporary interpreter and religious texts, in dialogue with which theological claims were constructed.[30] In turn, this recognition forced "the problematic of interpretation to the very center of theological attention"[31] and gave rise to a problem "historically called 'relativism.'"[32] No longer could theologians rely simply on "proof-texts" to defend theological positions. Notions such as tradition,[33] magisterial authority,[34] the nuanced theological appropriation of history in *ressourcement*, or "extrinsicist" approaches to philosophy could no longer provide an adequate foundation upon which one could make convincing claims. In a context of historical consciousness, such universalizing structures were no longer available.[35]

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[29] *The Oneness of God*, 3, the quotes are part of original formatting, representing the meaning of "historical consciousness," not the work of a different author. We may add that historical consciousness functioned, for Tracy, as no less than "the key transition in contemporary Catholicism" (Review of *A New Catechism*, 402), and "the real issue" facing twentieth-century theologians ("Why Orthodoxy," 81). Tracy dealt with this important idea most explicitly in *Oneness of God*, 1-12 and "Why Orthodoxy," 78-86.

[30] Tracy later claimed historical consciousness as "probably" "the major reason" he rejected the reflective discipline called "'transcendental' in its modern formulation or 'metaphysical' in its more traditional expression" (*BRO*, 55). I locate it as a primary problem for the early Tracy, a problem in response to which he felt compelled to bring order to disciplinary chaos.

[31] "Why Orthodoxy," 82.

[32] "Why Orthodoxy," 83.

[33] "Why Orthodoxy," 82-83.

[34] "Why Orthodoxy," 80-81.

[35] It is interesting to note that Tracy viewed the inattentiveness to theoretical founding as a cause of "death of God" and "secularist" theologies. Hermeneutical theologians such as John Cobb and James Robinson made "the debates of the forties and fifties and, indeed, of 'aggiornamento' seem like an age of

The collective upshot of these factors was a desire to redefine, sometimes

radically, that "discipline (viz., philosophy) which traditionally provided a 'trans-

historical' possibility (viz., metaphysics) to theology."[36] Given the problem of relativity

and the breakdown of classical approaches to philosophy, the theologian could not defend

theological claims to universality by classical approaches. She must formulate the

"theological question" in a manner adequate to temporal-historical consciousness.[37]

Internal Factors: The Search for Objectivity in a Theologically Imaginative Culture

The problems caused by Tracy's growing awareness of relativity were

exacerbated by what he viewed as an increasingly arbitrary use of the theological

imagination in Roman Catholicism. Although Tracy was supportive of the revisionary

direction that often accompanied the imaginative alternative to "manualist aridity,"[38] he

was disconcerted over the observably superficial intellectuality that typically

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theoretical innocence—attractive, indeed, but no longer possible" ("Horizon Analysis and Eschatology." *Continuum* 6, no. 2 [1968]: 167).

[36] "Why Orthodoxy," 84.

[37] The distinction between "adequacy" and "appropriateness" would eventually become very important for Tracy. For a clear example of the manner in which Tracy draws that distinction, see BRO, 64-79. After defending phenomenology as a properly transcendental mode of reflection for accessing the meaning, meaningfulness, and truth "adequate" to transcendental experience, Tracy posits hermeneutical analysis as a mode of reflection "appropriate" to the Christian fact as expressed in texts, quintessentially in scriptural texts. Appropriateness was thus more directly related to an "appropriation" of theological tradition, while adequacy reflected a theology's ability to reflect "adequate," contemporary (non-theological), "philosophical investigation of Christian language." Theology engaged the "Christian theologian's responsibility to show how his or her present categories were appropriate understandings of the Christian understanding of existence." The best theological expressions must reflect *both* adequacy and appropriateness: "The theologian's task is neither to invent a new religion nor to leave his interpreters the task of determining the appropriateness of his categories to the Christian tradition. Rather, the theologian must himself assume this responsibility" (*BRO*, 72).

[38] Tracy referenced the "aridity" of the contemporary context as "too narrow," as a result of "the separate questions, the apologetic atmosphere, the failure to engage in the necessary preliminary research, interpretation, and dialectic." David Tracy, "Method as Foundation for Theology: Bernard Lonergan's Option." *Journal of Religion* 50.3 [1970]: 307.

accompanied such progressive tendencies. Both Tracy and his "younger" colleagues[39]

were suspicious of any theology, no matter how amenable with their conclusions, which

lacked an initially solid, objectively valid theoretical foundation. What ensued among

young Roman Catholic theologians was a "general, often inchoate, and usually

undifferentiated repugnance with the seeming lack of any fundamental intellectual,

moral, and religious seriousness in much of what pass[ed] for 'fundamental' theology."[40]

Even the emerging "correlationist"[41] approach was unable to respond to the needs of the

methodological day:

> As the waning enthusiasm for 'aggiornamento' among younger Catholics
> makes clear, the problems—philosophical, theological, catechetical, and
> just plain human—are far more radical and serious than even the best
> combination of the 'questions' of personalism and existentialism with the
> 'answers' of the historico-critical method applied to the Christian sources
> can handle.[42]

The unwitting continuation of positivistic, indeed "extrinsicist" categories on which

correlational theology was built did not provide a competent means by which

contemporary philosophical challenges could be answered. The solution was infinitely

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[39] "Many younger students of Catholic theology have almost the same problem that the post-Barthians have been facing in Protestant theology. …Van Buren, Altizer, Cox, and Hamilton, whose early education was strictly Barthian and who at one time were all Barthians, are 'turned off' when told about transcendence, especially Barthian transcendence" (*Oneness of God*, 139). Cf. also "Horizon Analysis," 167: "Many theologians, Protestant and Catholic, realize anew the need for more rigorous definition and more technical theoretical defense of their too often loose language."

[40] "Method as Foundation," 307.

[41] This type of theological reflection was associated with Paul Tillich. See Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, I:65: "The method of correlation requires that every part of the system should include one section in which the question is developed by an analysis of human existence and existence generally, and one section in which the theological answer is given on the basis of the sources, the medium, and the norm of systematic theology. This division must be maintained. It is the backbone of the structure of the present system."

[42] Review of *New Catechism: Catholic Faith for Adults*, *Theology Today* 25.3 (Oct 1968): 403. Note the allusion to Tillich in the notions of "personalism," "existentialism," "questions," and "answers."

more complex,[43] insofar as the "most important" and "most difficult" question for

theologians was "just how one may critically vindicate the very possibility of theological

language"[44] in an increasingly relativized Western milieu. Theologians did not need a

quasi-Lutheran "return to the sources" but some means of locating "the conditions of the

possibility of whether such a return was possible at all."[45]

In the following, uncharacteristically bald critique, Tracy observed a similar

problem in the pneumatological theology of Rosemary Radford Ruether:

> As far as I can see, all of the 'Spirit' practitioners and theologians are
> quite innocent of the nature of theoretical inquiry, of the need to
> differentiate the myriad conditions before judging, and of the
> contemporary inadequacy of a return to undifferentiated expressions of
> religion. But that judgment may best be defended by a specific example:
> aside from the 'underground' and 'pentecostal' movements themselves,
> probably the most influential 'Spirit-theology' among American Catholics
> at the present time is Dr. Rosemary Ruether's in *The Church Against
> Itself*. Readers of that often brilliant work and the discussions it
> provoked…will recall that besides its more obvious limitations (e.g., its
> too heavy dependence on one school of biblical exegesis or its often
> dogmatic statements on involved historical questions) there remains a
> central flaw in the whole enterprise: How in the world is Dr. Ruether able
> to speak so knowledegeably (i.e., so theologically) of the Holy Spirit?
> Does she realize the sociological, psychological, anthropological,
> philosophical, and theological *presuppositional* difficulties of her work?[46]

For the early Tracy, in other words, religious experience could serve as a foundation on

which fundemantal theology could be constructed (a position we will see Tracy

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[43] Note the manner in which Tracy complicated the theological question ad nauseum in "Holy Spirit as Philosophical Problem, 209: "Perhaps it may seem that I have set so many conditions for the prospective [theological] judgment that any such judgment is really an impossibility. To state the matter as bluntly as possible, I hope I have."

[44] "Why Orthodoxy," 78.

[45] "Horizon Analysis," 167.

[46] "Holy Spirit as Philosophical Problem," 210. Italics mine. The critique is of Rosemary Radford Ruether, *The Church Against Itself* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967). See also *Oneness of God*, 34.

defending in *Blessed Rage for Order*), but such an allowance did not mean that religious

experience should give way to an unfettered use of the theological imagination.[47]

Instead, the theologian should be careful to locate a theoretical grounding for theological

language. In a milieu where religious terminology itself appeared increasingly passé,

such theoretical grounding was not an option:

> No theological discussion is more important at present than that of the
> theoretical models which the theologian employs for any 'God-talk' or
> 'redemptive-talk' or the like. The time is now past when one may use
> such phrases as 'salvation-history' or 'God acts in history,' or even 'God'
> without trying to defend theoretically just what such language might
> mean.[48]

For Tracy then, the theoretical explanation of theological expression was nothing less

than the key task of theology. The cosmically unified world of previous eras had long

since disappeared. No longer was symbolic expression alone adequate to the distinctions

between sacred and profane, interior and exterior, commonsense and theory. In a period

of mature consciousness—the realization of the Western ideal Bonhoeffer called "man

come of age"[49]—the "former childlike apprehension of religion"[50] was not plausible.[51]

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[47] Cf. "Why Orthodoxy," 80: "No matter how ecstatic or vestigial one's own religious experience may be, an analysis of the meaning of that experience cannot but pose the truth-claim question to it."

[48] "Horizon Analysis," 166.

[49] Tracy regularly referenced Bonhoeffer's notion "man come of age" in his early writing career. See, e.g., *Oneness of God*, 101-104; "Method as Foundation," 312.

[50] The categories of "genetic epistemology" delineated by child psychologist Jean Piaget [*Genetic Epistemology*, trans. Eleanor Duckworth (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1970)]—from undifferentiated states to a differentiation, integration, and grouping of operations—served as a ready resource by which the early Tracy could reference the rise of "historical consciousness" as a form of Western *development*. To be exact, Piaget's categories were entitled "sensorimotor," "preoperational," "concrete operations," and "formal operations." For an example of Tracy's analogical use of this idea as a means of understanding the theological consciousness, see "Horizon Analysis," 172.

[51] Tracy pointed to fundamental theology as a "quiet revolution" in which all disciplines—history of religions, psychology, sociology, philosophy, etc.—were to be used "to understand and criticize [the Christian] tradition, to appropriate its richness, to try to eliminate its faults, to develop its strengths," in

More adequate to the exigencies of historical consciousness was reflection on the shared

experience of "judgment."[52] Doing so would allow the theologian to "ground and order

methodically" the type of language[53] and cognition[54] involved in theological expression.

Reflecting on "man's [*sic*] *being* as his being,"[55] the theologian disclosed the very

subjective experience of existence as the point of entry into shared being and, thereby, as

the point of entry into ontology and the quintessentially ontological science, theology.

Metaphysics as Horizon Analysis

In response to the need for a theoretical founding of theology, Tracy suggested

that the theologian engage in "horizon-analysis."[56] Tracy defined "horizon" as…

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order to enable "steady and systematic critical reflection upon the nature of religious experience itself" ("Catholic Presence in the Divinity School," *Criterion* 11 (1972): 29-31).

[52] Philosophers Tracy regularly mentioned in this regard include Husserl, Heidegger, Gadamer, Merleau-Ponty, de Waelhens, Ricoeur, Coreth, Rahner, Lonergan, Pannenberg, or even less metaphysically oriented philosophers such as Patrick Heelan; cf. P. Heelan, "Horizon Objectivity and Reality in the Physical Sciences," *International Philosophical Quarterly* (Sept 1967) 375-412. On more than one occasion Tracy noted that the type of method used was less important than the more generic attempt somehow to analyze the conditions of the possibility for God-talk. See, e.g., "The Religious Dimension of Science" in Andrew M. Greeley and Gregory Baum (eds.), *The Persistence of Religion*, Concilium 81 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1973)," 135. For a later example, cf. *BRO*, 44.

[53] "Horizon Analysis," 167. Again, it should be noted that the early Tracy's wager was not that the horizon-analysis of Rahner, Lonergan, Coreth, Schillebeeckx, and others was necessarily a "better" means of ordering that language than, say, the use of Hegel by Altizer; Whitehead by the process theologians; Heidegger by Ott, Ebeling, and Fuchs; or Wittgenstein by van Buren. Instead, horizon-analysis functioned as a "certain heuristic and schematic possibility" for grounding the theological enterprise in a manner considered adequate to the contemporary situation" (ibid).

[54] "Theology makes the religious values of a person's life cognitively accessible" ("Method as Foundation for Theology," 313).

[55] "Why Orthodoxy," 83; italics his.

[56] Tracy claimed in his earliest writings that Husserl's attempt to ground philosophy as the basic horizon of the sciences stood as the "origin of the use of the word 'horizon' itself" (*Oneness of God*, 141), yet most important for the early Tracy's understanding of horizon-analysis was Bernard Lonergan. Although Tracy's understanding of the integration and differentiation of the functional specialties within theology depended heavily on Lonergan's reconstruction of human consciousness in *Insight*, it is primarily Lonergan's work in *Method* which (continued to develop his earlier ideas and which) served as Tracy's primary resource for considering theological method as critical, transcendental-phenomenological analysis.

a maximum field of vision from a determinate viewpoint. It possesses both an objective and a subjective pole, each one of which is conditioned by and conditions the other. The subjective pole refers to the intentionality-meaning possibilities of the present stage of development of the subject. The objective pole refers to the worlds of meaning achieved by or open to the subject at his present stage of development.[57]

In its most basic form, horizon *analysis* involved the exploration of the "maximum field of vision" which saturated the cognitive process and which functioned as the immanent cognitional structure that set all rational behavior into motion.[58] It involved "disciplined inquiry upon religious experience and language," upon the "basic presuppositions of religious experience and language," and upon "the basic presuppositions of all inquiry into such phenomena."[59] One could associate it broadly with the discipline of phenomenology[60] and its modern predecessor, transcendental philosophy,[61] each of

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This endeavor would especially occupy him during his teaching career at the University of Chicago: "As a theologian principally involved in the discipline of fundamental theology in a secular university setting, my principal interest and work in relationship to Catholicism has shifted to trying to delineate basic orientations—or, if one prefers, horizons of meaning—which may constitute Catholic Christianity" (Tracy, "Analogical Vision," *Criterion* 15 [1976], 13).

[57] "Horizon Analysis and Eschatology," 172. This definition of "horizon" is quite common in the early Tracy.

[58] In traditional terminology "horizon" could be defined as the space between *docta ignorantia*, or learned ignorance, and *indocta ignorantia*, or unlearned ignorance. "That which lies beyond my present horizon "does not consist simply of unknown answers, but of questions that are meaningless, irrelevant, and insignificant." *Oneness of God*, 143, 169.

[59] "Why Orthodoxy," 85.

[60] *Oneness of God*, 140: especially as phenomenology "reached an ontological stage in Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty." Cf. also "Method as Foundation for Theology," 293: It was "the gains of the phenomenological movement" which made attentiveness to method "the key to all the products of any discipline."

[61] "The phrase 'transcendental method' is employed to indicate that the major philosophical approach of intellectualist interpreters [the "intellectualist hermeneutic" of the transcendental Thomists – where "intellectualist hermeneutic" is used to differentiate them from the "conceptualist" hermeneutic of other interpreters of Thomas – Billot on Thomas's Trinitarian analogy, e.g.] is the explication of the 'conditions of the possibility' of all contents of human knowledge via an explication of the acts of consciousness grounding those contents" ("Why Orthodoxy," 88).

which attempted "to investigate, through some species of a critical philosophical method, the subjectivity-intentionality-meaning-possibilities of man [*sic*] questioning being."[62] If authentic theological inquiry required self-awareness through critique of judgment, horizon analysis could found theology by engaging in the "radicalization of inquiry via ontological reflection upon the basic, essential, and universal presuppositions of such inquiry":[63]

> In horizon analysis one must start with the subject, for it is not the reality of any single object or series of objects (including the subject as object in introspection) which can ground one's horizon or one's critique of horizon. Rather, it is the reality of subject as subject.[64]

Further, if the infinitely complex and virtually unconditioned event of subjective judgment was made cognitively accessible by an explanation of the link between the conditions upon which a judgment was formed and the fulfillment of those conditions (the event of judgment as a "virtually unconditioned"[65]), then theological expression as an infinite navigation of presuppositional conditions on the way to theological conclusions would likewise be made cognitively accessible. Theological expression was made understandable, insofar as the theologian could display a level of continuity

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[62] "Horizon Analysis," 168.

[63] "Why Orthodoxy," 83.

[64] *Oneness of God*, 149-150.

[65] "The grasp of the sufficiency of evidence for a prospective judgment is a grasp of that judgment as a virtually unconditioned" ("Holy Spirit as Philosophical Problem," 206; see also "Why Orthodoxy," 89-91.) As virtually unconditioned, a judgment contained three elements: (1) a conditioned, (2) a link between the conditions and the conditioned, and (3) the fulfillment of the conditions. A prospective judgment becomes virtually unconditioned when (1) it is conditioned, which is proved by the fact that a question for reflection is being meaningfully asked; (2) the conditions are known; and (3) they are fulfilled. Lonergan's description functions as a frank explanation of the "fact" of rationality, provided with an appreciation for rationality's infinite complexity and, thereby, its virtually unconditioned status. Cf. Lonergan, *Insight*, 279-316.

between theology and shared, cognitional processes. Theology's claim to truth could

thus be adequately tested.

Initial Observations

The amalgamation of an emerging historical consciousness and an observably

chaotic situation in post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism motivated the early Tracy to

adopt a more careful construction of the event of theological judgment, or "horizon-

analysis." In order to respond adequately to contemporary demands and to settle down

an uncontrolled use of the theological imagination, it was imperative that the theologian

thematize the cognitive processes at work in the use and formation of Christian

theology's values, beliefs, and faith. So doing would make the potentially arbitrary use

of theological language shareable in a collective context. Failing to do so would enable a

naïve, uncritical assumption of "what is meant by judgment"[66] and a consequently naïve,

uncritical use of the very subjective discipline dependent on judgment, theology.[67] On

the other hand, basing theology on a theory of judgment such as that of Bernard

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[66] "Holy Spirit as Philosophical Problem," 205; cf. also "Lonergan's Foundational Theology," 255, fn. 9

[67] Thus, Tracy disapproved of both the "epistemological ambiguities" in Wolfhart Pannenberg's attempt at universalizing via historical categories and the continued uptake of a Pascal's *esprit de finesse* or Newman's "illative sense." Pannenberg, standing as he does in the tradition of dialectical theology, insists upon the primacy of history as the fundamental category for revelation and christology. Pannenberg believed that God's self-revelation is indirect, as opposed to direct, revealed through the historical events preserved in the Judeo-Christian tradition, but remains an eschatological revelation only fully revealed at history's "conclusion." It is in this way that Pannenberg establishes his own form of publicness: "In distinction from special manifestations of the Deity, the historical revelation is open to anyone who has eyes to see. It has a universal character" (*Revelation as History*, 135. See Tracy's reviews of *Jesus God and Man* and *Revelation as History* by Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 31 (April 1969) 285-288; see also *AI*, 242, FN. 5: "To suggest that the correct theological procedure is to reconstruct historically the humanity of Jesus on historical-critical grounds and then account for the reasonableness (for Pannenberg, through his historical analysis of the resurrection accounts) of the claim for divinity…is not *theologically* correct. …Theologically, the primary relationship is to the event—and that means, as in the case of *any* religious classic so here for the Christian classic of the event of Jesus Christ, to a religious event" (parenthetical and italicized portions are Tracy's).

Lonergan—where there is an assumed isomorphism between "the structure of knowing and structure of the known"[68]—would allow for an observably shared identity and a respectably methodological discipline. In continuity with "the rise of the methodological question" emerging among "theoreticians in other disciplines," the theologian must "attempt to articulate the scientific nature and involved methodology of his discipline in a manner both faithful to the traditional Catholic understanding of theology and to the contemporary problematic."[69] The theological sub-discipline adequate to such a task was "fundamental theology,"[70] for fundamental theology facilitated the mutually critical[71]

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[68] Lonergan, *Insight*, 399.

[69] "Lonergan's Interpretation of St. Thomas Aquinas," 5.

[70] Tracy concluded his critique of Lonergan in "Lonergan's Foundational Theology" by highlighting "certain factors in Lonergan's methodological formulations" that may be reformulated in a more "foundationally integrated" manner. These final observations by Tracy are especially telling in terms of the nascent framework that must have been materializing in Tracy's theological ruminations during the late '60s and early '70s.
　　He began by suggesting that a critical mediation of religious conversion would more fully highlight the analogous relationship between "the finitude of the scientific enquirer who has explicitated self-affirmation and the finitude-historicity (as existential consciousness) of the theological enquirer as human scientist critically investigating the nature of his [*sic*] historicity." A driving theme in *BRO* remains the phenomenological exploration of the religious dimension of common human experience—particularly a labeling of the fundamental horizon of trust as the condition of possibility of all enquiry as a "religious dimension." Whereas in Tracy's critique of Lonergan the theologian-scientist analogy is developed in terms of an awareness of historical finitude, in *BRO* the theologian-scientist analogy is developed in terms of mutual trust in a whole in spite of contingency.
　　A second foreshadowing of *BRO* can be seen in Tracy's initial use of phenomenological hermeneutics as a means of mediating the "relationship between the 'life-world' and the 'scientific world.'" Such an "explicitation" would necessarily involve a further "explicitation of (a) the critical relationship of the 'feelings' in the 'experience' of the 'critical' enquirer" and "(b) the relationship of his theory of meaning to language, or if he prefers, the critical relationship of Lonergan's transcendental turn to the linguistic turn" ("Lonergan's Foundational Theology," 220-221). Note also Tracy's interest in Küng's use of "linguistic philosophy" as a means of offering a "philosophical critique" of the infallibility doctrine. Tracy refers to "the fertile if sometimes puzzling realm of German philosophy of historicity and linguistics" as a means by which the theologian can widen the discussion "to include more fundamental theological questions." David Tracy, "Hans Küng: Loving Critic of His Church," *Christian Century*, 88.20 (May 19, 1971): 633 (631-633, inclusive). Of course, given our previous survey of Tracy's (Lonerganian) notion of fundamental theology, we can see the beginnings of Tracy's appreciation for linguistic philosophy as an alternative means of nuancing properly transcendental philosophy. In his review of *A New Catechism* (op. cit., fn. 279), Tracy seems encouraged by the book's use of "continental personalism" and "phenomenological existentialism" which represent "the best contribution of the Dutch Catholic theological world" (402). Yet note: "Is not the hermeneutic problem of greater depth and complexity than the Dutch

correlation between uniquely theological and shared modes of expression. Given the

early Tracy's obvious concern with founding the potentially chaotic discipline of

theology, it is no wonder that his first major work, *Blessed Rage for Order*, was dedicated

to this task.[72] We turn to this work now.

<div align="center">

Metaphysics and Method in *Blessed Rage for Order*

"Internal" and "External" Crises

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Analogous to Tracy's earliest writings, the primary impetus for *Blessed Rage for*

Order was the observation of two crises that may be considered "internal" and "external"

to the theological discipline *per se*.[73] First was the crisis of "traditional Christianity" in

the modern, "post-Christian' period." Tracy called this crisis the "disenchantment with

mystifications."[74] Second was the crisis of "traditional modernity in the contemporary

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phenomenologists and personalists represented in this work have to date realized?" (403)

[71] Although the idea of a "*mutually* critical correlation" is more explicit in *AI* than *BRO*, it is present in *BRO*; cf. *BRO*, 32, where Tracy says, "The central task of contemporary Christian theology [is] the dramatic confrontation, the *mutual* illuminations and corrections," even "the possible basic reconciliation" between postmodern consciousness and a reinterpreted Christianity (italics mine); cf. *BRO*, 101 for a mutually critical correlation between science and theology. For mutually critical correlation in *AI*, cf. 64, where Tracy says public thought includes the investigation, "through mutually critical correlations," of "questions and responses in both situation and truth."

[72] "'Fundamental theology' may be defined as that discipline which investigates basic meanings present in the Christian fact and in common human experience" ("Theological Table-Talk," 387; cf. *BRO*, 34).

[73] To be exact, these crises encompassed "cognitive," "ethical," and "existential" dimensions of existence (Cf. *BRO*, 5), which Tracy divides into crises of traditional Christianity and Enlightenment rationality.

[74] *BRO*, 4-5. A precursor for this notion may be found in "The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the 'disenchantment of the world'" Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. and ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 155.

'post-modern' world."[75] Tracy called this crisis the disenchantment with Enlightenment

demystification. In the wake of oppressive institutionalization in Western society, not the

least of which was Christian theology itself, Christian theologians demanded the

"wholesale demystification of the Christian religion"[76] and the Enlightenment rationality

on which this demystification was initially founded.

Ultimately, this dual crisis resulted in a problem of identity for the modern

Christian theologian. On the one hand, she thoroughly embraced secularity's turn away

from traditionalism and its turn toward autonomous, critical reflection and authentic

liberation. Yet, on the other hand, she saw that without some form of ultimacy—some

shareable mode of meaning—secularity itself would be confronted with a crisis.[77]

Without constructing some "reflective account of our common human experience," the

secularist was unable to affirm "the final worthwhileness of existence"[78] and the critical

project would be left insufficient to the task of orienting collective direction through

positive ideology. Thus, in contrast to so many "conservative intellectual failures of

nerve," the self-critical theologian did not desire to "negate the critical forces set in

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[75] *BRO*, 4. We will see momentarily how labeling such crises assists in pinpointing the way that truth and self-critique correlate in Tracy's fundamental, public theology.

[76] *BRO*, 5.

[77] The purist uptake of secularity—with its "negation of any real ground of meaning outside ourselves" (*BRO*, 9-10)—was not adequate to its own goal of authentic liberation. This observation is not unlike my observation of "privateness" informing some forms of liberationist public theology. In his problematization of secularity's assumed lack of "fundamental faith," Tracy drew from both theological and non-theological thinkers. Examples of theologians include Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (New York: Macmillan, 1965) and Paul van Buren, *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel* (New York: Macmillan, 1963); cf. *BRO*, 20, fn. 50. Non-theological examples include B.F. Skinner, *Walden Two* (New York: Macmillan, 1948) and *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (New York: Vintage, 1971); cf. *BRO*, 20, fn. 49.

[78] *BRO*, 10.

motion by the Enlightenment."[79] On the contrary, the "post-modern intellectual" carried

out her project "in fundamental fidelity to the critical exigencies of the liberal period,"

indeed believing that a robust "application of this critique to the liberal self-image itself

was the finest expression of her commitment to the deepest demands of the liberal

spirit."[80] In rather significant contrast to the postsecular public theologies we surveyed in

chapter one, however, Tracy's hermeneutic of retrieval[81] was instantiated as a

hermeneutic of suspicion. Tradition was "never simply eliminated,"[82] but it was only

appropriated on the other side of a radical critique of traditionalism's tendency toward

reification.[83]

<center>Foundational Theology in *Blessed Rage for Order*</center>

In continuity with the transcendental concerns represented by Tracy in his earliest

writings, the aim of "fundamental" or "foundational" theology in *Blessed Rage for Order*

was the "explication of the ground, the basis, the fundament" of the phenomena

appearing to the theological consciousness.[84] In order to engage in such explication, the

theologian must locate "criteria of relative adequacy" or "criteria of experiential or

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[79] *BRO*, 12.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Tracy references Rudolf Bultmann and Karl Rahner's attention to the Heideggerian notion of pre-understanding operative in a retrieval of history; cf. *BRO*, 21, fn. 61; cf. 251, fn. 7.

[82] *BRO*, 12.

[83] There are parallels between the situation Tracy lays out in *BRO*, chapter one and the "liberal" model he summarizes in *BRO*, chapter two, specifically pp. 25-27. Primary among these loci of overlap is the dual commitment (1) to "the distinctly modern commitment to the values of free and open inquiry, autonomous judgment, and critical investigation" of all claims to truth and (2) to "the cognitive claims and fundamental values of the Christian vision" (*BRO*, 25-26).

[84] *BRO*, 67. Note the change from the cumbersome "explicitation" to "explication." Cf. fn. 279 above.

existential meaningfulness." Once located, such criteria functioned as plausibility

arguments enabling the theologian to mediate the basic meanings present in the Christian

fact[85] and to correlate those meanings with the basic meanings present in common human

experience. Attention to such "basic" concerns enabled the theologian to evaluate the

truth-status of the claims respective to both semantic domains.[86]

In contrast to theologians who responded to the post-Englightenment crises by

returning to traditional theological categories or by lobbying for an uncritical uptake of

modernity, Tracy suggested that theologians should abandon neither their "faith in the

modern experiment nor their faith in the God of Jesus Christ."[87] This "postliberal"[88]

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[85] Tracy used the notion of the "Christian fact" to reference "the meanings involved either explicitly or implicitly in the significant texts, actions, gestures, and symbols of the entire Christian tradition" (*BRO*, 72). However, the "Christian fact" is primarily interpreted according to historical expressions of Christianity, which Tracy calls, variously, "the texts of the Christian tradition" (cf. 43, 34, 49, 56, fn. 2; 57, fn. 3; 72-79, 119-145). Tracy's self-limitation to texts, "not events," does not connote a limitation of the category "the Christian fact" to texts only. Indeed, "'the Christian fact'…is clearly meant to include not merely texts but also symbols, rituals, events, witnesses" (*BRO*, 15, fn. 5). He considers the limitation to texts nonetheless appropriate, "insofar as Christianity as a religion of the word clearly involves written texts (the scriptures) as at least its charter document" (ibid). "Clearly," Tracy admits, an investation of the meanings present in the witnesses, events, and the like is needed to develop a fuller investigation of meaning as the Catholic notion of "tradition" (especially as *traditio* and not mere *tradita*) attests. Nonetheless, as theses one and four of the revisionist method especially attest, *BRO*'s exploration of the meanings present in Christian expression is directed primarily to textual expressions. Interestingly, Tracy does not give a robust defense of this limitation to texts or to "the tradition" (as texts) in *BRO*. He says, for example, "the recognition of the need for the Christian theologian to show just how and why he his conclusions are appropriate to the Christian traditions remains…obvious in its demand" and is "the least problematic" of the five revisionist theses (*BRO*, 44). The word "tradition" covered "the same ground as the expression 'the Christian fact,'" insofar as "tradition" is understood "in the sense of *traditio*, not *tradita*" (*BRO*, 42, fn. 74). For a resource on the distinction Tracy observes between *traditio* and *tradita*, cf. James Mackey, *Modern Theology of Tradition* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1962); noted by Tracy in *BRO*, 15, fn. 5.

[86] Such criteria were considered relatively adequate to the task of systematic theology, in which the theologian would explore the concrete symbols of the Christian tradition. As an instantiation of the type of thinking disclosed in foundational theology, the systematic theologian collects the symbols of the Christian tradition around an "ordering principle," in order to "refine, develop, and perhaps transform the criteria and arguments for the relative adequacy of one's own confessional position" ("Theological Table-Talk," 388). In complementarity to fundamental and systematic theologies, practical theology reflected on "the good" by proposing "a future ideal situation articulated in ethical-political-theological ways" (*AI*, 97, fn. 114).

[87] *BRO*, 4.

response allowed a mutually critical correlation of (what remained of) both modernity

and traditional Christianity. In this method the theologian[89] could attempt "a basic

revision of traditional Christianity and traditional modernity alike,"[90] both of which

should be challenged "in accordance with publicly available criteria for meaning,

meaningfulness, and truth."[91] Fundamental theology was thus refigured as

"philosophical reflection upon the meanings present in common human experience and

the Christian tradition,"[92] and the Christian theological enterprise was refigured as

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[88] It is striking that Tracy calls the "revisionist" theologian a "post-liberal theologian" (*BRO*, 33). Our turn to George Lindbeck, of course, will survey a significantly different "post-liberal" alternative. (Tracy used the hyphenated form, "post-liberal," reflecting the fact that "postliberal" theology had not yet emerged as a nameable phenomenon.)

[89] Using Lonergan's notion of a "model," Tracy referred to the theologian and the theologian's goal as the "subject-referent" and "object-referent" of his revisionist alternative. Cf. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 1-22. More specifically, and in continuity with our analysis of Tracy's turn to "horizon-analysis," Tracy united the notion of "model" with its "allied notion" of "horizon-analysis" or "intentionality-analysis." "Model" developed the notions of subject- and object-poles within a given theological horizon. (cf. also *BRO*, 34, fn. 1 and 35, fn. 5). In this framework, the "object-reference" is "that way of perceiving reality, that mode of being-in-the-world which the text opens up for the intelligent reader" (*BRO*, 78; note that this is the same definition of "referent" given by Tracy on *BRO*, 51, which Tracy attributed to Ricoeur, "Interpretation Theory" [before it was published], pp. 6-8, 18-19, 22-23). The "self-" or "subject-referent" is "the personal vision of the author implied by the text" (*BRO*, 78). The contemporary theological models Tracy surveyed included "orthodox," "liberal," "neo-orthodox," and "radical" (*BRO*, 22-32). Tracy continued to use the terminology of "model" in *AI* (cf. 62-63), but instead of suggesting an "alternative" model, as he did in *BRO*, he offered a methodological/hermeneutical analysis that would facilitate conversation within the plurality of models making up theological discourse. He referred to different models for adjudicating "implicit or explicit criteria for the truth of theological claims" (*AI*, 62). These included correspondence, coherence, experiential, disclosure, praxis/transformative, and consensus models.

[90] *BRO*, 4.

[91] *BRO*, 34.

[92] *BRO*, 34. This definition is given variously for "fundamental theology" and Tracy's "revisionist model" (cf. *BRO*, ix and 43, where Tracy says, "In its briefest expression, the revisionist model holds that a contemporary fundamental Christian theology can best be described as philosophical reflection upon the meanings present in common human experience and language, and upon the meanings present in the Christian fact" [43].)

revisionist theology.[93] Tracy clarified the "principal meanings involved" in the

revisionist model by offering the following five theses:

> (1) "The two principal sources for theology are Christian texts and common human experience."[94] (2) "The theological task will involve a critical correlation of the results of the investigations of the two sources of theology."[95] (3) "The principal method of investigation of the source 'common human experience and language' can be described as a phenomenology of the 'religious dimension' present in everyday and scientific experience and language."[96] (4) "The principal method of investigation of the source 'the Christian tradition' can be described as an historical and hermeneutical investigation of classic Christian texts."[97] (5) "To determine the truth-status of the results of one's investigations into the meaning of both common human experience and Christian texts, the theologian should employ an explicitly transcendental or metaphysical mode of reflection."[98]

The Space of Mutual Correlation

In order to enable a truly mutual correlation between common human experience

and the Christian fact,[99] it was imperative that the theologian locate a theoretical space

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[93] I purposefully state the relationship in this order ("revisionist theology AS fundamental theology") to stress the logical primacy Tracy gives to fundamental theology as a guiding rubric for all three of the theological sub-disciplines (the latter two of which are "systematic theology" and "practical theology"). The notion of "fundamental theology as revisionist theology" will become important in subsequent chapters of this dissertation, where I posit "public theology as critical theology." For an example of the primacy Tracy gives to fundamental theology, cf. *BRO*, 80: "Once fundamental theology takes…a 'historical' turn, then fundamental theological reflection begins to approach the task of a properly Christian dogmatics. Yet a factor of no little importance still remains: the basic criteria and the basic modes of argumentation for dogmatics itself will remain those developed in fundamental theology."

[94] *BRO*, 43-45.

[95] *BRO*, 45-46.

[96] *BRO*, 47-48.

[97] *BRO*, 49-52.

[98] *BRO*, 52-56. The five theses laid out in *BRO*, chapter three are also found in David Tracy, "The Task of Fundamental Theology," *Journal of Religion* 54.1 (Jan 1974): 13-34.

[99] Tracy references his colleage Schubert M. Ogden, "What is Theology?," *Journal of Religion* 52 (1974): 22-40 Cf. *BRO*, 57, fn. 4, 7. Chapter four of *BRO* is dedicated to a search for criteria adequate to

where such correlation could occur. Historically, theologians had proposed

understanding common experience in theistic and religious terms—as, say, a

"fundamental confidence or trust in existence,"[100] "an ultimate concern,"[101] or a

"formally unconditioned" factor enabling scientific and moral inquiry.[102] For the Tracy

of *Blessed Rage for Order*, that dimension was located by way of disciplines that

disclosed "religious existential meanings" expressed in both domains.[103]

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the task of contemporary philosophical expression. The explorations exemplified there are exemplary of Tracy's concerns in the second half of the book as a whole (*BRO*, 81, fn. 1).

[100] Tracy references Schubert M. Ogden, *The Reality of God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 21-43; cf. *BRO*, 62, fn. 53.

[101] Tracy references "inter alia," Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, I:11-15, "for perhaps the clearest formal exposition of this famous Tillichian motif" (*BRO*, 62, fn. 54).

[102] This reference is to Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*, 634-687 (for the former notion) and *Method in Theology*, 101-125 (for the latter).

[103] We should note that Tracy believed historical consciousness stood as the primary motivating factor in the "psychological direction" of hermeneutics in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Bultmann, Ebeling, Fuchs, et al. According to their "Romantic" framework, interpretation was "the effort of one subjective consciousness (the interpreter) understanding another consciousness (the author). This understanding of the hermeneutic task is not merely informed by historical consciousness. In fact it is fully determined by the psychologizing tendencies of that consciousness" (*BRO*, 74). In such an uptake of the "psychologizing tendencies" of historical consciousness—over against, say, the eventual development of an immanent interpretation in structuralism—the interpreter attempted to determine the author's "original intention," the "original discourse" of a situation, or the "historical addressee" of a text. C. H. Dodd and Joachim Jeremias's corrective to Adolf Jülicher represents a further example. In contrast to Jülicher's interpretation that parables mediate some moral by recounting a story of ordinary life (*BRO*, 127), Dodd and Jeremias exposed "the meaning of each parable by determining through exegesis and historical criticism the life-situation of either Jesus or the community to which or from which the parable spoke" (*BRO*, 77). Sophisticated historical linguistic analysis was used to determine the *Sitz im Leben* captured by the parable, making the interpreter uniquely able "to achieve a historical reconstruction of the parables *as* the parables of Jesus" (*BRO*, 127). Historical consciousness applauded "all these enterprises as legitimate and fruitful ones," even if it also had eventuated in the reluctance to "state that any one of these historical analyses—or even the sum total of all of them—would actually give the theological meaning of the text" (*BRO*, 74). Tracy's understanding of Jülicher comes from Adolf Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963); Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (New York: Scribner, 1962), 16-20; and Werner George Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems* (Nashville: Abindgon, 1972), 186-188.

Specifically, Tracy turned to a variety of philosophical studies that expressed religious experience in terms of "limit."[104] "Limit" served as a "key (but not exhaustive) category for describing certain signal characteristics peculiar to any language or experience with a properly religious dimension."[105] The type of expression common to both shared experience and the Christian fact was thus religious-as-limit-language reflecting a shared experience of limit articulated explicitly by religious expression.[106] Limit-language, limit-experience, limit-situation, limit-character, and limit-dimension functioned as ideas that could capture both implicit (i.e., that shared but not named religious dimension of experience) and explicit ("religion" as a social phenomenon) expressions of religious language and experience and could function as a point of entry into the dimension common to human experience and representative of Christian expression. Commonality was thus located insofar as the various disciplinary approaches used to analyze the Christian tradition pointed to and further defined the manner in which explicitly Christian language could be characterized as a limit-language re-presenting the

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[104] Limit is not the "definition" of religion but a "defining characteristic of religion" (*BRO*, 136, fn. 1). Tracy notes his dependence more on the Kantian expression of religion's limit-character than on the "Hegelian-dialectical analysis emphasized by such thinkers as Dupré and Altizer." "The major but not sole influences upon my own interpretation of the limit-character of religious language is Ian Ramsey and Paul Ricoeur (yet without the latter's emphasis on a return to Kant through Hegel)" (*BRO*, 111). For Ricoeur's admission of "leading in the direction…of a post-Hegelian return to Kant," see "The Specificity of Religious Language" (unpublished lecture delivered at University of Chicago Divinity School, Spring, 1974), p. 30. Tracy turned to existentialist philosophy—e.g., of Karl Jaspers—to explain the limit-situations of everyday existence as the final point of entry to considering a "religious dimension" which may serve as a space for comparison between common human experience and the Christian fact. Suggested by the event of "falling in love," we "experience a reality simply given, gifted, happened" (*BRO*, 106).

[105] *BRO*, 93. Unlike the revisionist model, religious language and experience included "as its self-referent a final dimension or horizon to all the experience of the self (religion) and as its objective referent in reality an experienced necessary existent (God)" (*BRO*, 71).

[106] *BRO*, 79; cf. 92-94

fundamental trust in existence (or, "religious dimension" of existence) shared by all reasonable, intelligent, attentive humans.

Having disclosed a kind of overlap in both sources, Tracy set the stage for a critical correlation. This correlation was best carried out as a determination of "truth."[107] To locate the "truth-status" of the religious meanings disclosed in each source, the theologian must turn to a reflective discipline that could "account not merely for some particular dimension of experience but for *all experiences* as such."[108] For Tracy, the reflective disciplines of metaphysics and transcendental philosophy were reflective disciplines adequate to such a task. However, given Tray's confession of "historical consciousness" and his sympathy with so many post-Enlightenment critics, metaphysics and transcendental philosophy were constructed "from the bottom up," as it were. Metaphysics was defined as "an investigation of cognitive claims,"[109] and transcendental philosophy was defined as an explication of "criteria for the 'condition of the possibility' of all experience."[110]

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[107] More specifically, of the "truth-status of the results" of the double investigation (*BRO*, 52), or, "to determine their significant similarities and differences and their truth-value (*BRO*, 53).

[108] *BRO*, 55.

[109] *BRO*, 63.

[110] *BRO*, 55. Transcendental reflection attempted "the explicit mediation of the basic presuppositions (or 'beliefs') that are the conditions of the possibility of our existing or understanding at all." Metaphysical reflection is based on such transcendental analyses and functioned as "the philosophical validation of the concepts 'religion' and 'God' as necessarily affirmed or necessarily denied by all our basic beliefs and understanding." Tracy continued here, "We seem to be unavoidably led to the conclusion that the task of fundamental theology can only be successfully resolved when the theologian fully and frankly develops an explicitly metaphysical study of the cognitive claims of religion and theism as an integral moment in his larger task" (*BRO*, 55-56). "Philosophy must investigate every subject, every discipline, every method, every phenomenon—every 'being,' if one wills—with a view towards the basic and fundamental presuppositions of that and every phenomenon. In that sense, philosophy [and phenomenology as a sub-discipline of philosophy] has always been transcendental in its self-understanding, precisely as a rising-above (to use one metaphor) or a going-beneath (to use another) any phenomenon to

The Pursuit of a Critical, Revisionist Theology

After locating an adequately shared space for correlation, Tracy considered

theology proper[111] according to the criteria made accessible through his phenomenology

of religion.[112] Consistent with the five theses of the revisionist model, Tracy moved from

a phenomenological disclosure of "limit" as the category that could most adequately

capture the religious mode of being "common" to "human experience and language"[113] to

an explicitly hermeneutical[114] disclosure of this same mode of being reflected in

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discover the most basic presuppositions or (more critically formulated) 'conditions of possibility' of that phenomenon" (*BRO*, 65).

[111] The book as a whole moved in a "logical order…from religion to theism, and not vice versa" (*BRO*, 83, fn. 27; cf. 71). *BRO*, 146-203. Cf. also the experience-theism-christology movement in the following quote: "How and in what senses is the religious interpretation of our common human experience and language meaningful and true? How and in what senses is the theistic interpretation of religion meaningful and true? How and in what senses is the Christological interpretation of theistic religion meaningful and true? (*BRO*, 91).

[112] The movement from phenomenology to transcendental philosophy represents Tracy's desire to move from "meaningfulness" (accessed by way of phenomenology) to "truth" (accessed by way of transcendental philosophy).

[113] *BRO*, 91-119.

[114] Hermeneutics functioned as the discipline capable of explicating the referent—"As distinct from either the sense of the text or the historical reconstruction of the text" (*BRO*, 52)—of the second source of theology, Christian texts. By taking up hermeneutics, the theologian engaged in theological anthropology, "the understanding of humanity as existing in the presence of gracious God" (*BRO*, 52). So doing enabled the theologian not merely to determine "exactly what facts"—historical and textual—could be "affirmed as probable" but also to disclose "the primary existential meanings" present in those texts (*BRO*, 49). Because "much of the language of the New Testament texts was metaphorical, symbolic and parabolic, as distinct from conceptual," the historian further understood this existential meaning as a "religious way of being-in-the-world" (*BRO*, 50).

Tracy pointed to two "contemporary refinements of the hermeneutic tradition" which were especially applicable to the exploration of Christian texts: the notion of "distanciation"—the hermeneutical observation that a "written text, precisely as written, is distanced both from the original intention of the author and from its original reception by its addressees" (*BRO*, 50)—and the differentiation between the "sense" and the "referent" of a text. This dual appropriation of hermeneutics shifts the interpreter's concern from an attempt to grasp the subjectivity expressed in the text, a divination of the author's intention, to an attempt to grasp the meanings "in front of the text"—that "mode of being-in-the-world which the text opens up for the intelligent reader" (*BRO*, 51).

Christian texts.[115] Consistent with the manner in which Tracy took up "reflexive"

alternatives to historical, "extrinsicist" versions of metaphysics in his earliest writings, in

Blessed Rage for Order he posited that a phenomenological-hermeneutical appropriation

of metaphysics[116] would allow for an analysis of the meaning, meaningfulness, and truth

of theistic alternatives. In response to such analyses, Tracy offered an "inclusivist"

christology that could enable a robustly revisionist and pluralistic foundational

theology.[117] Christological language functioned as the "appropriate summary," the

"adequate re-presentation," of "the revisionist model for contemporary reflection."[118]

This revisionary, inclusivist christology was faithful "to both the central meanings of our

common human experience and the central meanings of the New Testament texts."[119]

The Jesus of this christology was the one who lived radically according to the

fundamental trust in existence shared by all people, re-presented as trust in the God of

agapic love:

> The principal referent disclosed by this limit-language [of the New
> Testament texts] is the disclosure of a certain limit-mode-of-being-in-the-

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[115] *BRO*, 120-145.

[116] "Metaphysical truth" was determined according to the degree to which a claim was "consonant with our actual situation" (*BRO*, 204).

[117] BRO, 204-236. Given the claims made during Tracy's revisionist analyses of common human experience and the Christian fact, this christology claims that the "disclosure manifested by the Christian proclamation of Jesus Christ is genuinely disclosive of all reality, is meaningful for our common existence, is central for a human understanding of the limit-possibilities of human existence. What that special occasion ("special" or "categorical" revelation) manifests is the disclosure that the only God present in all humanity at every time and place ("original" or "transcendental" revelation) is present explicitly, actually, decisively, as my God in my response to this Jesus as the Christ (*BRO*, 206-207). Note here a similarity between Tracy and Lindbeck (whose approach to religious meaning we will explore in the next chapter) in reference to the differentiation between special/categorical revelation and original/transcendental revelation.

[118] *BRO*, 237.

[119] *BRO*, 207.

world; the disclosure of a new, an agapic, a self-sacrificing righteousness willing to risk living at that limit where one seems in the presence of the righteous, loving, gracious God re-presented in Jesus the Christ.[120]

Informed by this christology, Tracy turned, finally, to a consideration of various "political theologies of *praxis*—of hope, of liberation, even of revolution—which so strongly inform[ed] the present theological moment"[121] and which could, in turn, complement optimistically pluralistic christologies[122] by enabling substantial self-critique. A "critical social theory"[123] thus "supplemented" and "completed" the revisionist model, insofar as critical theory allowed not only a critique of society from a Christian-theological perspective but a critique of the critique itself—a critique of the symbols, categories, truths, and language of the theological point of view from which the societal critique emerged.

> A revisionist theology of *praxis* would need at least one further mode of theoretical analysis to supplement and complete the earlier modes of analysis proper to constructive theology. That other necessary mode of analysis can perhaps be best described as a critical social theory.[124]

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[120] *BRO*, 221. Coincidentally, it

[121] *BRO*, 240.

[122] "The present work [*BRO*] is principally concerned to outline a new model and method for fundamental theology—a model which can be faithful to some of the more important pluralist possibilities of the present day" (*BRO*, 91).

[123] "One cannot but ask with Marxist critics how a Christian commitment to a corporate *praxis* is finally intelligible if, even after demythologizing the 'super-natural' world as not some world other than the world we actually live in, Christians continue to believe in the omnipotent, all-knowing, and unrelated God of classical theism and, at the same time, in an exclusivist understanding of revelation and christology which threatens the ultimate value and meaning of that basic secular faith shared by all those committed to the contemporary struggle for liberation" (*BRO*, 245).

[124] *BRO*, 246. Note the turn to "praxis" in this quote. The reader will recall that Tracy anticipated *Blessed Rage* functioning as the first of a three-part series covering fundamental, systematic, and practical theologies. Cf. fn. 259 above.

The "critical social theory of the Frankfurt school" had likewise disclosed modernity

itself as "in fact responsible for some of the oppressive horrors of the twentieth

century."[125] As exemplified by an inability to attend to "the power of negation," the

optimism of "calculatory, instrumental, formal rationality" was merely a tool for the

perpetuation of power by society's dominant cultures:

> In place of liberating symbols which can include the protest of the
> oppressed, the memory of their suffering, the demand for the negation of
> their oppression, and the radical affirmation of the possibilities of personal
> and societal liberation, one finds instead demystified, reified,
> impoverished symbols of a conformist development which effectively
> insure—as they are articulated at the level of mass-culture—the continued
> domination of the developed powers in modern technological society. In
> place of such a 'one-dimensional' view of human possibilities, we need
> both the analytical tool of 'negative dialectics' and the hermeneutical tool
> of *mimesis* for a retrieval of the symbolic and conceptual powers which
> can allow for the negation of present intellectual, linguistic, and societal
> oppression.[126]

Returning to both the tradition and modern self-consciousness after such self-critical

analyses, especially when this critique was informed by truths located in common

humanity, enabled a more robust trajectory toward common freedom:

> a critical reappropriation of the symbols of Christian eschatological
> liberation, once united to a critical reformulation of the symbols God,
> Christ, and revelation, might free the imagination of the politically
> committed Christian and non-Christian alike to find symbols
> representative of their struggle for full-scale liberation.[127]

The revisionist theologian, in short, was "committed to continuing the critical task of the

classic liberals and modernists in a genuinely post-liberal situation."[128] Motivated by this

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[125] *BRO*, 13; cf. 240-250.

[126] *BRO*, 13.

[127] *BRO*, 247.

[128] *BRO*, 32.

commitment, the revisionist theologian aimed to expand previous theological limitations in response to new resources in social, philosophical, historical, and scientific disciplines.[129]

Initial Conclusions:

Truth and Self-Critique in Fundamental Public Theology

In response to our summary of the early Tracy, we can offer a few points of analysis that suggest two of the more important criteria of evaluation in the fundamental stream of public theology represented by David Tracy. The connotations typically associated with these two criteria suggest opposing modes of thought; yet, when they are placed together according to phenomenological-transcendental metaphysics and the critical-philosophical genealogy appropriated by Tracy in *Blessed Rage for Order*, their juxtaposition is not unwarranted. The two criteria are (1) a commitment to an intrepid evaluation of the "truth" of theological claims and (2) a commitment to keeping self-critique at the center of theological method.

Truth in Fundamental Theology

First, it should be noted that Tracy saw a trajectory toward "truth"[130] in the Christian self-understanding *per se*.[131] It was the theologian's "responsibility to the

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[129] Alongside her "secular colleagues," the revisionist theologian refused "to allow the fact of her own existential disenchantment with the reifying and oppressive results of Enlightenment disenchantment to become the occasion of a return to mystification, Christian or otherwise (*BRO*, 33). Her genealogy was rooted both in the liberal theology of the nineteenth century, the "clearest example" of which remains Friedrich Schleiermacher (*BRO*, 26-27), and what Tracy called the "post-liberal" situation that "recognizes and attempts to articulate not a new ideal for the theological task but new methodological and substantive resources for fulfilling that ideal" (*BRO*, 33).

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[131] For example, "the doctrine of creation seems especially influential in fostering science in the West" (*BRO*, 17, fn. 21). Tracy calls Ian Barbour, *Issues in Science and Religion* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1966) and Ian Barbour (ed.), *Science and Religion* (New York: Harper and Row,

tradition" that motivated her "to show the adequacy of the major Christian theological

categories for all human experience."[132] Not to attempt this proof was to diverge from

"the very logic" of Christianity, for Christianity claimed "to provide the authentic way to

understand our common human existence."[133] The Christian theologian could do no less,

therefore, than express this claim in ways that were recognizable by those outside of the

Christian community. Forcing a strictly inner-theological defense of tradition was

theologically disallowed. The theologian could not merely correlate the situation and the

message.[134] Correlation must be a step toward a mutually critical analysis.

However, Tracy's notion of metaphysical truth was not dependent on

"empiricist"[135] modes of analysis. The metaphysician qua phenomenologist of religion

turned to disciplines that enabled access to the "experience of the self as a self," the "non-

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1968) "a good survey of the state of the question." Rational analysis itself was "initially fostered by the basic Christian vision of the world" (*BRO*, 5).

[132] *BRO*, 44. We will see this observation continued in *AI*.

[133] *BRO*, 44. It should also be noted that Tracy did not see fundamental theology as a task limited to Christian believers. Tracy purposefully chooses the notion of "the Christian fact" to imply "that the fundamental theologian need not be a believing member of the Christian community" (*BRO*, 57, fn. 3). Of course, fundamental theology as available to non-believers should be clearly differentiated from systematic and practical theologies, which were dependent on an authentic participation in the religious tradition informing the theology. This authentic participation would entail belief in the truth-claims of that tradition. This position continued in *AI*: "Beliefs may not serve as either warrants or backings in arguments in fundamental theologies. They ordinarily do serve as eliciting or empowering agents for the expressions of systematic theologies and practical theologies" (*AI*, 86, fn. 33; cf. 57). Also, "in all arguments in fundamental theology…personal faith or beliefs may not serve as warrants or backings for public defended truth claims" (*AI*, 64).

[134] As we have already observed, Tracy clarifies his own understanding of "correlation" by differentiating it from Paul Tillich's correlation of the shared "situation" with Christianity's "message." Whereas, for Tillich, Christianity provided the "answers" to the questions asked in the situation, for Tracy no such unidirectional interrelationship could be allowed. Tillich's correlation, Tracy would argue, is not sufficiently robust in its appreciation of Christianity's universality or of the situation's uniqueness. "If the 'situation' is to be taken with full seriousness, then its answers to its own questions must also be investigated critically" (*BRO*, 46). Tracy primarily references Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, I:3-11, 18-28, 40-47; II:5-10, 27.

[135] That is, based merely on appeals "to what I can see, taste, touch, smell, or hear" (*BRO*, 65).

sensuous," or "supra-sensuous" experience of the self, which phenomenologists called

"lived experience."[136]

> We seek aid for understanding, for raising to explicit consciousness—in a
> word, for mediating—the immediacy of that experience by our own
> powers of intelligent and critical introspection.[137]

This more elusive, indeed "primordial," sense of self was expressed in mood, feeling,

tone, and bodily awareness. The "meaningfulness" of the meanings disclosed in the

metaphysical correlation of both sources of theology was thus located as an experience of

"resonance" with the immediate experience of self disclosed by phenomenology.

Phenomenology mediated "the meaning of my experience as a self-in-a-world."[138] When

the primary "beings" being considered were "human," and the primary human experience

being considered was "religious," the philosopher's task was the disclosure of the "basic

and fundamental presuppositions" which made religious experience and shared meaning

possible, which, in other words, were "the basic *a priori* condition of all human living

and thinking."[139]

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[136] *BRO*, 66.

[137] Ibid.; cf. 67-68: An evaluation of the "truth-status" of the meanings disclosed in correlation was dependent on the theologian's ability to continue "classical phenomenology's task and aim," namely "the explication of the ground, the basis, the fundament of every phenomenon which appears to human consciousness."

[138] *BRO*, 66; cf. 68, 82, fn. 10. Tracy notes the broadness of this definition of "phenomenology." He notes Langdon Gilkey, *Naming the Whirlwind* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), 266-276, as a "major example" of such a use. Other authors that are important for Tracy's understanding of the "experience of a self as a self" include, of course, Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 3-27, 30-41; and Emerich Coreth, *Metaphysics* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 17-45. Along with Karl Rahner, Lonergan and Coreth are regularly invoked by the early Tracy, especially in establishing Tracy's connection between metaphysics and transcendental phenomenology.

[139] *BRO*, 68. Tracy is able to combine "phenomenological" and "transcendental" modes of analysis because he sees the phenomenological movement having reached a kind of full circle, as expressed in its retrieval "of the transcendental question itself" (*BRO*, 68). Tracy says further, "Although it may be technically inappropriate to describe Heidegger's ontology (or even his 'retrieval' of Kant) as 'transcendental,' the clearly ontological (and not existentialist) character of Heidegger's thought seems to

Critique in Fundamental Theology

Second, Tracy believed that the best examples of religious experience were the typically marginalized, "intense"[140] or "logically odd"[141] expressions of religion. By centralizing intense expressions in his religious theory, the theologian was less likely to reduce "our" experience to "my" experience and, consequently, to protect the *sui generis* quality of religious experience itself.[142] The "first key" of this experience was…

> its reality as limit-to our other everyday, moral, scientific, cultural, and political activities: a dimension which, in my own brief and hazy glimpses, discloses a reality, however named and in whatever manner experienced, which functions as a final, now gracious, now frightening, now trustworthy, now absurd, always uncontrollable limit-of the very meaning of existence itself.[143]

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allow for this interpretation" (*BRO*, 83, fn. 19). Both theology and philosophy, "in their contemporary self-understanding," have emerged as disciplines confronted with an experiential-metaphysical necessity. Both must incorporate a "phenomenological moment in order to disclose the meaning and meaningfulness of that experience and a transcendental moment to disclose the true condition of the possibility of that experience" (*BRO*, 69).

[140] William James is in the background for Tracy here. See especially William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: a study in human nature: being the Gifford lectures on natural religion delivered at Edinburgh in 1901-1902* (New York: Modern Library, 1902); among the many later editions of this classic, see William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985).

[141] Tracy depends primarily on Ian Ramsey, *Religious Language: An Empirical Placing of Philosophical Phrases* (New York: Macmillan, 1963) for his linguistic analysis of religious language, although he ends up using Ferré's "more revisionist" approach as a "worthwhile check upon Ramsey's more traditional theological stance" (*BRO*, 123). Cf. Frederick Ferré, "Metaphors, Models, and Religion," *Soundings*, LI (1963): 327-345; *Language, Logic, and God* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961) and *Basic Modern Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Scribner's, 1967). Ferré serves especially as a corrective to the internal coherence of religious language, especially religious language claiming both God's impassibility and God's relationship to history. Tracy returns to Ramsey and Ferré in *BRO*, 150-153; cf. also 136, fn. 3.

[142] The reader should note a contrast here between Tracy's response to religion's *sui generis* character and the response of postsecular theologians like Robert Benne. Cf. above, pp. 11-12, 72.

[143] *BRO*, 108.

In utilizing such categories to reference the religious theory founding fundamental, public theology, Tracy was guarding his project against a fundamentalist[144] reduction of religion to positivism and a technocratic rejection of religion by "modern man." By re-presenting the authentically disruptive forms of intense expression, the theologian freed such forms to reorient us to that fundamental dimension of life,[145] in which we a sense a "wholeness of meaning to all our basic activities."[146] The existential meaningfulness of limit-language was locatable to the degree that it could disclose possible modes of existence which lay dormant in our ownmost but unrecognized potential. "*Qua* religious," these modes of existence were "not trans-worldly but recognizably and authentically human."[147]

Finally, we can tentatively posit that Tracy's observation of an unmanageable, inner-disciplinary situation initially led him to lay a formal groundwork for theological conversation.[148] If the theological conversation was not guided by shared rules of

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[144] For an uncharacteristically bald statement against fundamentalism, see *BRO*, 135: "Fundamentalism of whatever tradition and by whatever criteria of truth one employs seems to me irretrievably false and illusory. Christian fundamentalism cannot and will not withstand the force for truth and the transformative power of self-sacrificing love which its own originating limit-language and its own past and present religious dynamism has set loose in our history."

[145] "The liberation of our language and the liberation of our experience go hand in hand" (*BRO*, 133).

[146] *BRO*, 134. The proclamatory sayings of the New Testament bestowed on the hearer the "e-vent of an authentic time," a happening which is trusted as the disclosure of God's gracious and trustworthy action happening now. Parables, analogously, disclosed a new, extraordinary but possible mode of faithful, loving being-in-the-world: "Religious language in general re-presents that basic confidence and trust in existence which *is* our fundamental faith, our basic mode of being in the world" (*BRO*, 134). Religious language and experience "promise, restore, and liberate a dimension to our lives which we can destroy only at the unwelcome price of self-deception and human impoverishment" (*BRO*, 135).

[147] *BRO*, 146.

[148] "I realize that a plea for public discourse and collaborative practice may seem to possess all the excitement of a stifled yawn. Yet seething beneath that great grey western virtue of reasoned public

engagement, it would devolve into competing points of view expressed merely as a power struggle, as politics. Tracy's observation of historical consciousness and the a-theoretical, relatively chaotic theological imagination in post-Vatican-II Roman Catholicism initiated a concern with locating these shared rules of conversational engagement that has guided so much of his writing career. Yet, it was not merely observations of disorder that motivated Tracy to pursue an ordered conversation. It was his understanding of the Roman Catholic, Christian religion which had been so formative for his own religious identity. Insofar as the theologian made claims that originated in the monotheistic religion called Christianity, she could not but pursue claims to truth. If this trajectory was to be taken seriously, the Christian theologian could not but consider the "truth-status" of her theological claims.

<div align="center">Dialogue and the "Blessed Rage" for Order</div>

This dissertation functions as part of the dialogue initiated when a robustly Christian identity is confronted by an authentically contemporary and shared sense of self. For "the early Tracy," one cannot make claims from a Christian perspective without boldly considering the degree to which Christian expression adequately re-presents what is intuitively known by all others. Attention to method enabled the theologian to navigate an otherwise chaotic, intra-disciplinary conversation, and an uptake of transcendental philosophy (mediated by hermeneutics and phenomenology) enabled the theologian to push this conversation into domains appropriate for a discipline concerned with truth. Informed both by the Enlightenment disenchantment with mystification and the post-

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discourse is, I believe, the desire really to hear one another once again and the passion to overhear together the still disclosive and emancipatory power of the Christian tradition" ("Theological Table-Talk," 395).

Enlightenment disenchantment with demystification, however, Tracy likewise attempted

to balance his desire for order and truth with a protection against problematically

totalizing frameworks. As was especially noteable in Tracy's turn to critical philosophy

at the conclusion of *Blessed Rage for Order*, a deep criticism of institutions and

institutionalized theory functioned as the "completion" of a revisionist theology. It was

only through "the negative" that one could reach "the positive," and it was only as a

critical theology that one could achieve a fully public theology.

On the opening page of *Blessed Rage for Order*, Tracy included a poem by

Wallace Stevens entitled "The Idea of Order at Key West." In this poem, the implied

author sits in a boat not far from shore. He looks back "toward the town" and sees on the

horizon "lights in the fishing boats at anchor there." The lights float, bobbing in the

mysteriously undulating water, and act as a hazy reminder of the "boundary," mastering

the night and portioning out the sea. The poem concludes:

> Oh! Blessed rage for order, pale Ramon,
> The maker's rage to order words of the sea,
> Words of the fragrant portals, dimly-starred,
> And of ourselves and of our origins,
> In ghostlier demarcations, keener sounds.[149]

Although the "rage" for order could never be totally satisfied—Tracy's later work was

much more explicit about these early gestures toward critical theory—the theologian

could not cease to attempt locating it. It was a "blessed rage," a seemingly created

tendency that the subject could not but attempt, if only with the final realization that all

attempts would ultimately remain unfulfilled.

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[149] Wallace Stevens, "The Idea of Order at Key West," in Wallace Stevens, *The Collected Poems* (New York: Knopf, 1954), 130 (128-130, inclusive); quoted in *BRO*, vii.

If theology required an analysis of truth, then the theologian could not but express her project according to shared criteria of adequacy. The post-Enlightenment situation informing Tracy's notion of "truth," the phenomenological point of entry into "primordial" religious trust, and the pinpointing of "oddness" as the defining characteristic of religious expression deeply informed this pursuit. It is for this reason that our inclusion of Tracy in the consideration of public theology must lead us in the direction of a public-as-critical theology, further highlighting the need to complement respect for the irreducibility of unique theological appropriations of tradition by placing openness and self-critique at the center of our project. If the desire to protect "the"—or, more accurately, "my"—theological narrative results in an inability to engage that narrative in substantial dialogue, then that narrative must be considered suspect. Further, if the desire to open up a narrative to evaluation results in an uncritical uptake of Enlightenment rationality, thus reducing all particularities to a rationally located universality, then that desire must also be considered suspect. However, if a theology rests within the mutually critical place of intersection, where a trajectory toward truth meets a trajectory toward criticism, where universality and particularity engage one another, then we may remain hopeful in our pursuit of a public-as-critical theology. A primary point of departure for Tracy's second major work, *Analogical Imagination*, was the intersection of concreteness and universality in the construction of an analogically imaginative systematic theology founded on a revisionist fundamental theology. It is to this latter work that we now turn.

Pluralism and Publicness in *Analogical Imagination*

> The route from chaotic pluralism to a responsible one within any discipline demands that all conversation partners agree to certain basic rules for the discussion.
>
> – David Tracy[150]

Our purpose in this final section of chapter two is to consider Tracy's most complex and multifaceted work to date, *Analogical Imagination*. As in *Blessed Rage for Order*, there are numerous points of entry we could use to organize our analysis. My comments will be rather limited, as our primary purpose is the demonstration of both continuity and development in the "fundamental" approach to public theology with which we have associated David Tracy. As in our analysis of *Blessed Rage for Order*, we will begin our analysis of *Analogical Imagination* with a consideration of what could be called "internal" and "external" crises to which Tracy's unique version of publicness served as a response. After introducing the crises facing the theologian of *Analogical Imagination*, we will summarize the notion of "publicness" Tracy offered as a response. Two observations found our analysis here: publicness could be achieved as disciplinary self-awareness, and publicness included the uniquely theological vocation of risking truth-claims. Motivated by the need for self-awareness in the pursuit of conversation, the theologian engaged in a deliberate naming of the disciplinary criteria determining the relative adequacy of her project. Motivated by the theological vocation of speaking truth, the theologian founded her project—regardless of the primary public to which it was addressed—on the theoretical groundwork laid by the fundamental theologian. The public of the academy thus served as the paradigmatic public informing all theologies.

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[150] *AI*, 58-59.

Finally, we will highlight Tracy's continued appreciation of both pluralism and critical philosophy. Prompted by the inclusivist christology of the catholic, analogical imagination, the theologian engaged in authentically open conversation with the multiple contemporary publics constituting her situation. Approaching her tradition as a collection of religious classics addressing the fundamental questions of existence, the theologian was given a ready resource for facilitating "the self-interpretation of the religious dimension of a culture."[151] It was the possibility of a productive conversation which served as Tracy's primary motivation for *Analogical Imagination*. However, Tracy was also aware that the ideal of conversation often masked structures of power. Informed by a christology highlighting the Christ *event* and a twentieth-century situation highlighting the experience of "the uncanny," Tracy complemented his embrace of conversation with a suspicion informed by critical philosophy.

<center>"Internal" and "External" Crises: The Ambiguity of Plurality</center>

In our survey of Tracy's writings thus far, we have used the spatial qualifiers "internal" and "external" in reference to the theological guild. In our survey of *Anological Imagination*, our spatial point of reference is personal. Whereas the post-Enlightenment situation created crises internal and external to the theological discipline in *Blessed Rage for Order*, the post-Enlightenment crisis of *Analogical Imagination* is more directly related to the theologian as subject. Central to the subjective crisis outlined in *Analogical Imagination* was the personal sense of ambiguity induced by pluralism.[152]

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[151] Tracy, "The Role of Theology in Public Life," 232.

[152] In *AI* Tracy did not distinguish clearly between plurality and ambiguity, at least to the extent that he would later in *Plurality and Ambiguity*. I thus use the terms here with some sense of overlap.

On the one hand, pluralism was a "fundamental enrichment"[153] of the theologian's

situation;[154] on the other, it created a confusing, if not dangerously[155] diffuse experience.

Although it was certainly true that the experience of plurality was an opportunity for

"hard thought and creative possibility," a "more vital existential fact"[156] was that

ambiguity "inevitably emerged" even in the theologian's "most creative achievements"

and "most profound loyalties."[157]

Unlike the existentialist of the nineteenth century,[158] the theologian of the late

twentieth century was caught in the experience of multiplicity. Internalizing multiple

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However, the title of this subsection, "the ambiguity of plurality," is intentionally worded to highlight Tracy's observation of pluralism's simultaneous possibilities and pitfalls.

[153] *AI*, xi.

[154] In both *BRO* and *AI* Tracy used "situation" intentionally. It was a reference to Paul Tillich's notion. Cf. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1:3-4: "'Situation,' as one pole of all theological work, does not refer to the psychological or sociological state in which individuals or groups live. It refers to the scientific and artistic, the economic, political, and ethical forms in which they express their interpretation of existence."

[155] In the fluid disciplinary situation resulting from unresolved problems of discourse, "the dangers for a discipline are obvious: the continuous diffusion of energies; the unending emergence of sects, schools, paradigms, even fads; too little real collaboration among theologians; too little mutual criticism upon agree-upon standards, criteria, and norms for theological performance" (*AI*, 18).

[156] Tracy used the term "existential" in a variety of ways in *AI*. In a more technical sense, Tracy used it refer to a particular mode of philosophical thought associated with philosophers like Jacob Burckhardt, Søren Kierkegaard, and Friedrich Nietzsche. More colloquially, Tracy used it to refer to a particular, uniquely individual, perhaps even "private" situation. He referred, for example, to the "'existential' viewpoint of the fundamental theologian," who "in principle" was "bound by the discipline itself" to certain critical and interpretive rules (*AI*, 64) and to the "'existential' recognition of a theologically derived trust in both church and world" (*AI*, 84, fn. 18). Here the "existential" situation is one of trust in claims made by a unique religious tradition. These disparate uses are united in their mutual connotation of what could be called a "private" posture of trust.

[157] *AI*, 51.

[158] "The concept of the 'single one' is the ultimate yet not the penultimate ground for the complex reality of the contemporary self" (*AI*, 4). Whereas it was certainly true that "beyond" the experience of pluralism, there was an ideal "single one" who captured the ideal identity of each theologian, the actual experience of the theologian intimated a plurality of publics which had been formative for the theologian's identity—the types of questions she asked and the mode of reflection she used in response to such questions. In the background here is Kierkegaard.

constituencies "to different degrees of intensity,"[159] the theologian felt compelled to

speak "not merely to several publics external to the self but to several internalized publics

in one's own reflections."[160] These voices may be so powerful that they effectively

determined the theologian's positions and method. More often, they constituted "elective

affinities" with particular emphases in theology, "including an emphasis on what would

count as a genuinely theological statement."[161] The addressee of the single self of

existentialism had thus given way to a "conflict of addressees in each self."[162] The result

was a situation of confused theologians and a correspondingly confusing discipline:

> The fact is that theologians do not only recognize a plurality of "publics"
> to which they intend to speak, but also more and more the theologians are
> internalizing this plurality in their own discourse. The results are often
> internal confusion and external chaos.[163]

Pluralism likewise gave way to an experience of cognitive dissonance, as the

theologian committed to "any major religious tradition" attempted a robust dialogical

engagement with those making up her pluralistic society. No theologian authentically

committed to the truth-claims of her tradition could allow the theological project to be

reduced either to some religious, "lowest common denominator" or to a marginal

instantiation of "one interesting but purely private option."[164] The former did not enable

an authentic appropriation of history; the latter did not enable an authentic participation

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[159] *AI*, 51.

[160] *AI*, 4.

[161] *AI*, 5.

[162] *AI*, 5.

[163] *AI*, 3.

[164] *AI*, xi.

in public dialogue. Neither option approached the problem of "truth" with any

seriousness.

If not confronted with both optimism and caution, pluralism would thus "prove as

damaging as an earlier theological generation's refusal to face historical

consciousness."[165] Indeed, the alternatives for a marginalized theology were "the short-

run enchantment of self-fulfillment and the long-run despair of societal value

bankruptcy."[166] The necessary task for the theologian was to construct an "inevitably

complex" strategy for confronting pluralism that would "avoid privatism by articulating

the genuine claims of religion to truth."[167] Truth, for Tracy, would be achieved by way

of publicness.

Like so many of Tracy's terms, the notion of "publicness" yielded significant

semantic return. Among other connotations, "public" was used to suggest "meaning and

truth," "self-awareness," an explicit account of disciplinary models, shareable warrants

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[165] *AI*, 6. Not unlike Augustine's classic appropriation of Neo-platonic thought in his positing of the distended self, Tracy's constructive suggestions consistently begin with an awareness of the experience of plurality and potential crises this plurality can engender. Tracy himself alluded to this similarity, when he paralleled his implied retrieval of Augustine with the retrieval of Freud in Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966) and Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism* (New York: Norton, 1978). Tracy said, "The Augustinian theological tradition here (especially the neo-Platonic strains in Augustine, where the self's major problem is self-dispersal dialectically related to 'narcissist' self-concern) could bear the same kind of retrieval as Rieff and Lasch accord…Freud's psychoanalytic model" (*AI*, 33, fn. 7). Tracy himself addresses Freud in *AI*, 345-352, esp. 348; and later in *DO*, 17-26. A theological resource on the Nietzschean-Freudian critique for Tracy was Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, III: 86-107 (cf. *AI*, 84, fn. 25). Of course, in both *BRO* and *AI* (and thus again in continuity with the Augustine of *Confessions*), the initial confrontation with pluralism was pushed through a theological focal point (theism in *BRO*, Christology in *AI*) before it was reopened into a reappropriation of pluralism ("inclusivist christology" in *BRO*, "analogical imagination" in *AI*). I consider this also a contemporary analogue of the Augustinian trajectory. Although *Confessions* obviously began with the pursuit of rest for the "restless heart," it concluded with an ability to rest in a kind of theological pluralism empowered by Augustine's various imaginative, ecclesiological interpretations of Genesis 1-3.

[166] *AI*, 14.

[167] *AI*, xi.

and criteria, universality, and disclosive and transformative meaning.[168] In what follows, I will highlight three of these connotations: publicness as explicit and disciplinary self-understanding, the public of the academy as paradigm, and publicness as theological truth-claims.

Publicness as Disciplinary Self-Understanding

In continuity with the Lonerganian vision, Tracy urged theologians to develop an attentive self-understanding.[169] By understanding themselves "publicly," theologians would found the theological project on criteria available in theory to anyone willing to do the same and would thus keep intense and potentially divisive conversations from devolving into competing ideologies. Historically, this task had been connected to the practice of "discernment," connoting "an imagery of tentativeness, groping, risk-bearing alertness" that served as "an authentically spiritual sensitivity to the anxieties and fears" of a situation.[170] Yet, in a context of extreme disciplinary plurality, where some objectifying measures were needed, such existentially located pursuits were inadequate. Informing these pursuits was an assumption that the theologian could view the situation from "some privileged place," separated from what was happening "out there." This view failed to account for the observation that "every theology lives in its own

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[168] At least three of these connotations—meaning and truth, shareable warrants and criteria, and universality—may be found on *AI*, 55. We will observe self-awareness and disciplinarity momentarily. For disclosive and transformative, confer David Tracy, "On Thinking with the Classics," *Criterion* (Autumn 1983): 9-10.

[169] "The more general question 'What is theology' first demands…a response to a prior question: 'What is the self-understanding of the theologian?'" (*AI*, 5). Tracy connects this idea with Lonergan by adding ni a footnote, "One of the most important innovations" of Lonergan's *Method* was "his insistence, based on his generalized (as transcendental) empirical method, that one can and should study the operations of the theologian via intentionality analysis or horizon analysis" (*AI*, 33, fn. 10).

[170] *AI*, 339. As elsewhere, Tracy's dialogue partners in many of his reflections on self-understanding reflect an existential trajectory; cf. fn. 407 above.

situation":[171]

> Like all those creatures who dwell in, not on the sea, we are all in our culture and our history: affected by it at every moment for good or ill, groping at every moment to understand, to discern how to live a worthwhile life in this place, at this moment. With the prophetic passion of a Jeremiah, an Isaiah, an Amos, theologians may confront and denounce their age. But no one escapes it; nor does the authentic prophet wish to. With the foolhardiness of a truly misplaced concreteness, contemporary persons in every age may announce that the ever-elusive now and the all-encompassing ego are all that really matter. Then, struggling to live not in but on the sea, we drown.[172]

A more appropriate way to pursue self-understanding, therefore, was to make explicit the theologian's social location.[173] For those theologians who clarified the relative criteria guiding their unique social setting, the result was a project more robustly enabling the trajectory toward conversation that was so desperately needed in the twentieth-century situation.

Theologians brave enough to engage in social analysis discovered a ternary social reality: explicitly or implicitly, theologians addressed three "principal publics" in their theological constructions. Although all theologians spoke "trans-publicly" to some degree, it was possible to discern a public that was particularly determinative for the unique model a theologian adopted. The respective publics were the wider society, the

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[171] *AI*, 339.

[172] Ibid.

[173] Tracy situated the type of analysis he offered in the "sociology of knowledge" genealogy of Van A. Harvey and Peter Berger. The resources Tracy noted for Harvey were his essays on Anders Nygren, *Religious Studies Review* (1975): 13-19 and Peter Berger, *Religious Studies Review* (1979): 1-15. For Berger, Tracy noted Peter Berger, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Doubleday, 1967); *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1967); (with Brigitte Berger and Hansfried Kellner) *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness* (New York: Vintage, 1973). Tracy differentiated the "sociology of knowledge" approach from the critical approach of Matthew Lamb and Gregory Baum.

academy, and the church. The distinct public setting within which a theology was situated gave way to the determination of "distinct plausibility structures." In the best cases, theologians would make a correlation or "interactionist sociological model" explicit that could be used to relate the affinities between themselves and their publics and "to adjudicate conflicts between plausibility structures."[174] But such explicitness was not always the case, minimizing the possibility for dialogue. When theologians did not reflect on the assumed plausibility structures, the result was inconsistency, as when "radical critiques of society" were "allied with surprisingly conservative demands for maintaining the present status quo of a given church order."[175] Instead of being ignored in an abyss of vagueness, "Plausibility structures must become explicit."[176]

As a first step on the path of conversation by way of self-understanding, Tracy distinguished three "models"[177] operative in the theological guild—fundamental, systematic, and practical[178]—that correspoinded to the three publics: fundamental

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[174] *AI*, 28.

[175] *AI*, 28.

[176] *AI*, 29.

[177] Recall Tracy's use of Bernard Lonergan's notion of "models" in *BRO* (cf. fn. 207 above). In *AI*, Lonergan's "models" paradigm is not applied to competing theologies but to different sub-disciplines or "functional specialties" (delineated as fundamental, systematic, and practical theologies by Tracy) within the theological discipline as a whole.

[178] The "primary attention" of *AI* was given "to the relationships between fundamental and systematic theologies with some attention to the claims to meaning and truth of practical theology" (*AI*, 69). Tracy covered practical theology explicitly in *AI*, 69-79. *AI*, 390-404 covered "political and liberation theologies" as an alternative to the dual forms of "manifestation" and "proclamation." "Manifestation" and "proclamation" were initially considered as distinct forms of religious expression that, when intensified, emerged as classics (*AI*, 202-230). By including practical (or, political/liberationist) theologies as the culmination of "Christian responses to the contemporary situation," Tracy was able to posit that together, manifestation-proclamation-action represented "the full Christian symbol system." When this system was "allowed by each theologian to work its corrective and expansive functions…then contemporary Christian systematics [began] to approach relative adequacy" (*AI*, 371-372).

theologians spoke primarily to the academy and thus according to the warrants and

criteria characterizing the academy; systematic theologians spoke primarily to the church

and thus according to the warrants and criteria characterizing the church; and practical

theologians spoke primarily to (or, perhaps, "about") society and thus according to the

warrants and criteria characterizing society and its needs. Using the "language of

transcendental reflection," [179] Tracy says of these models:

> Fundamental theology is concerned principally with the "true" in the sense
> of metaphysics, systematic theology with the beautiful (and, as we shall
> see, the beautiful *as true*) in the sense of poetics and rhetorics, practical
> theology with the good (and the good *as* transformatively true) in the
> sense of ethics and politics.[180]

Although the three, subdisciplinary models were differentiated in their respective

reference groups, modes of argument, ethical emphases, theological prerequisites, and

formulation of what counted as truth-claims, they were united (showing continuity with

Blessed Rage for Order) in their mutual commitments to interpretation of a tradition,[181]

interpretation of the situation,[182] and a correlation of these two interpretations.[183]

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[179] As in *BRO*, "transcendental" has an explicitly "human" or, perhaps, "phenomenological"
connotation for Tracy in *AI*. He did not appreciate Anders Nygrens' "lifelong attempt to demonstrate the
strictly 'scientific' character of theology as a mode of 'objective argumentation,' the latter specified by a
linguistic philosophy and 'value-free' motif research" (*AI*, 14). Anders Nygren, *Meaning and Method*
(Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972). Cf. *BRO*, 157-160. As an alternative, Tracy was more appreciative of
Wolfhart Pannenberg's "attempt to demonstrate the strictly scientific (in the European sense of
Wissenschaft) character of theology" understood under the rubric of a theology of religion. Wolfhart
Pannenberg, *Theology and Philosophy of Science* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 301-346, cf. 228-297
(*AI*, 39, fns. 51, 53). Cf. also fn. 389 above.

[180] *AI*, 85, fn. 31.

[181] *AI*, 59.

[182] *AI*, 60.

[183] It should be clarified that this third moment was not included in the primary text of *AI*, chap. 2,
where Tracy discusses the "theological portrait of the theologian" as a public intellectual. It was noted
explicitly in the footnotes, however: "In any theology accepting these two 'constants' [interpretation of a
tradition and interpretation of a situation]," there was "a third (if usually implicit) constant. To render it

Reminiscent of Tracy's call to utilize historical or hermeneutical analyses in an appropriation of the Christian tradition in *Blessed Rage for Order*, in *Analogical Imagination* Tracy posited that the inter-model constants were constituted by "both a historical moment and a constructive one."[184] All three subdisciplines needed some explicit theory of hermeneutical and historical interpretation to develop criteria of appropriateness and some mode of experiential analysis to develop criteria of adequacy. The three sub-disciplines were differentiated, therefore, not in relation to their sources for theology. These sources remained common human experience and the Christian fact. The models were differentiated according to a multi-tiered rubric including:

> (1) distinct primary reference groups; (2) distinct modes of argument; (3) distinct emphases in ethical stance; (4) distinct self-understandings of the theologian's personal faith or beliefs; (5) distinct formulations of what primarily counts as meaning and truth in theology.[185]

The Public of the Academy as Paradigm

What is intriguing about Tracy's social analysis for our purposes here is the observation that—although all three models together constituted the totality of the theological task—one of the models stood out as particularly amenable to the task of publicness: fundamental theology. All three disciplines should be informed, indeed "grounded," or "founded," in fundamental theology. Although all three models were concerned to one degree or another with both meaning and truth, the fundamental model was uniquely able to "articulate arguments for theological discourse as openly

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explicit: there will ordinarily exist a correlation to relate these two interpretations. …Even Barthians correlate, if only ordinarily in the form of *Nein*, to the extra-theological interpretations of the situation" (*AI*, 88, fn. 44).

[184] *AI*, 56.

[185] *AI*, 56.

public arguments in the obvious sense of argued, reasoned positions open to all intelligent, reasonable, and responsible persons."[186] Publicness in the academy was constituted by a careful analysis of the "criteria, evidence, warrants, and disciplinary status" adequate to the unique task of theological construction,[187] but "academic" was not limited to the university setting. "Academy" served as a "generic word to describe the social locus where the scholarly study of theology most often" occurred.[188] Indeed, the academy consisted of "the whole community of inquirers, not only those who happen to be in the 'groves of academe'!"[189] It was not the case that every theologian must make attention to fundamental-theological criteria "the principal, explicit issue of theology."[190] "Every theologian must face squarely the claims to meaning and truth of all three publics."[191] Yet, the theological complexity engendered by internal ambiguity and the sociological complexity engendered by multiple, unnamed publics demanded that some theologians enter purposefully into the task of rendering explicit the possible criteria for inter-public correlation. The work done by such theologians would enable more specialized theologians to inject the publicness informed by an academic setting into their

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[186] *AI*, 58.

[187] *AI*, 21. "Internal" to the modern university was the "debate on the character of a scholarly discipline" (*AI*, 64).

[188] *AI*, 14. For Tracy, the "best exponent" of the Anglo-American approach to the understanding of an academic discipline was Stephen Toulmin, *Human Understanding*, Vol. 1 *The Collective Use and Evolution of Concepts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972) and *The Uses of Argument* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958). For Toulmin, academic disciplines could be classified into three categories: "compact," "diffuse," and "would-be" disciplines. Paradigmatically instantiated in "hard" sciences, the "compact" disciplines provided the normative framework for the notion of an academic discipline. For Tracy on Toulmin, cf. *AI*, 17-18 and corresponding footnotes on pp. 36-40.

[189] *AI*, 90, fn. 57.

[190] *AI*, 29.

[191] Ibid.

respective models and thus "express anew the authentically public character of all theology, whether fundamental theology, systematic theology, or practical theology."[192]

Publicness as Truth-Claims

We must immediately note, though, that the careful engagement with fundamental-theological criteria was not merely expedient. For Tracy, there was an intrinsic "universality"[193] implied in the theological quest itself. Publicness may have been "occasioned" by the rise of a historical and sociological consciousness, which relativized the truth-claims of historical and constructive theology. Publicness was "caused," on the other hand, by the very nature of theology.[194] In contrast to scholars in religious studies,[195] theologians "must, by the intrinsic demands of their discipline, face the questions of both meaning and truth."[196] Although the classics informing the theologian's reflections represented an expression made "on a particular journey in a particular tradition," the classics nevertheless disclosed "permanent possibilities for

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[192] *AI*, 55.

[193] "The present author shares the universalist strand in Christianity as fundamental for Christian self-understanding" (*AI*, 49). Cf. also *AI*, 33, fn. 3, where Tracy says monotheism "logically entails publicness," and *BRO*, 64-171 (chs. 4-7).

[194] *AI*, 55.

[195] "Religious studies is a study of religion in keeping with the standards, methods, and criteria of all scholarly study of any phenomenon. It cannot and should not allow for the use of special criteria (for example, a demand for personal faith in a particular religion in order to understand that religion). Theology, conventionally understood, demands just such special criteria. As a discipline, theology belongs, therefore, to the churches and its seminaries and possibly to church-related institutions of learning" (*AI*, 116).

[196] *AI*, 20.

human existence both personal and communal." Any religious classic was "always public, never private."[197]

This universal trajectory was especially implied in the Christian understanding of God. "Whether classical, process, liberationist or liberal," any Christian theology affirmed "the strict universality of the divine reality."[198]

> Any authentic speech on the reality of God which is really private or particularist is unworthy of that reality. Christianity, when true to its heritage, cannot but recognize that its fundamental faith, its most radical trust and loyalty, is to the all-pervasive reality of the God of love and power disclosed in Jesus Christ.[199]

The theologian's insight into the universal character of the divine reality was what ultimately impelled her to attempt publicness. To engage in private theological reflection was, "at best, to perpetuate an oxymoron."[200] The theologian risked responses to the deepest, most serious and difficult questions that any society faced: questions of ultimate meaning, ontological truth, and existential meaningfulness:

> Theologians, by definition, risk an intellectual life on the wager that religious traditions can be studied as authentic responses to just such questions. The nature of these fundamental questions cuts across the spectrum of publics. Lurking beneath the surface of our everyday lives, exploding into explicitness in the limit-situations inevitable in any life, are questions which logically must be and historically are called religious questions.[201]

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[197] *AI*, 14.

[198] *AI*, 51.

[199] *AI*, 51.

[200] *AI*, 52.

[201] *AI*, 4.

The public theologian's task, therefore, was not merely to recognize the meaning and meaningfulness expressed in the public and in Christian texts.[202] It was to engage intrepidly in the evaluation of the "truth-status" of those texts and to take up the task of contemporary theological construction in a critical manner. "Every theologian" was engaged in the task of "making claims to meaning and truth."[203]

A Publicly Reconstructed Systematic Theology

The role played by "the inner-Christian drive to universality" in fundamental theology found its systematic analogue in such biblical notions as sin, idolatry, fallenness, and confession. While the former drove the fundamental theologian to locate common human experience and/or a shared sense of trust expressed as the religious dimension, the latter drove the systematic theologian to the centrality of the cross in its Protestant forms and the centrality of incarnational Christology in Roman Catholic forms.[204] Departing from a position of faith, the systematic theologian believed such "natural" expressions were radically affected by the Creator-creature distinction. This did not mean that the systematic theologian ignored contemporary observations.

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[202] As before, we must be careful to point out that "text" is understood very broadly by Tracy. Although he limited his technical analyses to a consideration of texts *per se* as the primary source for understanding the Christian tradition, he did suggest that the historical sources available for analysis were not solely textual. They included works of art, monuments, expressions, even lives. This inclusive understanding of the classic is made rather explicit in *AI* (cf., *inter alia*, *AI*, 128-130 on "genre").

[203] *AI*, 20.

[204] An example Tracy gave here was the nature-grace debates central to twentieth-century Catholic theology in Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967); Karl Rahner, "Some Implications of the Scholastic Concept of Uncreated Grace," *Theological Investigations*, I (Baltimore: Helicon, 1961):, 319-346; and Bernard Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), 13-19.

Exemplified in the Barthian[205] trajectory that would eventually inform George Lindbeck

(whom we will discuss in the following chapter) and the (H. Richard) Niebuhrian[206]

trajectory emphasizing "soft perspectivism," the best systematic theologians were able to

combine hermeneutical observations (a notion not unlike the "historical consciousness"

that informed Tracy's earliest writings[207]) with the biblical and inner-theological notions

mentioned above.

When the systematic theologian was able to account for such interpretational

maneuvers, there was a kind of public plausibility to the confessional position. Where

the fundamental theologian would relate "the reality of God to our fundamental trust in

existence (our common faith),[208] the confessional systematic theologian would "relate

that reality to arguments for a distinctively Christian understanding of faith."[209] The

"faith" in question could not merely be a common trust in existence, as it was for the

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[205] Tracy believed Barth's phrase "The best apologetics is a good dogmatics" was particularly exemplary of the type of theology represented by the systematic, or "confessional" model being presented as an alternative to the fundamental model (*AI*, 132, inter alia). Cf. John D. Godsey (recorded and ed.), *Karl Barth's Table Talk* (Richmond: John Knox, 1963). For Barth on apologetics, see *Church Dogmatics*, 1.2, pp. 332-333; 2.1, p. 94; and 2.2, p. 520. I am thankful to David W. Congdon for his tips along these lines. Cf. "Karl Barth and Apologetics," <<http://fireandrose.blogspot.com/2006/05/karl-barth-and-apologetics.html>> Accessed May 16, 2012.

[206] Tracy called Niebuhr "the most sophisticated model for a confessional theology in contemporary theology" (*AI*, 65). Tracy's reference here for Niebuhr's systematic theology was not *Christ and Culture*, as it was in the consideration of ecclesiology. Here Tracy was thinking of H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation* (New York: Macmillan, 1960). Because Niebuhr united a confessional position with a "profoundly modern sense of historical relativity without collapsing into the privateness of either Christian sectarianism or secularist relativism" (*AI*, 65), Tracy called his approach "soft perspectivism." Tracy also regularly recalled Niebuhr's pithy aphorism, "A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of Christ without a cross" (*The Kingdom of God in America* [New York: Harper, 1959], 193), cf. *AI*, 91, fn. 64, 68.

[207] It is interesting to note that Tracy himself said of his own writings, "Indeed, my own earlier interpretations both of the text, and its history of effects, and of the interpreter, and his or her historicity, can be read as one more footnote to the modern revolution of Western historical consciousness" (*PA*, 35).

[208] *AI*, 65.

[209] *AI*, 65.

fundamental theologian. The faith of the systematic theologian was the "trust in and loyalty to the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jesus Christ."[210]

Fundamental-Systematic Theology

When the "concrete" systematic form and the "abstract" fundamental form could exist in a mutually critical correlation, the result was an ability to account both for the experience of particularity unique to systematic theology and the concern with universality unique to fundamental theology. Insofar as the fundamental theologian explicated "the general, abstract, necessary (i.e., metaphysical) characteristics of any coherent concept of God,"[211] she was able to "inform and, where necessary, correct the fuller, more concrete expressions of systematic theology."[212] Analogously, concrete expressions of intense particularity in systematic-theological forms kept the fundamental-theological project from devolving into *mere* abstractions.[213] Systematic theology pushed fundamental theology's "abstract, metaphysical notions of God…in the direction of greater concreteness."[214] Systematic theology, in other words, demanded a "constant dialectic," a mutually critical correlation, "between formulations of the revelatory

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[210] *AI*, 65.

[211] *AI*, 90, fn. 63. Tracy recalled here the construction of God as the "one necessary individual and as dipolar" that he offered in *Blessed Rage for Order*.

[212] *AI*, 91, fn. 63.

[213] This did not mean, coincidentally, that Tracy's encouragement of concrete expressions could be translated into positivistic theology. He was most appreciative of such confessional positions as Luther's "hidden and revealed God," Rahner's "comprehensible-incomprehensible God," or Jüngel's "present-absent God." As we have already posited, Tracy's own "inclusivist" christology is likewise deeply informed (in-formed) by both a trajectory toward truth and a radical embrace of critique.

[214] *AI*, 91, fn. 63. "The concrete" of systematic theology was "not reducible to the abstract" (*AI*, 401, fn. 35), but abstractions in fundamental theology were "necessary to correct confusions in the concrete" (*AI*, 49, fn. 47). Abstractions never replace the concrete. For the fundamental theologian, to replace systematic and practical theologies would prove not merely imperialistic but a prime instance of the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness" (*AI*, 49, fn. 47).

tradition and the contemporary experience of the theologian":

> Christian systematic theology…is as fully aware of its perspectival
> character as any other historically conscious position in modern culture.
> Christian theology, in fact, consists in explicating in public terms and in
> accordance with the demands of its own primary confessions, the full
> meaning and truth of the original 'illuminating event'…which occasioned
> and continues to inform its understanding of all reality. Claims that a
> discipline, any discipline, can achieve more publicness than this for its
> truths are misguided. For all metaphysical or general philosophical claims
> to universality are, in the confessional view, suspect to a historically
> conscious mind.[215]

Systematic Theology and Ideology-Critique

The hope for conversation, Tracy believed, could be energized for Christians by

their embrace of a christology allowing a "life at the limits,"[216] a life lived in trust of the

God of Jesus Christ and thus lived "to focus, confirm, correct, challenge, confront, and

transform my present questions, expectations, reflections on life and all my attempts to

live a life worthy of the name 'human.'"[217] Pluralism need not indicate a "repressive

tolerance," a "bourgeois complacency," or a "relaxed eclecticism."[218] Pluralism

demanded conversation and expected conflict. Methodologically, the systematic

theologian could achieve authentic conversation by injecting a "dialectical moment," or a

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[215] Although Tracy admitted that this position was "rarely argued for" by confessional theologians, he posited that it was "de facto," or "empirically" true. Again, a primary interlocutor for Tracy on this point remained Anders Nygren, *Meaning and Method* (op. cit.). Cf. *AI*, 92, fn. 73.

[216] *AI*, 330.

[217] *AI*, 326.

[218] *AI*, 366, fn. 22. Elsewhere, Tracy blamed the existence of "pluralism's caricature, eclecticism," on (1) "the dearth of truly critical reviewing of many works as distinct from an announcement of a pro or con opinion with no supporting argument" and (2) "the emergence of a theological eclecitism based, it seems, on personal tastes for a 'little of this position' and a 'little of that' masked as constructive theology" (*AI*, 40, fn. 63).

"Christian theological ideology critique"[219] into the conversations enabled by an

analogical imagination.

Examples that the theologian could follow in constructing this "theological

hermeneutic with an explicit moment of ideology critique" included the so-called

"masters of suspicion" (Freud, Marx, Nietzsche, and Heidegger), German critical

philosophers ("Adorno, Horkheimer, and especially Benjamin"[220]), apocalyptic

theologians (Johann Baptist Metz,[221] Jurgen Moltmann, and Wolfhart Pannenberg), and

even mystic theologians whose intensified journey into concrete particularity was

"manifested as the intensified particular and *hence and by the same route* as ultimately

the whole."[222] Theologically, such forms of critique could be energized by constructing a

christology that allowed for mutually critical correlations.

Given the plurality internal to the New Testament, the later Christian tradition, the

history of conflict over interpretations, and the history of conflict internal to any church

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[219] *AI*, 324.

[220] "Although the more hermeneutically oriented approach of most uses of literary criticism does not ordinarily render explicit this moment of ideology critique, the hermeneutical approach is entirely open to any defensible public use of Christian ideology critique towards any systematically distorted expression in the tradition. The secular examples of this reality in Adorno, Horkheimer, and especially Benjamin are perhaps the best analogues for the kind of literary criticism that does include a moment of ideology critique while still respecting the relative autonomy of the text. Although it is not explicitly developed here, there are good reasons to believe that recent literary-critical and theological approaches could be developed into a theological hermeneutics with an explicit moment of ideology critique" (*AI*, 328). Cf. especially, Ernst Bloch, Georg Lukacs, Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetics and Politics*, trans. Ronald Taylor (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1977). For Tracy's endorsement, cf. *AI*, 146, fn. 76.

[221] Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1980). Metz provides a critical, political alternative response to the crises of the Enlightenment. Tracy's response was primarily to the cognitive crises of (1) the enlightenment form of modernity and (2) of modern forms of Christianity. Metz constructed his unique "post-Enlightenment" theology according to a "dialectics of the Enlightenment" which informed (1) the prioritizing of praxis over theory and (2) the turn to "massive global suffering" as a more adequate way to name the post-Enlightenment situation than the cognitive-theoretical alternative.

[222] *AI*, 382.

tradition, the conflict of interpretations confronting the twentieth-century theologian was "merely a new expression for the actuality and destiny of Christian self-interpretation."[223] The diversity, dissonance, and potential cacophony of New Testament forms witnessing to Christ,[224] of interpretations of that event in tradition and the situation, and of the various pluralities informing the language of the theological interpreter were collected around a kind of dialogical-dialectical focal point, the always-already, not-yet, event of Jesus the Christ.[225]

By constructing a christology that did not negate plurality but, in fact, included it as a constitutive aspect of its identity, Tracy was able to suggest that the plurality characterizing his theological situation was quite Christian. Further, insofar as the systematic theologian could allow the event-like character of the Christ event to retain its disclosive and transformative power, she could find contemporary analogues in the increasing instantiations of "uncanny," post-Enlightenment philosophy (Freud, Nietzsche, Marx, and Heidegger). By gathering the disparate theological fragments into analogously related responses to the uncanny event of Jesus Christ, Tracy was able to suggest modes of analysis that were amenable to conversation.

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[223] *AI*, 372.

[224] *AI*, 259-263.

[225] "Without a focus upon the person of Jesus, the Christ event can lose its decisiveness by quietly disowning its distinctively Christian identity. Without the paradigmatic focus upon the present, mediated experience of the Christ event as decisive manifestation, proclamation, action, every christology is in danger of becoming either a Jesusology or a supernaturalist mythology" (*AI*, 428). Using the event of Jesus Christ as the focal point of his inclusivist, pluralistic, systematic theology, Tracy hoped to facilitate a truly ecumenical, truly catholic, vision for the future of Christian theology. It is not surprising, then, that Tracy has been compared to Erasmus: Stephen H. Webb, "David Tracy: Our Erasmus," in *On the Square: Daily Columns from First Things top Writers* (April 22, 2009).
http://www.firstthings.com/onthesquare/2009/04/david-tracy-our-erasmus. Accessed May 9, 2012.

Conclusion: Conversation as Gathering Fragments

Anticipating his later turn to fragments,[226] the Tracy of *Analogical Imagination*

aimed to facilitate a conversation without compromising the irreducible uniqueness of

each participant. The religious classics of Tracy's own faith tradition, Christianity, were

recognized as uniquely intense responses to the quintessentially "uncanny" event of

human history, the event of Jesus the Christ. Probing deeply into a unique experience

with that event, the creators of Christianity's classics expressed timely responses to the

shared limit-experiences of all people. Insofar as these responses were recognized as

disclosive and transformative expressions of the fundamental questions of existence, they

were consequently elevated to classic status—the timelessness of permanent timeliness.

By highlighting isomorphic and analogous tendencies among these unique expressions,

and by attempting the same exercise in his present, Tracy hoped to facilitate a variety of

always-arriving, never-arrived[227] moments of agreement in the ongoing conversation

which was Christianity.

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[226] "Fragments and Forms: Universality and Particularity Today," in G. Ruggieri and M. Tomka (eds.), *The Church in Fragments: Towards What Kind of Unity*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997); "Fragments and Form," *Concilium* 23 (1997): 122-129; "Fragments of Synthesis? The Hopeful Paradox of Dupré's Modernity," in Peter J. Casarella and George P. Schner, S.J. (eds.) *Christian Spirituality and the Culture of Modernity: The Thought of Louis Dupré* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998); "Form and Fragment: The Recovery of the Hidden and Incomprehensible God," in *Reflections: Center of Theological Inquiry* 3 (1999): 62-89; "African American Thought: The Discovery of Fragments" in Dwight N. Hopkins (ed.), *Black Faith and Public Talk: Critical Essays on James H. Cone's* Black Theology and Black Power, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1999), 29-40; "Fragments: The Spiritual Situation of Our Times," in John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (eds.) *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism* (op. cit.), 170-184.

[227] Especially in the later, more systematic-theological portions of *AI*, Tracy used the eschatological vocabulary of "always-already," "not-yet" to capture the now-then moment of Christian theology. Consider this citation: "The Christian focus on the event of Jesus Christ discloses the always-already, not-yet reality of grace. That grace, when reflected upon, unfolds its fuller meaning into the ordered relationships of the God who is love, the world that is beloved and a self gifted and commanded to become loving. With the self-respect of that self-identity, the Chrsitian should be released to the self-transcendence of genuine other-regard by a willing self-exposure to and in the contemporary situation" (*AI*, 446).

Tracy's goal was much less order and systematization than it was facilitation of a conversation, a conversation that had gotten out of hand but that—because of its uniquely Christian form—should be consistently pursuing a renewal of order. In order to keep conversation partners from devolving into disparate and increasingly disconnected options, struggling against one another for more esteemed positions at the political table, Tracy saw his role as something like a moderator, perhaps a mediator or, finally, a priest.[228] The type of "public" reflection for which he argued enabled the conversation to move forward in constructive ways without compromising the theistic and christological affirmations which differentiated this conversation from, say, the conversations engaging biologists or mathematicians or even those of other religions. His was an explicitly Christian, unapologetically theological, conversation; but the re-membering of this unique religious identity did not mean the conversation was sectarian or irrational. It was not "private." The conversation would become more and more navigable and the truth-options more adjudicable, the more willingly participants opened up the conversation to forms of thought that were recognizably public. Such a goal was not only useful in carrying out the conversational task. It was ethical,[229] for public modes of thought protected theologians from adopting arbitrary appropriations of traditional categories.

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[228] Toward the end of his chapter distinguishing the three disciplinary models of theology, Tracy said, "Perhaps this proposal is, finally, a futile exercise born of an irenic temperament. Yet I think not. It would be if the distinctions developed are simply invalid—ungrounded in the common drive to publicness entailed by the doctrine of God and ungrounded in their distinct relationships to society, academy, and church entailed by the doctrines of church and world" (*AI*, 80). Stephen H. Webb says of his mentor, "David Tracy was an irenic and benevolent graduate school advisor who encouraged his students to follow their own paths." Stephen H. Webb, "On Mentors and the Making of a Useful Theology: A Retrospective on the Work of William C. Placher," *Reviews in Religion and Theology*, 13.2 (Feb 23, 2006): 237 (237-243 inclusive).

[229] For David Tracy, fundamental theology was distinct from the complementary theological models (systematic and practical) in its commitment to the "ethical stance of honest, critical inquiry proper to its academic setting" (*AI*, 57).

"Publicness," in other words, was a way of encouraging responsible theological thinking. It was adverbial. Theology was done "publicly" as a uniquely contemporary instantiation of post-Enlightenment identity.

There were a number of twentieth-century theologians who did not believe that Tracy's public pursuit of theological meaning and truth was sufficiently sensitive to uniquely religious thought. George Lindbeck posited, for example, that Tracy was not sufficiently sensitive to the unique way religions mediated meaning and truth to and within a particular religious community. The debate instantiated by the Tracy-Lindbeck conversation represents an ongoing problematic for public theologians. We turn now to a consideration of the Lindbeckian option.

CHAPTER THREE

RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND NARRATIVE IN GEORGE LINDBECK

Introduction

As the dust from the chaotic theological scene of the American 1960s slowly

settled,[1] contours of a new debate emerged between hermeneutically minded

philosopher-theologians associated with the University of Chicago, represented primarily

by Paul Ricoeur and David Tracy, and narrative theologians associated with Yale

University, represented primarily by Hans Frei and George Lindbeck.[2] The discussion

between these two camps gained momentum in the 1980s, finding its climax in the

exchange between Lindbeck's *Nature of Doctrine*, published in 1984 and Tracy's review

of *Nature of Doctrine*, published a year later.[3]

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[1] The experience of "unfounding" that accompanied relativism philosophically was mirrored in the variety of historical events which defined the cultural makeup of Tracy's early career. For a particularly personal account, cf. David Tracy, "Tribute to Bernard McGinn," *Continuum* 42 (Autumn 2003): 41-42.

[2] Of course, many others could be named. Included in the "intratextual" approach to theology from a cultural-linguistic perspective were David Kelsey, Stanley Hauerwas, Ronald Thiemann, and Charles Wood; included in the intertextual approach were Schubert Ogden and Langdon Gilkey. For a connection between the two theological approaches and their philosophical complements, see William C. Placher, *Unapologetic Theology*, 74-137. By 1987, Gary Comstock could say "two distinct camps are now visible" ("Two Types," 687) labeling the opposing sides "Yalees" and "Chicagoans," as these were the "respective headquarters." Because Comstock reads the Chicago-Yale debate as two diverging riffs on the theme of narrative—"reflection on religious claims embedded in stories" (687)—he could also add a third group to the debate, an "uncommitted contingent from Berkeley." He places such diverse theologians as James W. McClendon (Baptist), Robert McAfee Brown (Presbyterian), Terrence W. Tilley (Roman Catholic), and Michael Goldberg (Jewish Rabbi) in this camp.

[3] Tracy, "Lindbeck's New Program for Theology," op. cit.

The "nasty tension in the ranks"[4] surrounding this discussion has been explored by a number of historian-theologians, yet no constructive approach has created consensus.[5] The means of construing the differences expand with each new study of the debate. In addition to Lindbeck's classic differentiation between a "cultural-linguistic" approach to religion and the "experiential-expressive" alternative of transcendental Thomism, Tracy would offer the labels "grammatical-confessionalist" over against "hermeneutical-political"; Ronald Thiemann would suggest "antifoundationalist" over against "foundationalist";[6] Gary Comstock "impurist" over against "purist";[7] and Paul Knitter "unitive pluralism" over against "the acceptance model"[8] – just to name a few.

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[4] Gary Comstock, "Two Types," 687.

[5] Indeed, even an interpretation as recent as Marianne Moyaert's highlights this impasse: "Both positions [specifically, postliberalism and pluralism] form themselves antithetically, and thereby force a choice: either an open inter-religious dialogue grounded in pluralism or a commitment grounded in post-liberalism [*sic*]." Marianne Moyaert, "The (Un-)Translatability of Religions: Ricoeur's Linguistic Hospitality as a Model for Inter-Religious Dialogue," *Exchange* 37.3 (2008): 340. See also Moyaert, *Fragile Identities: Towards a Theology of Interreligious Hospitality* (New York: Rodopi, 2011) and "Interreligious Dialogue and the Debate between Universalism and Particularism: Searching for a Way out of the Deadlock," *Studies for Interreligious Dialogue* 15 (2005), 36-51. On the intertextual-intratextual impasse, see also Stephen Stell, "Hermeneutics in Theology and the Theology of Hermeneutics: Beyond Lindbeck and Tracy," Journal of the American Academy of Religion, LVI/4 (Winter 1993), 679: "Neither the incessant revision of labels nor the polemical rehashing of issues has produced an agreement on these differences, much less resolved them." Stell's doctoral dissertation offers a helpful summary of Tracy's development: *Hermeneutics and the Holy Spirit: Trinitarian Insights into a Hermeneutical Impasse*. Doctoral Dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1988, 207-392.

[6] Ronald F. Thiemann, *Revelation and Theology: The Gospel as Narrated Promise* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press), 1985. "Antifoundationalist" is the term Thiemann uses for Frei and Lindbeck, while "foundationalist" is his label for Ricoeur and Tracy. I have to agree with Gary Comstock that Thiemann's labels represent "an inexplicably odd reading of the Midwesterners," as it is "not at all clear that Paul Ricoeur and David Tracy are philosophical foundationalists" (Comstock, "Two Types," 688).

[7] Gary L. Comstock, "Truth or Meaning: Ricoeur versus Frei on Biblical Narrative," *Journal of Religion* 66 (1986), 119. Comstock is among those who use negative (in the sense of being defined not *per se* but over against another idea) terminology to refer to Tracy et al. Like Lindbeck's "*extra*textual" nomenclature, Comstock refers to Tracy et al as "*im*pure narrative theologians": "Christian narrative is not autonomous, pure, or sealed off from other forms of language. It is enmeshed in them—impure, corrupted with historical, psychological, and metaphysical claims. On this view, the stories themselves invite the critical scrutiny of historians, feminists, and deconstructing metaphysicians" (Comstock, "Two Types,"

Most surveys of the debate tend to fall into one of three categories. First, the interpreter may simply adopt one or the other paradigms, arguing on behalf of its superiority.[9] Second, the interpreter may attempt to construct a third alternative by which both approaches may be critiqued.[10] Third, the interpreter may attempt to find some common ground for both approaches, within which a mutual critique might be facilitated.[11] Typically, those attempting alternatives two and three still fall into one or

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697). Stephen Stell, "Hermeneutics in Theology and the Theology of Hermeneutics: Beyond Lindbeck and Tracy," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, LVI/4 (Winter 1993): 679-703.

[8] Paul Knitter, *No Other Name: A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions*, American Society of Missiology Series 7, Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books 1985, 7; noted in Moyaert, 341.

[9] Most surveys of the intratextual-intertextual debate fall into this category. Examples of interpreters embracing an intertextual approach include Kristin E. Heyer, "How Does Theology Go Public? Rethinking the Debate between David Tracy and George Lindbeck," *Political Theology* 5.3 (2004): 307-327; and Bradford Hinze, "Postliberal Theology and Roman Catholic Theology," *Religious Studies Review* 21 (1995): 299-310. Examples of interpreters embracing an intratextual approach include David H. Kelsey, *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975); "Biblical Narrative and Theological Anthropology," in Garrett Green (ed.), *Biblical Authority and Narrative Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 121-143; William C. Placher, who, in point of fact, calls himself a "certified postliberal" in "Being Postliberal: A Response to James Gustafson," *Christian Century* 116.11 (April 7, 1999): 390-392. See also William C. Placher, *Unapologetic Theology: A Christian Voice in a Pluralistic Conversation* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989); "Paul Ricoeur and Postliberal Theology: A Conflict of Interpretations," Unpublished paper, presented to the Narrative Interpretation and Theology Group of the AAR, November 25, 1985; "Revisionist and Postliberal Theologies and the Public Character of Theology," *The Thomist* 49 (1985), 392-416.

[10] I place Kathryn Tanner, Stephen Stell, Richard Lints and Hugh Nicholson in this camp: See Tanner's critiques both of correlational theology in *Theories of Culture*, 66-69, and postliberalism in *Theories of Culture*, 104-119; as well as "Theology and the Plain Sense," in Garret Green (ed.) *Scriptural Authority and Narrative Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987). For the others see Richard Lints, "The Postpositivist Choice," 655-77, who blames the difference on divergent interpretations of the Enlightenment; Stephen L. Stell, "Hermeneutics in Theology and the Theology of Hermeneutics: Beyond Lindbeck and Tracy," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 61 (Wint 1993): 679-702, who critiques both from a hermeneutical standpoint; and Hugh Nicholson, "The Political Nature of Doctrine: A Critique of Lindbeck in Light of Recent Scholarship," *Heythrop Journal* 48 (2007): 858-877, who utilizes Talal Asad's critique of Clifford Geertz to deconstruct Lindbeck's assumed apolitical theory of religion.

[11] The best example of this type of approach would be Gary Comstock's reading of both Lindbeck/Frei and Ricoeur/Tracy according to the category of "narrative." Other than those works by Comstock that have been already cited, see Gary L. Comstock, "Truth or Meaning: Ricoeur versus Frei on Biblical Narrative," *Journal of Religion* 66 (1986): 117-140; "Telling the Whole Story? American Narrative Theology after H. Richard Niebuhr," in Peter Freese (ed.), *Religion and Philosophy in the United States of America* (Essen: Verlag Die Blaue Eule, 1987), 125-152.

the other of the original camps.[12] My own alternative could be categorized under option

two while also admitting its relative continuity with an intertextual approach. As will

become evident in the remaining chapters, I attempt to take seriously the concerns of

theologians in all streams of public theology, yet I find the constructive proposals of

fundamental public theology, especially those of David Tracy, best able to account for

the others. My response to postsecular and civic theologians whose projects reflect

continuity with Lindbeck's intratextual theology will be elucidated in my excursus on the

capacity for dialogue in Lindbeck's theology. I turn now to an introduction to

Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic theory of religion, the regulative theory of doctrine which

supplements his theory of religion, and the postliberal approach to theology which serves

as their culmination.

Introducing *Nature of Doctrine*

George Lindbeck's *Nature of Doctrine* has been called "one of the most

influential works of academic theology to appear in English in the last fifty years."[13]

Much like Tracy's fundamental concerns, its initial motivation occurred in a post-Vatican

II religious context where "the contemporary ecumenical problematic"[14] had been

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[12] Tanner and Nicholson are especially exemplary. Although she critiques both intratextual and intertextual approaches according to her nuanced understanding of cultural studies, Tanner's theological paradigm—though also adopting a form of theological imagination indebted to Hans Urs von Balthasar—is still in relative continuity with a narratival approach. Her recent *Christ the Key* (op. cit.) is exemplary. Nicholson's very impressive political critique of Lindbeck is still in relative continuity with Tracy's analogical approach to pluralism, embraced with the necessity of facilitating "dialectical moments," or moments of interruption during which naïve dialogue may be protected from simply allowing "more of the same."

[13] Bruce D. Marshall, "Introduction: The Nature of Doctrine after 25 Years" in *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age, 25th Anniversary Edition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), vii.

[14] *ND*, 2.

elevated to significant importance by the renewed emphasis on interreligious and

ecumenical dialogue in Roman Catholic theology and practice. As Lindbeck participated

in these discussions over a period of twenty-five years, he experienced a "growing

dissatisfaction" with the usual ways theologians construed the norms of communal belief

and action. Lindbeck's primary problem was with a phenomenon he called

"reconciliation without capitulation,"[15] or the possibility[16] for members of one faith

group to remain fully identified with their tradition while either (a) finding significant

points of commonality with members of other faith groups or (b) appropriating their

theological tradition in ways significantly different from those of previous generations.

Exacerbating Lindbeck's concern was the fact that theologians engaged in ecumenical

dialogue were often unable to specify the criteria employed in judging some doctrinal

changes faithful to a tradition and others unfaithful. Doctrines, in other words, did "not

behave the way they should, given [the] customary suppositions about the kinds of things

they [were]."[17] Lindbeck put the matter this way:

> How is it possible not to surrender or relativize historically church-
> dividing doctrines and yet maintain that these doctrines are no longer
> divisive [as was displayed in the ecumenical movement]? How can
> fidelity to opposing confessions of faith…be compatible with church

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[15] Lindbeck defined this notion clearly in the afterword to the 25th anniversary edition: "How is it possible not to surrender or relativize historically church-dividing doctrines and yet maintain that these doctrines are no longer divisive? How can fidelity to opposing confessions of faith (to those of Trent and of the Reformation, for example) be compatible with church unity? Is it imaginable, in other words, that opposing Catholic and Protestant orthodoxies could coexist in full ecclesial fellowship? Or, to make the same point in more familiar ecumenical terminology, can there be 'reconciled diversity' in which the diversity remains intact? Most starkly stated, the problem is how doctrines that contradicted each other in one historical context can cease to be contradictory in another and yet remain unchanged" (*ND*, 126-127).

[16] As he says twenty-five years after *ND* was originally published, "the problem" addressed was not that of the legitimacy of reconciliation without capitulation but "that of its possibility" (1, 126), a methodological nuance that Lindbeck regularly states.

[17] *ND*, xxxiii.

unity? Is it imaginable, in other words, that opposing Catholic and Protestant orthodoxies could coexist in full ecclesial fellowship?[18]

Borrowing from the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein[19] and the cultural analyses of Clifford Geertz,[20] *The Nature of Doctrine* set out to construct a theory of doctrine that more adequately responded to the new approaches to theology occurring in the emerging ecumenical context than "traditionalist propositional orthodoxy" or "currently regnant forms of liberalism."[21] Traditional propositionalists were too quick to equate doctrinal claims immediately with "ontological truth," thereby not attending adequately to the growing pluralistic culture or to the problematic phenomenon of doctrinal reconciliation without capitulation. Liberals were too quick to change traditional doctrines without attending theoretically to how or why they may be able to do so and thus opened their projects to the charge of theoretical vacuity. Lindbeck went about finding a "via media" between these alternatives by constructing a "rule," or "regulative" theory of doctrine based on a "cultural-linguistic" theory of religion. Constructing a theory of ecumenism on the cultural-linguistic theory of religion would enhance future ecumenical discussions by allowing for "nonproselytizing interreligious

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[18] *ND*, 126-127.

[19] Language "influences domains of human reality that are generally thought of, not simply as prelinguistic, but as preexperiential, e.g., sensory physiological processes to which we as subjects do not have privileged access but of which we can become aware only by external observation of ourselves or others. It seems that even the presensory or preperceptual selection and organization of stimuli is not entirely prelinguistic" (23). Following Wittgenstein, "private languages are logically impossible" (24) [Robert J. Fogelin, *Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), pp. 153-171.] The same has to be true even of "private religious experiences."

[20] For a summary of Tracy's reading of Geertz, see *BRO*, 92. Tracy summarizes Geertz's understanding of religion as (1) a symbol system that creates (2) powerful, long-lasting modes of belief. These beliefs give rise to (3) a general order of existence, (4) factuality, and (5) realism. For Tracy's engagement with Geertz, cf. *AI*, 5, 11.

[21] *ND*, xxxvi.

dialogue and cooperation"[22] and for an interpretation of the meaning of doctrine that more adequately reflected doctrine's function within so many traditions now engaged in ecumenical dialogue. As such, *Nature of Doctrine* was "more concerned with how to think than with what to assert about matters of fact," and his suggestions sought "not to decide material questions, but to provide a framework for their discussion."[23]

Lindbeck's Critique of Lonergan, Rahner, and Tracy

An important step in Lindbeck's construction was his critique of the "regnant liberals," whose understanding of religion did not adequately account for the way doctrines functioned in ecumenism. Of primary concern for Lindbeck was the theory of religion which undergirded liberal approaches. He called this theory "experiential-expressivism," locating it in the Roman Catholic theology of David Tracy, Karl Rahner, and Bernard Lonergan.[24] The "extra-textual" approach of experiential-expressivists located religious meaning "outside the text or semiotic system" of the theologian, either in the "objective realities" to which meaning referred or in the experiences meaning

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[22] *ND*, 32.

[23] *ND*, xxxv. Lindbeck has other similarly relativizing comments elsewhere: more with "the availability" than "the superiority, of a rule theory of doctrine and the associated cultural-linguistic view of religion" (77-78). We will deal with the potential relativity of the cultural-linguistic paradigm shortly.

[24] To be exact, Rahner and Lonergan are originally placed in a "hybrid" alternative between an "analytical" theory of religion associated with "traditionalist propositional orthodoxy" and "experiential-expressive" theories of religion. Lindbeck concluded that Rahner and Lonergan attempt to account "for both variable and invariable aspects of religious traditions but have difficulty in coherently combining them. Even at their best, as in Rahner and Lonergan, they resort to complicated intellectual gymnastics and to that extent are unpersuasive" (3). He also associates this position with a "long and notable experiential tradition" (6) moving from Kant through Schleiermacher, Eliade, Otto, and Paul Tillich. Lindbeck distinguished between his own "rule theory" approach to doctrine and Tillich's symbolic theory, according to which a doctrinal claim—e.g. the resurrection—"is seen primarily as [a] symbol of a certain type of experience…that can in principle be expressed or evoked in other ways" (66). Cf. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 2 (University of Chicago Press, 1957) and Lindbeck, "An Assessment Re-assessed: Paul Tillich on the Reformation," *Journal of Religion* 63.4 (1983), 376-393, esp. 391-392.]

symbolized.[25] Implicitly, doctrine was understood as "noninformative and nondiscursive symbols of inner feelings, attitudes, or existential orientations."[26] Religions did not shape subjectivities. As diverse expressions of "one and the same core experience of the ultimate," doctrines were "a manifestation of those subjectivities."[27] The "outer features" of religion were "expressive and evocative objectifications" of internal experience,[28] and doctrines were "noninformative and nondiscursive symbols of inner feelings, attitudes, or existential orientations."[29]

In Lindbeck's narrative, experiential-expressivism emerged as the product of certain "psychosocial factors"[30] or "social processes"[31] defined by what he called the "modern perspective." The post-religious, individualistic, liberal, modern tendencies in society "deobjectified" religious meaning and made religion a means to an end: self-actualization. Religions were…

> multiple suppliers of different forms of a single commodity needed for transcendent self-expression and self-realization. Theologians, ministers, and perhaps above all teachers of religion in colleges and universities whose job is to meet the demand are under great pressure…to emphasize the experiential-expressive aspects of religion. It is thus that they can most easily market it.[32]

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[25] Ibid.

[26] *ND*, 12, italics mine.

[27] *ND*, 19.

[28] *ND*, 7.

[29] *ND*, 2.

[30] *ND*, 5-11.

[31] *ND*, 63.

[32] *ND*, 8.

Drawing on common humanity was a much more fecund means of avoiding catastrophies

such as nuclear, environmental, or genocidal destruction. Society needed this "highly

generalized outlook capable of providing a framework for infinitely diversified religious

quests." With its attempt at locating an underlying unity, experiential-expressivism

functioned as a better means of filling this void than its cultural-linguistic counterpart,

"with its stress on particularity."[33]

The marketplace mentality of American religiosity had further exacerbated the

felt need for experiential-expressivism, while experiential-expressivism had in turn

defended and enabled such a sensibility. Compounded by the growing differentiation

between "traditional standards" and "the prevailing values of the wider society," attention

to doctrine was interpreted as cutting oneself off from society.

> The modern mood is antipathetic to the very notion of communal norms.
> This antipathy can be construed…as the product of such factors as
> religious and ideological pluralism and social mobility. When human
> beings are insistently [*sic*] exposed to conflicting and changing views,
> they tend to lose their confidence in any of them. Doctrines no longer
> represent objective realities and are instead experienced as expessions of
> personal preference. … as long as each person is honest and sincere, it
> makes no real difference which faith they embrace.[34]

This led to the weakening of communal loyalties and heightened the importance of

"individual freedom, autonomy, and authenticity"[35] Dogma "unhealthily" separated one

from society and tacitly discounted Christianity within the contemporary milieu, giving

theologians freedom to argue that the…

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[33] *ND*, 113.

[34] *ND*, 62.

[35] *ND*, 63.

absurd doctrines of the past never were important in themselves, but were only expressive symbolizations of deeper experiences and orientations that ought now to be articulated in other and more contemporary ways. Thus an experiential-expressive approach to religion can be easily, though not necessarily, used to legitimate the religious privatism and subjectivism that is fostered by the social pressures of the day.[36]

Among the most central correctives offered by cultural-linguists was the fracturing of experiential-expressivism's unified approach to religion. For Lindbeck, the experiences that religions evoked were as varied as the interpretive schemes they embodied. Far from being external, diverse riffs on an internal, unifying baseline, the increasingly diverse types of religious experiences represented *radically* distinct— literally, different "at the root"—ways of "being oriented toward self, neighbor, and cosmos."[37] Failing to allow for such differentiation would trap the theologian in privatized forms of expression.[38] Different religions indeed represented an "external world, a *verbum externum*,"[39] but far from being a mere concretization—an "expression

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[36] *ND*, 63.

[37] *ND*, 26.

[38] "Even those experiential-expressivists—such as Lonergan (or Karl Rahner and David Tracy)— who acknowledge that experience cannot be expressed except in public and intersubjective forms, do seem to maintain a kind of privacy in the origins of experience and language that, if Wittgenstein is right, is more than doubtful" (38). Of key importance here is the distinct manner of referencing the "*origins* of experience and language." According to Lindbeck's interpretation of Lonergan, Rahner, and Tracy, the origin of religious language is an internal self shared by all humans. Mircea Eliade's "only the paradigmatic is the real" references this shared locus. Lindbeck's own theory of religion is distinct insofar as it posits movement in the opposite direction—from religion as a *verbum externum* "into" the interiority which is the self. The self is formed by publicly available facts such as religious texts and doctrines. Postliberal theology built on a cultural-linguistic theory of religion then redirects this self which has been formed by external stimuli into engagement with the public world. An experiential-expressivist approach, on the other hand, does not allow one to challenge typical notions of selfhood. Here, "fulfillment comes from exfoliating or penetrating into the inner depths rather than from communally responsible action in the public world" (112). In contrast, a cultural-linguistic approach to religion facilitates the creation of "communal enclaves that socialize their members into highly particular outlooks supportive of concern for others rather than for individual rights and entitlements" (113).

[39] *ND*, 26.

or thematization of a preexisting self or of preconceptual experience"—religion "molded

and shaped the self and its world."[40] Religions thus *produced*, not merely represented,

"fundamentally divergent depth experiences," and it was as much a mistake to clump

diverse religions into one experience as it was to say, "All red things, whether apples,

Indians, or the Moscow square belong to the same natural genus."

Finally, Lindbeck maintained that experiential-expressivism's attempt at unifying

religious experience destroyed "the conditions for its own existence."[41] Without the

availability of a differentiating structure underlying religious studies, the theologian qua

scholar of religion lost the possibility for a clear definition of religion itself:

> Lonergan assumes, as do most experiential-expressivist theologians, that
> the scholarly study of religious phenomena on the whole supports the
> crucial affirmation of the basic unity of religious experience. …this is the
> most problematic element in his, as in other, experiential-expressivist
> theories. Because this core experience is said to be common to a wide
> diversity of religions, it is difficult or impossible to specify its distinctive

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[40] *ND*, 20. Lindbeck claims that his proposal does not deny Tillich's famous observation that "religion is the substance of culture and culture the form of religion" (*Systematic* Theology, III [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963], 248). A cultural-linguistic approach is more Aristotelian than Hegelian or Schellingian, the latter two of whom influenced Tillich. Lindbeck says, "In both models the culture-forming power of religious experience can be acknowledged, although in one case the experience is derivative, in the other primordial" (21). A potential critique arises at this point. One may ask how a theory assumedly "from the outside" may answer a set of criteria for determining meaning held to be "on the inside"? In order to deconstruct and/or provide a framework for understanding a particular group there is a level of exteriority that is required.

In semiotic systems, even more so than in rule-governed human behavior, "meaning is more fully intratextual." "But among semiotic systems, intratextuality…is greatest in natural languages, cultures, and religions which (unlike mathematics, for example) are potentially all-embracing and posses the property of reflexivity. One can speak of all life and reality in French, or from an American or a Jewish perspective; and one can also describe French in French, American culture in American terms, and Judaism in Jewish ones. This makes it possible for theology to be intratextual, not simply by explicating religion from within but in the stronger sense of describing everything as inside, as interpreted by the religion, and doing this by means of religiously shaped second-order concepts" (100-101).

[41] Lindbeck maintains it is terribly unlikely that any one religion will garner the theological and apologetic fortitude needed to establish itself as "the one true religion" over against others and, thereby, socialize all of society according to its "highly particular" but socially aware ethical concerns. For this reason, "it may well be that postliberal theologies are more applicable than liberal ones to the needs of the future" (113).

features, and unless this is done, the assertion of commonality becomes logically and empirically vacuous.[42]

In order to protect against relativism and vacuity, the theologian should protect the uniqueness of diverse religious expressions as a means of protecting their meaning-communicating potential.

Indeed, the very viability of public theology depended on the protection of this differentiating structure.[43] Religion was "that ultimate dimension of culture (because it has to do with whatever is taken as most important) which gives shape and intensity to the experiential matrix from which significant cultural achievements flow."[44] Especially in a cultural setting where the Judeo-Christian point of view has been so central to cultural identity,[45] "the West's continuing imaginative vitality and creativity may well depend on the existence of groups for whom the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures are not simply classics among others, but the canonical literature par excellence."[46] So long as religions stressed "service rather than domination," they were much more likely to contribute "to the future of humanity" by preserving their own distinctiveness and integrity than by yielding "to the homogenizing tendencies associated with liberal

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[42] *ND*, 18.

[43] Note how this desire to protect the autonomy of religious expression unites Lindbeck with the concerns of such scholars as Benne, MacIntyre, Stackhouse, and Neuhaus, whom we considered in chapter two—those theologians and ethicists who see the dispersion of religious identity as a central problematic in (what they see as) the moral decline of Western society.

[44] *ND*, 20.

[45] Lindbeck points to Northrop Frye's *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982) for an exemplary study on the Bible's central status. Cf. also *ND*, 120: "The vitality of Western societies may well depend in the long run on the culture-forming power of the biblical outlook in its intratextual, untranslatable specificity."

[46] *ND*, 114.

experiential-expressivism."[47] If a particular movement robbed a culture of its religious

core, ethical nihilism would not be far removed.

The Cultural-Linguistic Approach to Religion

Instead of locating the "abiding and doctrinally significant aspect of religion" in

inner experiences, cultural-linguists turned to the stories of a religion and the "grammar"

that informed the way such stories were told.[48] Borrowing from scholarly trends in

anthropological, sociological, and philosophical literature,[49] Lindbeck emphasized those

respects in which religions resembled languages in their mutual ability to shape

"correlative forms of life." In so doing, Lindbeck suggested that religion, like language

and culture, should be understood "semiotically"—as a collection of "idioms for the

construing of reality and the living of life."[50] Religion *shaped* experience. It was "a kind

of cultural and/or linguistic framework or medium" that shaped the entirety of life and

thought.[51] Like language, religious expression was perpetually fluctuating, even as it

remained a culturally closed set of symbols, idioms, ideas, phrases, and structures whose

meaning was "immanently" definable. Lindbeck stated the difference this way:

> [An "extra-textual" understanding of religion] locates religious meaning
> outside the text or semiotic system either in the objective realities to which
> it refers or in the experiences it symbolizes, whereas for cultural-linguists

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[47] Ibid.

[48] *ND*, 66.

[49] For example Peter Berger and T. Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Doubleday and Co., 1966). Lindbeck's "pretheological inquiry" (ch. 2) is shaped primarily by theological concerns but is also consonant with anthropological, sociological, and philosophical studies (18).

[50] *ND*, 4.

[51] *ND*, 19.

the meaning is immanent. Meaning is constituted by the uses of a specific language rather than being distinguishable from it.[52]

Religion, like culture, was best understood as an interlocked system of signs, "embodied in myths or narratives," "heavily ritualized,"[53] and held together by their functional impact. Such varia informed the comprehensive interpretive schemes which structured human experience and the interpretations of self and world. There were "numberless" thoughts, sentiments, and realities that were inconceivable without "the appropriate symbol systems" of religion.[54]

The "objectivities" of religion—its language, doctrines, liturgies, and modes of action—were not merely external variations on an internally shared similarity between humans. Religious terminology shaped a culture's passions[55] and directed religious individuals toward that which was (for them) "more important than everything else in the universe."[56] One's inherited, religio-cultural language enabled "the description of realities, the formulation of beliefs, and the experiencing of inner attitudes"[57] and facilitated the actualization of "our specifically human capacities for thought, action, and feeling."[58] To become religious was to interiorize a *Weltanschaung*, to be saturated by a

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[52] *ND*, 100.

[53] *ND*, 18.

[54] *ND*, 20.

[55] *ND*, 25.

[56] William A. Christian, Sr., *Meaning and Truth in Religion* (Princeton University Press, 1964); cf. *ND*, 32-33.

[57] *ND*, 19.

[58] *ND*, 20. Religion facilitated emotional maturation into full humanity: "One learns *how* to feel, act, and think in conformity with a religious tradition" (*ND*, 21). In this context of *ND* Lindbeck is exploring the distinction between a regulative, or grammatical use of religious language—that it functions

linguistic paradigm that empowered one to engage in the unique experience of being

human.

Indeed, for the adherents of the unique religion, there was nothing *more* real than

the worlds witnessed to by said texts.[59] Religion's universalizing trajectory required

religious meaning to be "thickly" [60] described, embedded in the cultural-linguistic

paradigm of the religion. As in the way hammers and saws fit into the linguistic sphere

of carpentry, or as ordinals and fractions fit into the linguistic sphere of mathematics, so

religious doctrines were "made comprehensible by indicating how they fit into systems of

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as the language which enables a person to navigate existence—and an ontological, or propositionalist use of religious doctrine—that it functions in an immediate, one-to-one relationship with ontological "truth." Religion, "like a natural language" (*ND*, 50), functioned as a dialect for dealing with "whatever is most important" (*ND*, 26); "like a map," it guided "the traveler rightly into living according to the will and being of God (*ND*, 37-38).

[59] "A scriptural world is thus able to absorb the universe" (*ND*, 103). Though note Lindbeck's nuance: the relation between religion and experience "is not unilateral but dialectical. It is simplistic to say…merely that religions produce experiences, for the causality is reciprocal" (*ND*, 19). It "supplies the interpretive framework within which believers seek to live their lives and understand reality." Thus, traditionally, exegesis has assumed "that Scripture creates its own domain of meaning and that the task of interpretation is to extend this over the whole of reality (*ND*, 103).

Lindbeck points especially to Aquinas for a normative example of this traditional approach. For an in-depth look at Lindbeck's reading of Thomas Aquinas, see Gilles Emery, OP, *Trinity, Church, and the Human Person* (Naples, Florida: Sapientia Press, 2007), 263-290. Gilles' conclusion is that Lindbeck's reinterpretation of Aquinas—though in continuity with the axiom "it is necessary to reinterpret Aquinas in order to rediscover him"—is "separated from the more evident interpretations of Aquinas." Gilles' observation of the "originality of Lindbeck's interpretation" leads Gilles to a twofold conclusion: "On the one hand, one should affirm that the reading of Aquinas is consistently present in the background of *The Nature of Doctrine*, in such a way that it is a profound source of inspiration for the cultural-linguistic model. On the other hand, the reading of Aquinas proposed by Lindbeck is only truly understood starting from a pre-understanding whose concrete form is partly different from Aquinas's epistemology" (289). Among the more blatant theological-epistemological differences one can note between Aquinas and Lindbeck is the role Aquinas gives to the object of theological study in the determination of theological method. For Lindbeck, theological method is determined by a sociological-cultural observation on the nature of religion, not (e.g.) on the identity of God as being simultaneously the content and the source of theological language—thus necessitating an analogical, as opposed to univocal or equivocal, appropriation of said language.

[60] Cf., Geertz, *Interpretation*, 13; Lindbeck, 101. Lindbeck later connects the notion of "thick"—as "from the inside"—description with the notion of faith seeking understanding: "The logic of coming to believe, because it is like that of learning a language, has little room for argument, but once one has learned to speak the language of faith, argument becomes possible" (118).

communication or purposeful action, not by reference to outside factors." Their semiotic

identity was "wholly constituted" by intratextuality, by location within a specific,

religious story.[61]

For the theologian adopting a cultural-linguistic view of religion, therefore,

doctrinal statements expressed intrasystematic truth. They affirmed "nothing about extra-

linguistic or extra-human reality," nor did they make ontological truth claims. This was

not to deny that doctrines involved propositions.[62] They propositionally defined the

grammar of a cultural-linguistic community—how a community viewed metaphysics, as

opposed to how metaphysics should be viewed. But insofar as their primary point of

reference was the community's own expression, doctrines should not be related

immediately to ontology. In short, church doctrines functioned as grammatical and

ethical "rules"[63] governing "discourse, attitude, and action."[64] As grammatical

propositions, doctrines asserted "nothing about God and his [*sic*] relation to humans."[65]

They commented, instead, on the way in which such first-order assertions functioned in a

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[61] *ND*, 100.

[62] *ND*, 66. Drawing from Lonergan [*De Deo Trino* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1964), *The Way to Nicea*, tr. Conn O'Donovan (Westminster Press, 1976), and "The Dehellenization of Dogma," in Lonergan's *A Second Collection* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975) and *Method in Theology*, 307ff.], Lindbeck asserted that the attempt at "propositionally" narrowing down the "confused multiplicity of presystematic symbols, titles, and predicates" that may be applied to any one given religious idea or entity (e.g., God or Jesus Christ) was borrowed from the Greeks. This "logical" (Lonergan) or "grammatical" (Lindbeck) means of analyzing the data of Scripture functioned as a "second-order rule of speech" (*ND*, 94).

[63] Note: "Principle" and "rule" are often used interchangeably by Lindbeck: "Because the three doctrinal *rules* of which we are here speaking function much as does, e.g., the *principle* of causality" (94, fn. 8, ital. mine).

[64] *ND*, 4.

[65] *ND*, 55.

community gathering for worship, adoration, and preaching. As ethical guides, doctrines

recommended and excluded certain ranges of "propositional utterances or symbolizing

activities."[66] Religious truth claims enabled religious adherents to live "as if he [God,

sic] were good in the ways indicated by the stories of creation and providence which

shape believers' thoughts and actions."[67] Though believers did not have direct access to

the ontological realities referenced by historical stories of the resurrection, they could

nevertheless find a motivational impetus for living the resurrected life through the stories

attesting to it.[68]

Thus, the adequacy of doctrine[69]—that is, the level at which the behavioral and

grammatical rules of a faith community accurately captured the community's identity—

was theologically determined to the degree that such doctrines described or predicted the

usages that proved "acceptable or unacceptable in a given community."[70] In this sense

creeds and heresies were defined not by "positive collective desires" but negatively, as

"the avoidance of cognitive dissonance."[71] Grammatically stated, doctrines adjudicated

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[66] *ND*, 19.

[67] *ND*, 53.

[68] To say "Christ is Lord," for example, was not to offer a statement suggesting propositional truth. The claim became propositionally true insofar as it engendered "adoration, proclamation, obedience, promise-hearing, and promise-keeping" in continuity with the community's understanding of the mind of Christ. *ND*, 54.

[69] See also *ND*, 93 for a specific example, where Lindbeck considers the difference between theology—as a specification of the circumstances in which a doctrine, such as that of Nicea, applies—and doctrine, which references the actual words, symbols, sentences, mandates, and theological formulations constructed at the Nicean meeting of church leaders in 325 C.E.

[70] *ND*, 95.

[71] *ND*, 96.

"the correctness or incorrectness of particular usages"[72] of religious language within a

faith community.[73] Understanding the authority of ancient expressions of faith according

to the rules they instantiated gave theology a "partly empirical meaning," insofar as doing

so allowed full attention to the meanings present within the religious expressions of a

particular cultural-linguistic context. Lindbeck contended that this regulative approach to

doctrine gave postliberal theology a more direct connection with experience than its

experiential-expressive counterpart[74] and thereby protected it from the charge of vacuity.

> The proper way to determine what "God" signifies…is by examining how
> the word operates within a religion and thereby shapes reality and
> experience rather than by first establishing its propositional or experiential
> meaning and reinterpreting or reformulating its uses accordingly. It is in
> this sense that theological description in the cultural-linguistic mode is
> intrasemiotic or intratextual.[75]

The theologian charged with reflecting on church doctrine constructed "a

multiplicity of complex conceptual structures," which "he [*sic*] must contrive somehow

first to grasp and then to render."[76] His "only job" was to locate religious meaning by

recommending and excluding certain ranges of "propositional utterances or symbolizing

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[72] *ND*, 84.

[73] Lindbeck maintains that creeds are best understood as paradigmatic instantiations of doctrinal rules "that have been abidingly important from the beginning in forming mainstream Christian identity" (81).

[74] *ND*, 84.

[75] *ND*, 100.

[76] This understanding of religion posits a deep connectivity between religion and culture and is dependent on the definition of culture offered by Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation*, 13. Lindbeck, 101. Lindbeck later connects the notion of "thick"—as "from the inside"—description with the very theologically loaded notion of faith seeking understanding: "The logic of coming to believe, because it is like that of learning a language, has little room for argument, but once one has learned to speak the language of faith, argument becomes possible" (118).

activities" within a specific cultural-linguistic context.[77] Instead of turning to, say,

critical theory, feminist hermeneutics, or ideology-critique, the interpreter-theologian was

best served by simply explicating the reality "generated by" the texts which make up her

or his own religious identity.[78] In intratextuality "the normative or literal meaning" of a

religious text—indeed, its theological interpretation

> must be consistent with the kind of text it is taken to be by the community
> for which it is important. The meaning must not be esoteric: not
> something behind, beneath, or in front of the text; not something that the
> text reveals, discloses, implies, or suggests to those with extraneous
> metaphysical, historical, or experiential interests. It must rather be what
> the text says in terms of the communal language of which the text is an
> instantiation.[79]

Even though there may be diversity of theological opinion, intratextual theologians

converge around a common purpose: "to describe life and reality in ways conformable to

what [the biblical] stories indicate of God."[80] In the adoption of such narratively located

meaning, "literary considerations are more important than historical-critical ones in

determining canonical sense."[81] One commentator put the thrust of Lindbeck's position

as follows: "A narrative description of Christianity not only contains explanations of

various events within the faith, but is itself the required explanation of all those parts."[82]

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[77] *ND*, 5.

[78] *ND*, 103.

[79] *ND*, 106.

[80] *ND*, 107-108.

[81] *ND*, 108.

[82] Gary Comstock, "Two Types," 692.

Once the narratively rendered explanation is grasped, no further explanation is needed—

or possible.

> The believer, so an intratextual approach would maintain, is not told
> primarily to be conformed to a reconstructed Jesus of history (as Hans
> Küng maintains), nor to a metaphysical Christ of faith (as for
> Schillebeeckx), nor to an agapeic [*sic*] way of being in the world (as for
> David Tracy), but he or she is rather to be conformed to the Jesus Christ
> depicted in the narrative.[83] An intratextual reading tries to derive the
> interpretive framework that designates the theologically controlling sense
> from the literary structure of the text itself.[84]

Excursus: Cultural-Linguisticality and Dialogue

> [The cultural-linguistic approach] proposes no common
> framework…within which to compare religions.[85]
>
> <div align="right">– George Lindbeck</div>

Of primary importance for public theologians pursuing truth is the awareness that

some "common ground" between common experience and the Christian fact must be

boldly pursued. Once this space for dialogue is located, the theologian will find ways to

critique her own religious tradition and will thereby protect the important "critical

moment" involved in the fundamental approach to public theology. One way to assess

the existence of such a critical moment is to evaluate the potential a theological system

has for dialogue. With this observation in mind, we would do well to give a brief

consideration to the amenability of a cultural-linguistic approach to interreligious

dialogue. If mutually critical conversation across religious boundaries is allowed, one

can assume that mutually critical conversation across the theologian-public divide would

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[83] One may ask whether it is not the case that Lindbeck says the believer *has already* been conformed; and so the reason for adopting a cultural-linguistic approach to religion is to protect this formation.

[84] *ND*, 106.

[85] *ND*, 35.

also be allowed; if mutually critical conversation across religious boundaries is not

allowed, one can assume that mutually critical conversation across the theologian-public

divide would likewise not be allowed and would, therefore, limit the "publicness" of

cultural-linguistic theology to unidirectional expression.

Is Lindbeck's system—intent as it is on finding a means by which ecumenical

discussion can occur—actually amenable to authentic dialogue?[86] In his afterword to the

25th anniversary edition of *ND*,[87] Lindbeck himself admits the connection between

suspicions that his "account of religion and doctrine promotes fideism" and the

consequent impeding of "communication between different faiths."[88] Let us begin our

consideration of this question by considering Lindbeck's notion of truth. We will receive

some help in this task from Bruce Marshall,[89] who addresses the question of relativity

and truth in his introduction to the 25th anniversary edition of *Nature of Doctrine*.

Marshall points that that in *Nature of Doctrine* Lindbeck "speaks of 'truth' in three

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[86] Lindbeck referred to his "particularist universalism" as the primary insufficiency of his original writing (126), specifically in chapter three of *ND*. He summarized the problem as "a combination of particularity and comprehensiveness…. It is the particularistic side that is chiefly in evidence in chapter three, and the universal dimension is neglected. This imbalance results in an account that has been criticized for its isolationist and fideistic tendencies; it is with the explanation and correction of this imbalance that I shall be chiefly concerned [in the afterword to the 25th anniversary edition]." The idea originated from Joseph DiNoia, OP, *The Diversity of Religions* (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 1992), 164.

[87] George Lindbeck, "Interreligious Relations and Christian Ecumenism: Revisiting Chapter 3 of *The Nature of Doctrine*" in *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* 25th anniversary edition [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009]), 125-140.

[88] *ND*, 126.

[89] Marshall, "Introduction," xvii.

different ways: "there is 'categorial' truth, 'intrasystematic' truth, and 'ontological' truth."[90]

"Ontological" truth has the most in common with classical notions of truth, where that which is most true is that which most comprehensively lines up with "reality." In scholastic terminology, this type of truth was captured by the notion of *adequatio mentis ad rem*, the "adequacy of the mind to the thing." For "a theist," as Lindbeck says,[91] that principled locus remains "God's being and will." This all-encompassing idea becomes the norm in correspondence with which the truth of all things can be evaluated for Christians and, eschatologically, by all.[92] Intrasystematic truth, on the other hand, is that notion of truth which references the coherence of a statement within a particular context:

> We need, first, to distinguish between what I shall call the 'intrasystematic' and the 'ontological' truth of statements. The first is the truth of coherence; the second, that truth of correspondence to reality which, according to epistemological realists, is attributable to first-order propositions.[93]

Wallace generously defines intrasystematic truth as being more accurately captured with the notion of warrant or justification—"what we think entitles us to hold some beliefs and reject others."[94] Yet Lindbeck himself is not so clear in differentiating the two, thus

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[90] Ibid.

[91] *ND*, 37.

[92] Consider this eschatological statement by Lindbeck: "Salvation is first of all communal, and it has broken into the present from the future above all in Jesus Christ and in the communities that publicly witness to him, but it is not until the end of history that all humanity and—indeed, all creation—will acknowledge him as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. It is then that the foretaste of salvation that comes with belonging to a witnessing community will be fulfilled and those who have not shared in the initial foretaste may also join in the final consummation" (*ND*, 131).

[93] *ND*, 50.

[94] Marshall, "Introduction," xvii.

perpetuating the charges of fideism, relativism, and imperialism.[95] Categorial truth,[96] like its intrasystematic counterpart, does not immediately connote "reality" but the ideas of meaning and reference.[97] Categorial truth points to the manner in which a specific language, though limited by cultural-historical factors, enables clarity: "The classification and categorial patterns embedded in a language, once it has been acquired, help organize the…chaotic confusion that bombards our senses."[98]

It would indeed seem that the limiting of religious truth to an intratextual, or "categorial" locus would keep one from locating a shared space for mutually critical dialogue. The possibility of dialogue in a cultural-linguistic paradigm depends on one's religious commitment: "In a cultural-linguistic perspective, different religions will have different answers to how they should relate or not relate to others."[99] Their respective "material" teachings do not have sufficient commonality to warrant a common answer to the question.

How can Lindbeck claim both that dialogical cooperation between religions is imperative, dependent on a level of mutual respect, *and* that the depth of material difference among religions does not allow mutual correlation? His answer specifically references the universal-particular dynamic that has been so important for our purposes in

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[95] Marshall says, "On this point ['that Lindbeck is soft on truth'] Lindbeck's language has no doubt contributed to confusion about his views" (Marshall, "Introduction," xvii).

[96] Lindbeck first notes the notion of "categorial" truth on *ND*, 10. Interestingly, he points to Karl Rahner and Joseph Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition* (Herder & Herder, 1966), 9-25 as "a brief presentation of the distinction between transcendental and categorial revelation" (15, fn. 29; see also 29, fn. 18).

[97] Marshall, "Introduction" xvii.

[98] *ND*, 23.

[99] *ND*, 131.

considering public theology. Whereas for Tracy, the religious classic is "particular in origin and universal in effect," for Lindbeck religions remain unique from front to back. In their respective forms of particularity, religious expression functions as a "comprehensive interpretive scheme" characterizing what members the religious community considers to be "more important than everything else in the universe."[100] Religious adoration of the most quintessentially central aspect of all reality becomes the organizing concept by which all of life is conceptualized. Buddhists or Christians, for example, who desire to describe their theological beliefs to the other do not have enough material overlap to do so.

If the possibility of communication is dependent on similarity, and if the similarity is located not in material teachings and language but in the form underlying the respective material expressions of the different religions, then it would seem that Lindbeck is advocating a sort of prelinguistic shared space that is not unlike the unitive form of religious identity so important to (his understanding of) experiential-expressivists like Tracy, Rahner, and Lonergan.[101] Further, Lindbeck's focus on the mutual respect

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[100] *ND*, 18-19, 132; cf. 93 on content and form.

[101] Gilles Emery correctly reflects the reception of Lindbeck by Catholic theologians, when he says, "Des auteurs catholiques, David Tracy en particulier, ont reproché à la théologie postlibérale de concevoir les rapports de la foi et du monde de façon unilatérale en reproduisant un <<confessionnalisme barthien>>, de simplifier à l'excès les pensées expérientielles-expressives et la corrélation en les regroupant sans distinction sous le terme <<foundationalisme>>, de renouveler un <<pragmatisme classique>> et de jeter le soupçon sur la raison moderne sans apporter d'alternative convaincante" (Gilles Emery, O.P., "L'Intérêt de Théologiens Catholiques pour la proposition Postlibérale de George Lindbeck" in Marc Boss, George Eméry, and Pierre Gisel [eds.], *Postlibéralisme? La théologie de George Lindbeck et sa reception*, Lieux théologiques 37 [Genève: Labor et Fides 2004], 45 (39-57 inclusive).
    The accuracy or inaccuracy of Lindbeck's categorization "unitive" can be determined by reflection on such quotes as the following (here from Tracy): "There is no universally agreed upon single definition for the human phenomenon called 'religion.'" He says further, "A need to agree upon a single universal definition for the term 'religion' is neither necessary nor particularly desirable in the present pluralist situation. There is no longer, nor need there be, any one universally agreed upon 'religious perspective'" (*BRO*, 92). When Tracy does eventually posit his own definition of "religion," namely the idea of "limit"

each religion must have for the "true" in such discussions—the possibility that even

Christian statements which are unjustifiable in a Buddhist context may yet be "true" in

spite of their commensurability—points to his affirmation of an underlying unity to these

religions. This unity is, to be sure, only formal[102] and thus imperfectly accessible by any

one particular expression of faith; but to assert its existence means that Lindbeck is

affirming either (1) a commonality and thereby normative standard according to which all

religious expressions are ultimately judged; or (2) a commonality that, although not

functional as a universally available, normative standard yet exists as an underlying

enabler of religion and is thereby unitive, an idea which is, again, the primary problem

with experiential-expressivists for Lindbeck; or (3) certain dialogical parameters that

enable mutually critical conversations in a postliberal, religious context, a concern quite

similar to those of the early Tracy.

Lindbeck's ternary uses of "truth" (ontological, categorical, and intrasystemic)

notwithstanding, it is hard not to assume that his mode of argumentation lends itself most

radically to interpretation number one. In his afterword Lindbeck discusses the danger of

"epistemological imperialism" that may accompany the cultural-linguistic paradigm.

Indeed, when religion is not only described but prescribed as that fundamental posture

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as a means of adequately naming the shared experience of a religious dimension to existence, he says,
"'Limit is argued to be *a* characteristic, not a universal definition of religion," and "the argument is not that
all limit-language is *eo ipso* religious but rather that all religious (dimension or explicit) experience and
language has a limit-character." The limit-to characteristic of religious language and experience does not
necessarily imply a limit-of dimension. For a later quote, cf. *PA*, 90: "There are family resemblances
among the religions, but as far as I can see, there is no single essence." The observable similarities among
religious perdure as analogies, that is, "similarities-in-difference."

[102] *ND*, 132; cf. 34-35.

able to "absorb the world into the biblical [as the Christian scriptural norm] universe,"[103]

it is accompanied by the dangers of politicization and coercion—whether explicitly

violent or not. In order to protect against this danger, Lindbeck considers the possibility

(or lack thereof) of "changes in landscape and worldviews" which "occur within

believers' Scripture-dependent outlook." As believers discriminate between acceptable

and unacceptable doctrines, they are periodically required to engage in a "prophetic

denunciation of communal blunders."[104]

What one observes in our pluralistic context is the tendency for respective

religions to locate a means by which their unique narrative may absorb the others. Even

if the dialogue begins with a full commitment to non-proselytizing, respectful dialogue,

respective adherents inevitably end up searching for those categories which are

considered most adequate—those which are best able to account universally for what is

taken to be real intrasystematically. Yet since there is no possibility of mutual evaluation

of material claims, this discussion will inevitably end in Alasdair MacIntyre's notion of

perpetually conflicting traditions:

> To put it crassly, the religion that can better incorporate strengths from the
> other without losing its own is the one that wins. Conclusive victories will
> rarely if ever conclude such competitions before the eschaton.[105]

Conclusion: Toward a post-Lindbeckian appropriation of David Tracy

Our survey of George Lindbeck's response to Tracy highlighted the fact that

fundamental approaches to public theology have come under substantial critique since the

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[103] *ND*, 104.

[104] *ND*, 135.

[105] *ND*, 138.

publications of "the early Tracy." Various forms of particularist voices—from narratival and postsecular to liberationist and political—have deconstructed the ostensibly disembodied and, therefore, oppressive methodology tied up with hermeneutical method. In what follows, I intend to take these critiques seriously, even as I remain thoroughly sympathetic to the impulses out of which fundamental, revisionist public theology emerged. The burgeoning proliferation of marginalized voices struggling for recognition in our contemporary context should at least chasten any method broadly dependent on Enlightenment rationality and at most expose it as a totalizing hegemony perpetuating the evils of a technocratic society.

We may organize our responses to the Tracy-Lindbeck debate by reengaging the three questions raised at the conclusion to chapter one. Using the Tracyan notions of meaning, meaningfulness, and truth to situate our understandings of theological and public expression, we posed the following questions: (1) How does a theologian locate meaning, meaningfulness, and truth in dialogue with the publics informing theological expression? (2) How does a theologian locate meaning, meaningfulness, and truth in dialogue with the publics informing non-theological, or "public" expression? (3) How does a theologian facilitate an interrelation of the meaning, meaningfulness, and truth disclosed in both theological and non-theological conversational domains? In the course of our reengagement with these questions, we will suggest a five-pronged criteriology for public theology that will guide our philosophical considerations in part two.

How does a theologian locate meaning, meaningfulness, and truth in conversation with the publics informing theological expression?

Lindbeck saw the easy integration of particularities into an assumed, experiential commonality as a reductionistic framework disallowing authentic theological expression. To the extent that any non-theological framework is used to understand theological expression, that framework runs the risk of shifting theology's uniquely theological parameters. Theologians are charged with the task of engaging the members of their own community in thoughtful self-reflection. If, in the adoption of any framework for self-understanding, the theologian compromises her ability to communicate understandably to her ecclesial public, then she has potentially compromised her vocational calling and restricted the potential for her project to effect change.

Using our first question as a point of departure, we can thus posit the following, *first criterion for public theology: public theology must remain recognizable to members of a religious community*. Although Tracy's theology has been criticized from various narratival points of view, it is interesting to note that Tracy has never come under censure by his own theological tradition, that of the Roman Catholic church.[106] Although the fundamental-theological model founded Tracy's systematic-theological model, it did not compromise the systematic theologian's ability to communicate to the ecclesial public. The mutually critical correlation of common human experience (fundamental theology) and the Christian fact (systematic theology) gave way to a christology that was

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[106] For Tracy's own recollection of his engagement with the Vatican, see David Gibson, "God-Obsessed: David Tracy's Theological Quest," *Commonweal* 137.2 (Jan 29, 2010): 10-17. Gibson recalls, "After Blessed Rage for Order came out in 1975, he received a letter from the CDF asking him to explain and defend the 'process' understanding of God set forth in the book. 'So I did,' [Tracy recalled,] 'And I never heard back again. I don't know what that means'" (16).

sufficiently recognizable to members of Tracy's ecclesial community, sufficiently

inclusive to incorporate diverging points of view, and sufficiently critical to inform

liberationist projects.

Even so, we may question whether Tracy's project is easily transferable to

ecclesial contexts that are less amenable to the inclusivist, critical christology informing

his endeavors. In a recent article celebrating William Placher, Stephen H. Webb

contrasted the revisionist concerns of his mentor, David Tracy, with the "unapologetic

theology" of Placher (a professional mentor for Webb at Wabash College).[107] In the

course of this article, Webb celebrated the impressively bold approach to conversation

and critique of Tracy but judged it, ultimately, as "overly optimistic" for a theologian

functioning within an ecclesial context. For Tracy and the young theologians studying

under him at the University of Chicago during the last decades of the twentieth century,

"every aspect of Christian belief was open to inquiry and modification." This

"generous," "truly catholic hermeneutic" made for an exciting environment for emerging

theologians. As Webb recalls, it encouraged them to "believe we too could discuss

anything with anybody."[108]

Upon entering a private, liberal arts college in the Lutheran tradition, however,

Webb discovered that the "Chicago-style theological revisionism" was not easily

transferable to every context. William Placher's "rhetorical style," on the other hand,

worked well in the confessional but liberal setting of Wabash.

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[107] Stephen H. Webb, "On Mentors and the Making of a Useful Theology: A Retrospective on the Work of William C. Placher," *Reviews in Religion and Theology*, 13.2 (Feb 23, 2006): 237-243. Cf. William Placher, *Unapologetic Theology: A Christian Voice in a Pluralistic Conversation* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989).

[108] Webb, "On Mentors," 237.

> What set Placher apart from many of his peers is that he came to left-leaning politics by way of the Bible. Consequently, he did not need to revise his understanding of the Bible to meet the demands of radical politics, nor did he need to challenge political radicalism from a biblical perspective. The two fit together so snugly that they were indistinguishable. All that was left was the need for someone to tell the political radicals that the Bible has been with them all along and the traditional Christians that their beliefs are really quite politically radical. The wager of Placher's career is that one can probe deeply into the tradition of biblical theology and pop out at the other side on the cutting edge of the political left.[109]

Placher's attention to the texts shared by his religious community enabled him to communicate in a recognizable way to members of his ecclesial public without compromising the political concerns of his academic public. Placher and Tracy together remind public theologians of a primary responsibility: to engage appropriately enough with the memory of a religious community that their theology is recognizably Christian, while also pushing that community toward theological understandings more adequate to emerging situations.[110]

Immediately, however, we should recall the concerns of liberationist public theologians, who challenged the assumption that traditional understandings are sufficient to transform instantiations of systemic oppression. Informed by the dialogue occurring in the post-Enlightenment global public, we may suggest *a second criterion for public theology: public theology is aware of the potential for technocracy and totality in so many modern forms of theology and thus maintains a self-critical posture at the very center of its project*. Centrally concerned with the possibility of ideological distortion,

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[109] Webb, "On Mentors," 239.

[110] For example, Placher reprimands Christians of his own denomination for connecting "traditional Christianity" with a negation of LGBT rights. Cf. William Placher, *Jesus the Savior: The Meanings of Jesus Christ for Christian Faith* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 96-102.

public theology surveys the landscape of its tradition for forms of expression that do not

lend themselves to easily totalizing interpretations. These symbols are definable and

semantically meaning-full in theological communities; but their full meaning perdures as

a kind of limit-concept. Tied up with the pursuit of recognizability, therefore, is an

insistence on self-critique. For Tracy, rational forms represented by critical philosophers,

prophetic-eschatological theologians, and the radical mystics of the apophatic tradition

informed the analogical-dialogical approach to plurality in a post-Enlightenment society

disenchanted not only by mystification but also by the nihilism of disenchantment. For

Lindbeck and his narratival colleagues, critique was enabled by preserving the openness

of a religious community to conversation. Doctrine, as second order reflection on the

community's first-order religious expression, classified what the church was already

saying. As the unspoken grammar of the community continued to develop, so did

doctrine. In our analysis of Lindbeck, we judged his theology less amenable to critique

than that of Tracy, but the observation remains that both theologians were aware of the

need to construct projects not merely recognizable to their respective, ecclesial

communities but also to push those communities toward ever-expanding self-

understandings.

How does a theologian locate meaning, meaningfulness, and truth in conversation with

the publics informing public expression?

At the very outset of this project, we observed the relative consensus among

theologians that theology cannot remain merely in ecclesial parameters. Having run this

observation through four streams of public theology and the Tracy-Lindbeck debates, we

may highlight two, complementary examples of this trajectory that inform our third and

fourth criteria for public theology.

First, *public theology pursues "what is true."* In the public theologians we have

surveyed, this pursuit has taken two primary forms: philosophical and ethical. The

philosophical version may be observed in "the early David Tracy." In continuity with

both Protestant (Schleiermacher,[111] Troeltsch,[112] and Tillich[113]) and Roman Catholic

(Lonergan[114] and Rahner[115]) trajectories, Tracy maintained that theology could achieve

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[111] op. cit.

[112] Ernst Troeltsch, *The Christian Faith* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1991): 37-39, orig. *Glaubenslehre*, ed. Gertrud von le Fort (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1925). Max Stackhouse cites Troeltsch as a quintessential public theologian in "A Premature Postmodern," *First Things* 106 (Oct 2000): 19-22, though Stackhouse's concern is less with Troeltsch's stress on the necessary mediation of historical theology through personal experience than it is with Troeltsch's struggle "to accept the historical nature of Christianity without succumbing to relativism…affirm the transcendent claims of Christianity without recourse to supernaturalist metaphysics, and…actualize the commitment of Christianity to universal justice without imposing values of one culture" (Stackhouse, 20).

[113] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 1:40-46; 2:19-43. David Tracy's earliest writings reflect a critical appreciation for Tillich's attention to *Existenz* as a means of locating publicness. See inter alia "The Task of Fundamental Theology."

[114] E.g., Bernard Lonergan, "Lonergan Responds" in *Foundations of Theology*, Philip McShane, ed. (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1971), 224-225: the theologian must "uncover the basic and invariant structure of all human cognitional activity and so to reach a transcendental method, i.e., a method that is the condition of the possibility…of all the special methods proper to each of the special fields of human inquiry. Such a method will be relevant to theology, for theologians always have had minds and always have used them."

[115] Rahner calls this his "pre-scientific" reflection on theology. Given the (especially disciplinary) pluralistic context within which theology was being done, the tenor of science, and the turn to hermeneutics in philosophical thinking, Rahner attempts to give an account of the experience of Christianity based on the experience of personhood broadly, and particularly of the experience of mystery. "In the subject matter of this book we are…dealing with the totality of his own [the Christian's] existence" (*Foundations of Christian Faith*, 1). Insofar as this experience of existence is—based on the Kantian model of transcendentalism—itself somehow universal in scope, it provides the means by which an intellectually honest account of Christianity can be given. This is not to say that the experience of Christianity is—as an experience specifically of the *Christian* religion—the universal event. Rather, the reflection on the experience of Christianity provides a framework by which all other experiences of existence can be understood. Insofar as the Christian's experience of the mystery of the horizon of existence is reflective of the multiplicity of other experiences by others, the reflection on that experience—conceptualizing it and attempting to understand it itself as an act of understanding—will provide a means of communicating the intellectual legitimacy of Christianity.

its dialogically mediated relationship with all reasonable, attentive, intelligent individuals by "explicitating" the infinitely complex,[116] cognitional activity involved in the adjudication of theological expression. Such attentiveness enabled not merely an awareness of the internal coherence of a theological tradition or even of the existential meaningfulness a tradition informs. By locating a space between common human experience and the Christian fact, the theologian could evaluate better and worse proposals for the truth-status of theological claims. For Tracy, publicness-as-truth was not merely expedient. It was intrinsic to the entire task. Theologians risked "*logoi*" on "*theos*,"[117] words on God. Trusting critically in the truth of their unique, religious tradition, theologians moved through theological symbols to universality.[118]

The ethical version of the pursuit of truth may be observed in George Lindbeck, for whom the material differences among religions limited interreligious dialogue to formal expression. Understood on this formal level, doctrines functioned as "rules." They captured the spoken language of a religious community and suggested ethical

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[116] Note, for example, Lonergan's concept of judgment as a "virtually unconditioned." See *Insight*, especially "The General Form of Reflective Insight," 280-281. The notion of a judgment as "virtually" unconditioned is significant for Tracy's understanding of the importance of reflection on the conditions of the possibility of theological judgments. Although expressive of the "divine" aspect of any judgment as a negotiation of infinite stimuli on the way to an artful synthesis of said stimuli (to borrow Schleiermacher's phraseology), a judgment is yet *virtually* unconditioned, insofar as it meets three criteria: (1) it is conditioned, which is proved by the fact that a question for reflection is being meaningfully asked. (Simply being able to ask, "Am I understanding?" shows that I possess "a conscious recognition of the need for evidence that will insure a *reasonable* pronouncement" [Tracy, "Holy Spirit as Philosophical Problem," 206].); (2) the conditions are known and linked to the conditioned; and (3) those conditions are fulfilled. See also David Tracy, "The Religious Dimension of Science" in Andrew M. Greeley and Gregory Baum (eds.), *The Persistence of Religion* Concilium 81 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1973). Vital for the early Tracy is the especially noteworthy aspect of *theological* judgment as a virtually unconditioned. In one instance, Tracy sets forth "so many conditions for the prospective judgment that any such judgment is [disclosed as] really an impossibility" ("Holy Spirit as Philosophical Problem," 209).

[117] "Theology is *logos* on *theos*" (AI, 51).

[118] This trajectory is more explicit in Tracy's later writings. Cf. especially "Fragments and Forms" (op. cit.).

practices enabling the religious adherent to live as if in the presence of the God witnessed

to by their religion. Public theologians informed by Lindbeck's theory are free to engage

the theological imagination to facilitate moments of agreement between inner-ecclesial

and public recognizability. Responding sympathetically to the observations made in our

global society,[119] public theologians engage the theological imagination to motivate

fellow believers toward global goals. Taking our increasingly global consciousness

seriously need not threaten the irreducibility of the theological task. Likewise informed

by the potential to reify certain traditional propositions (as we highlighted in our critique

of Lindbeck), the public theologian engages sympathetically with the truths emerging in

the multiple, interreligious and non-religious conversations.

Second, *public theology responds substantially to pluralism.* In continuity with

Blessed Rage for Order, the trajectory toward publicness in *Analogical Imagination* was

opened up by an inclusivist christology, renamed as an "analogical imagination." That

analogical imagination functioned, for Tracy, as a contemporary strategy that allowed,

indeed demanded, "pluralism without forfeiting the need for common criteria of meaning

and truth."[120] Truth and critique, disclosure and concealment, conversation and criticism,

and christology and plurality were all considered constitutive aspects of a public theology

that was robustly Christian. Because theology is the quintessentially human science,

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[119] Such as, for example, the growing awareness of "axes of oppression." Cf. Paul Farmer, *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 29-50.

[120] *AI*, xii. The idea of "claims to meaning and truth" is very typical for the early Tracy, especially the Tracy of *AI*. In using this phrase, Tracy referenced the claims "to a genuinely public character" (*AI*, 58). All three sub-disciplines for theology (fundamental, systematic, and practical) were "grounded"—as both their beginning and end—in the careful articulation of respective claims to meaning and truth, claims to a genuinely public character.

Tracy's metaphysics were not merely cognitional but deeply subjective. Thus, Tracy complemented his uptake of transcendental philosophy with phenomenological projects, such as that of Paul Ricoeur. By attending to "the very possibility of theological language,"[121] Tracy hoped to minimize the arbitrary use of traditional Christian categories and maximize the potential for dialogue. The alternative was to perpetuate the naïve, perhaps oppressive adoption of both tradition and reason in response to "historical consciousness."[122] Complementing a careful analysis of theological judgement was a robust self-awareness achieved by naming the theologian's social location and highlighting the evaluative criteria unique to each public.

How does a theologian facilitate an interrelation of the meaning, meaningfulness, and truth disclosed in both theological and non-theological conversational domains?

The awareness of a global situation, where the exigencies not merely of pluralism but of pluralisms[123] have begun to give way to the exigencies of our shared citizenship, frees public theologians to reengage their respective religious traditions—unapologetically using the language, terminology, symbols, and categories of expression

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[121] Tracy, "Why Orthodoxy," 78. See also "Horizon Analysis and Eschatology," *Continuum* 6.2 (1968): 166: "No theological discussion is more important at present than that of the theoretical models which the theologian employs for any 'God-talk' or 'redemptive-talk' or the like. The time is now past when one may use such phrases as 'salvation-history' or 'God acts in history,' or even 'God,' without trying to defend theoretically just what such language might mean."

[122] The theme of history will be treated more extensively in chapter three on "tradition." An early and perhaps the most clear if least nuanced treatment of this theme in Tracy can be found in *The Oneness of God*. Ed. Jerome F. Filteau et al. Prepared by Theological College Class of 1971 at Catholic University of America School of Theology. Based on notes from the lectures of David Tracy Spring, 1968. Published privately by Theological College Publications. Washington, D.C. 1970, 1-12. The development of Tracy's thought can be seen by comparing this early expression with his uptake of Metz, Benjamin, and Weil in "God of history, God of psychology" in *Reincarnation or Resurrection?* (Concilium 1993/5), Hermann Häring and Johann-Baptist Metz, eds. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1993), pp. 101-111; also published in ONP, 47-58.

[123] Cf. David Tracy, "African-American Thought," 29-30. Op. cit. chapter one.

unique to their theological traditions—as a means of cooperating with other theological expressions toward shared goals.[124] Foremost among the tasks of a global public is the need to resurrect the multiple, repressed narratives whose stories have been covered over in the formation of cultural narratives. The correlation of theological and public expression, therefore, must remain chastened by an awareness of ideology and systemic oppression, not only within our global society but also—perhaps even more so—within our respective religious publics. *Our final criterion for public theology runs as follows: public theology re-engages its own tradition in order to disclose levels of culpability in perpetuating oppression. In response to such disclosures, public theology re-turns to its unique textual heritage to energize its members toward both confession of culpability and hope for continued liberation.* On the way to such achievements, it may be necessary for theologians to critique their traditions, sometimes substantially, confessing complicity in the sins of violence. Lest this critique fall on deaf ears, however—as when members of the theological community no longer recognize it as true—the public theologian must utilize the tradition itself to enable the critique.[125]

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[124] The increasing comfort with this perspective is recognizable, e.g., in Daniel Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (New York: Penguin, 2006), where Dennett argues that religion should be taught (as a natural phenomenon) in public schools. Not unlike the argument of this project, Dennett sees an analogy between religion and music: "Music may be what Marx said religion is: the opiate of the masses, keeping working people in tranquilized subjugation, but it may also be the rallying song of revolution, closing up the ranks and giving heart to all" (42). See also Daniel Dennett, "Response to Rick Warren," online video, where Dennett says, "Religions are immensely powerful social institutions" that should be taught in all our schools as a form of responsible citizenship. Video available at http://www.ted.com/talks/dan_dennett_s_response_to_rick_warren.html. Accessed May 28, 2012.

[125] My suggestion is a development of an observation made by David Tracy in "Practical Theology in the Age of Global Pluralism," in Mudge and Poling (eds.), *Formation and Reflection*, 141 (139-154, inclusive). In his observation of the growing impact "Eastern religions" will have on the global conversation, Tracy says, "If we are really in conversation then we are bound to respond to these 'Eastern' concerns and questions via our *own* tradition—but one now informed and eventually transformed by the conversation itself."

How is this possible? We have already observed a variety of examples; however, as we also observed at the conclusion to chapter one, there remains significant theoretical difference among critical and contextualized theologies, undermining their collective potential to effect change. I propose that we may make suggestions toward a more robust theoretical underpinning by turning to two philosophers who were aware of both the potentialities and pitfalls of tradition: Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005; chapter four) and Walter Benjamin (1892-1940; chapter five). If we are right in observing a renewed sense of freedom to re-turn to the unique, theological traditions informing the citizens of our global community,[126] then the public theologian should feel a renewed sense of obligation to the criteria informing her ecclesial public. We will thus engage Ricoeur and Benjamin with the public of the church as our primary point of reference. However, as will also become evident, the criteria of truth (as shared criteria), pluralism, liberation, and self-critique will likewise remain at the forefront of our considerations and complement tradition's easy slide into reification. Borrowing from the musicology of "plunderphonics," I will suggest that theological and public forms of expression may be adequately interrelated as a re-membering of a tradition's unique theological fragments, subsequently collected according to the criteria of truth, recognizability, self-critique, dialogue, and liberation (chapter six).

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[126] David Tracy is especially optimistic about this possibility for the systematic theologian. In a situation informed both by the Enlightenment "prejudice against prejudices" and the post-Enlightenment prejudice against rationality's ambitions toward totality. As fully aware participants in a religious tradition, systematic theologians challenge the assumption that "objective, public argument employed in fundamental theologies can serve as exhaustive of what functions as genuinely public discourse even for the academy" (*AI*, 66). In his later works, Tracy is more explicit about the possibility intrinsic to theological expression in a post-Enlightenment context. In an era that cannot name itself, religions access shared aspects of experience in ways that rationality simply cannot. For a similar interpretation, see Gaspar Martinez, *Confronting the Mystery of God*, 206-215.

CHAPTER FOUR

PUBLIC THEOLOGY AND PAUL RICOEUR

Introduction

Our goal in part two of this project is to construct a philosophical response to the

theological problems outlined in part one. There are a variety of reasons to begin this

response in dialogue with Paul Ricoeur. In addition to the fact that Ricoeur's philosophy

has recently been engaged for its usefulness in public theology,[1] Ricoeur addresses a

number of the concerns raised by the public theologians we have studied thus far. In

continuity with an "adverbial" interpretation of publicness, for example, Ricoeur's

paradigm encourages a move through "explanation"[2] before engaging the imagination n a

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[1] For example, Jaco S. Dreyer, "Public Theology and the Translation Imperative: A Ricoeurian Perspective," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theology* 67(3), Art. #1157, 8 pages, http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v67i3.1157; originally, "Responsible Public Theology in a Global Era: An Exploration from Ricoeur's Paradigm of Translation," paper presented at the International Conference on Ricoeur Studies, "New Perspectives on Hermeneutics in the Social Sciences and Practical Philosophy," National Research University "Higher School of Economics," Moscow, Russia, September 15, 2011. Also, Maureen Junker-Kenny, "Capabilities, convictions and public theology," in Maureen Junker-Kenny and Peter Kenny (eds.), *Memory, Narrativity, Self, and the Challenge to Think God: The Reception within Theology of the Recent Work of Paul Ricoeur* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2004), 143−201.

[2] Admittedly, explanation is always a "human" endeavor for Ricoeur. Even so, it serves a controlling purpose by its attention to various exegetical criteria. I will address the relative inadequacy of a textual paradigm to account for all experience. See "What is a text? Explanation and understanding," in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on language, action, and interpretation*, ed. and trans. John B. Thompson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 145-164. There, Ricoeur argues against Dilthey's bifurcation of explanation (as scientific *Naturwissenschaften*) and understanding (historical *Geisteswissenschaften*) on behalf of a "strict complementarity and reciprocity between explanation and interpretation" (150). Ricoeur achieves this complementarity by refiguring explanation as a hermeneutical endeavor and interpretation as a phenomenological endeavor. He concludes, "explanation is no longer a concept borrowed from the natural sciences and transferred to the alien domain of written artifacts; rather, it stems from the very sphere of language, by analogical transference from the small units of language (phonemes and lexemes) to the units larger than the sentence, such as narratives, folklore and myth" (157).

renewed construction of understanding. Publicness is achieved insofar as explanation

enables a sort of publicly available means of locating criteria of adequacy. Explanation

complements the turn to poetics and protects against a merely arbitrary, analogical-

imaginative[3] rendering of a world.[4] Ricoeur's attention to hermeneutics protects against

explanation's tendency toward reification, displaying a level of continuity with critical

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By showing analogies between interpretation in conversation (the intuiting of meaning by attending to *heard* oppositional units) and interpretation in reading (the intuiting of meaning by attending to *read* oppositional units), Ricoeur exposes Dilthey's scientific notion of explanation as reductionistic and posits that reading is better understood as a dialectic, not a process. Explanation is not merely a means to an end. Explanation is an irreducible "side" of reading. By correcting Dilthey in this manner, Ricoeur changes the way reading is understood and more adequately responds to the paradox of human-scientific interpretation. Reading thus becomes a fully human endeavor, insofar as both "sides" of reading—explanation and interpretation—are proved to involve both "scientific" and "human" aspects. Ricoeur also compares the textual polarities to the deeper, more substantially meaningful polarities with which the human experience is saturated: "birth and death, blindness and lucidity, sexuality and truth." Paul Ricoeur, "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as Text," in Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson (trans.), *From Text to Action: Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, II* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 164. This text was originally published as Paul Ricoeur, "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text," *Social Research*, 38.3 (Autumn 1971), 529–562.

[3] Joel Schmidt, "A Mediating Discourse: Christian Preaching in Light of Ricoeur's Analysis of the Memorial and Historiographical Representation of the Past in *Memory, History, Forgetting*," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, "Ricoeur Group," San Francisco, CA. November 19, 2011. Cf. Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); hereafter *Memory, History, Forgetting* will be referred to as *MHF*. French original Paul Ricoeur, *Mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* (Paris: Seuil, 2000).

[4] One can also observe this role of explanation in Ricoeur's analytical "detours" in Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1992), hereafter "*OA*." This work originated from the 1986 Gifford Lectures delivered in Edinburgh. Reflecting on the difference between the certainty achieved by attestation and that achieved by "objective science," namely *episteme*, Ricoeur says, "Verification [that is, the type of verification captured by the notion of *episteme*] is included in the process of reflection [as opposed to cogito philosophy] as a necessary epistemic moment" (*OA*, 21). Cf. also *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, trans. Erazim V. Kohak (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966), 17, for a control of "romantic effusion" by way of eidetic phenomenology. Ricoeur's notions of an utterance as "saying something to someone about something" (cf. "What is a Text?" 148) and of testimony as "triangular"—"I testify in front of someone about something"—highlight a complementing of poetic, imaginative construals of reflexive philosophy with objectifying forms of discourse directed to a locatable terminus. For the definition of testimony as "triangular," see Paul Ricoeur and Sorin Antohi, "Memory, History, Forgiveness: A Dialogue Between Paul Ricoeur and Sorin Antohi," trans. Gil Anidjar, Center for Historical Studies, Central European University (CEU). Budapest, March 10, 2003, p. 12, http://www.janushead.org/8-1/ricoeur.pdf, accessed online July 12, 2012.

public theologies and opening up a space for dialogue and pluralism.[5] In response to the concern with liberation, a Ricoeurian paradigm celebrates the productive imagination and enables originality, even the shattering of previous linguistic parameters in the creation of meaning. And finally, a concern with religious recognizability is addressed in Ricoeur's attention to notions like incarnate freedom[6]—the admission of an always-located point from which philosophical reflection emerges. A turn to Ricoeur is thus an appropriate next step.

We will unpack Ricoeur's amenability to our project according to the five criteria highlighted at the conclusion to part two: recognizability, truth, dialogue, self-critique, and liberation. On the other side of this consideration, we will find a public theology cautiously catalyzed by Ricoeur's philosophy. The Ricoeurian notions of metaphor, narrative, and the self—all mediated by hermeneutical and phenomenological analyses— are quite amenable to the first three criteria: truth, recognizability, and dialogue. By engaging a tradition in moments of metaphorical and narratival creativity, a subject is able to recognize herself as free and freely able to recognize an other. Even so, by attending to a variety of critiques "from the underside," we will judge Ricoeur's philosophy only partially adequate to the criteria of self-critique and liberation and thus in need of a supplementary framework. At least periodically, public theologies need a

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[5] As, e.g., when Ricoeur refers to the "polysemy of 'being'" in *OA*. Here, the unitive meaning of being as substance is placed against the backdrop of a "plurality more radical than any other, namely the meanings of being" (*OA*, 20).

[6] Cf. Paul Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature*, 32: "The awareness of my concrete self risks being sacrificed to ambitious construction to which we lack the key in our incarnate condition. Perhaps even a faithful description of incarnate freedom does more than it would seem to dissolve the phantom of the transcendental Ego." I am thankful to W. David Hall, *Paul Ricoeur and the Poetic Imperative: The Creative Tension between Love and Justice* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 19, for this observation.

philosophical framework highlighting inequality and fragmentation, not merely dialogue. James Cone and Enrique Dussel will inform our critique here. Ricoeur's attention to textuality as a kind of horizon for understanding highlights a prioritizing of criteria not fully adequate to the urgency of suffering, thus intimating the need to complement Ricoeur with a critical philosopher such as Benjamin.

We begin with the Ricoeurian notions of metaphor, narrativity, and subjectivity. Informing the reader's entry into this survey should be a sensitivity to the manner in which all three notions suggest plurality, recognizability, and innovative approaches to truth. We follow these summaries with a return to our public-theological considerations, highlighting the amenability of Ricoeur's philosophy to the criteriology we have constructed. The chapter as a whole is brought to a close with an appreciative critique of the Ricoeurian paradigm, in which we set the stage for an uptake of Walter Benjamin.

Metaphor

Ricoeur calls metaphor the "trope of resemblance *par excellence*."[7] When a speaker engages in metaphorical utterance, she uses the productive imagination to predicate one idea by way of another, unassociated idea. Once disparate, two semantic domains are juxtaposed, allowing "new semantic pertinence" to occur "by means of an impertinent attribution."[8] Metaphor thus functions as a "planned category mistake."[9] It

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[7] Paul Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello, S.J. (Buffalo, N.Y.: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 173; cf. 3, 278; French original: Paul Ricoeur, *La métaphore vive* (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1975), 221: *La métaphore est, par excellence, le trope par resemblance*.

[8] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Vol. 1, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), ix. Hereafter "*TN*."

[9] *RM*, 197; cf. *La métaphore vive*, 250: *méprise catégoriale*, borrowing from Gilbert Ryle.

establishes sense "on the ruins of the literal sense abolished by impertinence."[10]

Constituting both "a displacement and an extension" of meaning,[11] metaphor creates a

theretofore unknown referential space that disrupts previously assumed categories.

Metaphor reminds the speaker that she is not caught in language.

> The productive imagination at work in the metaphorical process is…our
> competence for producing new logical species by predicative assimilation,
> in spite of the resistance of our current categorizations of language.[12]

The productive imagination shatters prior categorizations and introduces new semantic

possibilities, not merely allowing the reader to see reality more clearly; metaphor creates

new reality.[13]

The centrality of metaphor in Ricoeur's philosophy can be traced to his 1975

work, *The Rule of Metaphor*. Following a methodological pattern that will become

increasingly noticeable in his later writings, Ricoeur facilitates the interpenetration of two

disciplinary spheres not often juxtaposed. In *Rule of Metaphor* those two spheres are

analytical philosophy, represented primarily by an English-speaking intellectual public,

and continental philosophy, represented primarily by a French-speaking intellectual

public. The initial studies of the work construct a sort of dialectical typology, into which

the contrasting approaches are placed. Aristotle's "taxonomy" between rhetoric and

poetics informs the typology between semiotics (analytical philosophy) and semantics

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[10] *TN*, 1:80.

[11] *RM*, 3.

[12] *TN*, 1:x.

[13] I am thankful to George Taylor for his clarification in this regard: George Taylor, "Delineations of Ricoeur's Concept of Utopia," paper presented at the International Conference on Ricoeur Studeies, "New Perspectives on Hermeneutics in the Human Sciences and Practical Philosophy," National Research University "Higher School of Economics," Moscow, Russia, September 16, 2011.

(continental philosophy). Ricoeur uses these opposing approaches to facilitate a

meaning-producing tension, creating a kind of metaphorical moment. This creative

juxtaposition eventually gives way to hermeneutics, according to which metaphor is

understood neither as mere substitution (analytical/semiotics) nor tension

(continental/semantics) but "similarity in dissimilarity." Here, the type of resemblance

embodied in metaphor is "understood as a tension between identity and difference in the

predicative operation set in motion by semantic innovation."[14] Metaphor is thus

disclosed not merely as a function of the *image*-ination but, in the terminology of

Wittgenstein, as a "seeing as." By introducing hermeneutics, Ricoeur moves beyond a

consideration of the *form* (word/semiotics) and *sense* (sentence/semantics) of metaphor

into a consideration of metaphor's *referential* function "as the power to 'redescribe'

reality."[15] Metaphorical discourse is thus poetic.[16]

The poetic dynamism of metaphor "proves that language's capacity for reference

is not exhausted by descriptive discourse."[17] Metaphor emerges from the imagination of

a new space, a "future" initiated by semantic play. By shattering the literal sense through

impertinent attribution, metaphor "effaces" the referential potential of language and

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[14] *RM*, 6.

[15] Ibid., cf.303-313, for metaphor's function as a rhetorical trope reconstituting traditional approaches to truth.

[16] Ricoeur uses "poetics" to connote the non-referential "play" of plurivocal language. In the revelatory plurivocity disclosed in a phenomenology of biblical revelation, "poetics" refers to the manner in which "the totality of [biblical] genres…exercise a referential function that differs from the descriptive referential function of ordinary language and above all of scientific discourse." ("Hermeneutics of the Idea of Revelation," 23). In the differentiation of poetic discourse from descriptive discourse, "poetic texts speak about the world. But not in a descriptive way" (*IT*, 37). Here, poetic discourse has "centripetal direction opposed to the centrifugal direction, which characterizes descriptive and didactic discourse. This is why poetry creates its own world" (*IT*, 67; cf. 57).

[17] *TN*, 1:80.

engages semantic possibilities.[18] It reveals a "radical power" to mediate "those aspects of our being-in-the-world that cannot be referenced directly."[19] Such indirect, imaginative mediation of what is impossible to access directly opens up a theoretical space for considering such notions as narrative and ontology. We begin with the latter.

Metaphor's "place," "its most intimate and ultimate abode" is in "the copula of the verb *to be*."[20] In a single utterance, metaphor "signifies both 'is not' and 'is like'," constituting a new "metaphorical 'is'"[21] and enabling the philosopher to speak of "metaphorical truth" as a tensive "isness" in the conjunction of the similar and the dissimilar. The philosophy implicit in metaphor ultimately motivates Ricoeur to plea for a "plurality of modes of discourse"[22] on the way to ontology. The "as" of metaphorical "being" reflects the irreducible plurality of ontological discourse and hinders the philosopher from engaging in said discourse without an awareness of interpretational difference. Yet, as we will see further below, Ricoeur is careful not to move directly from metaphorical philosophy to speculative constructions of "reality." His plea for plurality is also a plea for "the independence of philosophical discourse in relation to the propositions of sense and reference of poetic discourse."[23] Because poetic discourse

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[18] Cf. George Taylor, "Delineations of Ricoeur's Concept of Utopia," paper presented at the International Conference on Ricoeur Studies, "New Perspectives on Hermeneutics in the Human Sciences and Practical Philosophy," National Research University "Higher School of Economics," Moscow, Russia, September 16, 2011.

[19] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 1:80. See also *Rule of Metaphor*, 216-256.

[20] *RM*, 7.

[21] *RM*, 7.

[22] *RM*, 7.

[23] *RM*, 7.

represents a unique, quasi-spiritual mode of expression, Ricoeur is loath to move quickly

through it into ontology.[24]

No less varied than the perspectives giving rise to metaphorical utterance are

perspectives on being, meaning the phenomenology mediating an analysis of metaphor

can only be achieved by way of hermeneutics. In its simplest form, "hermeneutics is

text-oriented interpretation."[25] Ricoeur thus appropriates metaphysics by way of the

hermeneutical notion "seeing-as" and transposes "being" into an ontology of "being-as."

Ontological constructions reflect a unique "world" that is constituted, or better "opened,"

by all the texts which the see-er has read, interpreted, and loved.[26] One may attempt to

delineate the contours of that horizon by understanding the world of predications derived

from those texts. This horizon is enlarged in response to those most epochal texts, where

reality is augmented through the telling of new narratives, new innovations of recognized

modes of discourse. Incorporating the plurality, or poetics, of discourse into ontology

enables the philosopher to see in poetic works a referential capacity uniquely suited for

ontology.[27]

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[24] One may see this hermeneutical mediation of poetic discourse in such works as Paul Ricoeur, "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," *Harvard Theological Review*, 70.1 (1977), 1-37; "Naming God," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, 34 (1979), 215-227.

[25] *IT*, 25.

[26] *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, Texas: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 36-37, 40-44, 80, 88.

[27] *RM*, 216-256.

Narrative

Ricoeur unpacks the phenomenon of narrativity in his three-volume work, *Time and Narrative*.[28] Like metaphor, narrative represents a poetic capability of the subject. Faced with the aporias of temporality, the subject experiences selfhood as a distension. This experience is classically articulated in Augustine's ruminations on time in *Confessions*,[29] where the singular self in time is experienced as an *intentio* and *distentio animi*, or a "stretching and extending of the soul."[30] Engaging the Neoplatonic trope of time's enigma (*quid est enim tempus?* "What then is time?"), Augustine locates the "threefold present" (the "now of the past," the "now of the present," and the "now of the future") in the experience of "now" in the mind.[31] The awareness of time's ternary unity and psychic locality functions as a response to the enigma of time's (non)being, while—and, in fact, by—remaining in the aporias of temporal existence.[32] Discordance emerges "again and again out of the very concordance of the intentions of expectation, attention, and memory."[33] In the present of expectation, attention, and memory, the subject

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[28] In the opening sentence of this work, Ricoeur connects it directly to his reflections on metaphor: "*The Rule of Metaphor* and *Time and Narrative* form a pair: published one after the other, these works were conceived together" (*TN*, I:ix).

[29] Augustine, *Confessions*, XI.xiv.17-XI.xxxi.41. For an English edition, see Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 199-221.

[30] *TN*, 1:5. "The extension of time is a distension of the soul" (*TN*, 1:16).

[31] "From an Augustinian point of view, the future and the past exist only in relation to a present, that is, to an instant indicated by the utterance designating it" (*TN*, 3:19).

[32] "Augustine's inestimable discovery is, by reducing the extension of time to the distension of the soul, to have tied this distension to the slippage that never ceases to find its way into the heart of the threefold present—between the present of the future, the present of the past, and the present of the present" (*TN*, 1:21).

[33] *TN*, 1:21.

possesses "the relation of self-reference, attested to by the very act of uttering

something."[34] Augustine concludes his own ruminations, therefore, by turning to his

own utterance, the *canticus* recited by heart. Augustine says of this recitation:

> What is true of the whole psalm is also true of all its parts and each
> syllable. It is true of any longer action in which I may be engaged and of
> which the recitation of the psalm may only be a small part. It is true of a
> man's whole life, of which all his actions are parts. It is true of the whole
> history of mankind, of which each man's life is a part.[35]

The layers of meaning encapsulated by the psalm reflect the layers of meaning preserved

in stories—the stories of individuals as microsms of all "mankind." Ricoeur supplements

Augustine's narratival response (as confession) by facilitating a dialectic between

Augustine's notion of *distentio* and Aristotle's notion of *muthos*. Whereas Augustine

"groaned under the existential burden of discordance," Aristotle discerned "in the poetic

act par excellence—the composing of the tragic poem—the triumph of concordance over

discordance."[36] In response to the "inconclusive rumination"[37] disclosed in the

speculations on time, the poetic act of emplotment[38] brings unity to an otherwise

meaningless dispersion.[39] By narrating, the self engages the productive imagination to

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[34] *TN*, 3:19.

[35] Augustine, *Confessions*, 28:38; cited by Ricoeur, *TN*, 1:22.

[36] *TN*, 1:30.

[37] *TN*, 1:6, where Ricoeur also says, "A constant thesis of this book is that speculation on time is an inconclusive rumination to which narrative activity alone can respond."

[38] "To make up a plot is already to make the intelligible spring from the accidental, the universal from the singular, the necessary or the probable from the episodic" (Ricoeur on Aristotle, *TN*, 1:41).

[39] *TN*, 1:21-22.

"draw from the manifold of events the unity of one temporal whole."[40] Narrative

functions as a "resignification of a world" and thus, like metaphor, exemplifies the

human capacity to discern meaning in apparently meaningless situations. Narrativity

engages the poetic imagination, as the story-teller collects and emplots memories forged

in time.

<div align="center">Narrative and Tradition</div>

The power of the narrative is directly proportional to the narrator's ability both to

remain within and move beyond a particular tradition. Instead of mere "imitation," the

author engages in "creative imitation." Instead of mere "representation," the author

engages in "the break that opens the space for fiction."[41] The existence of recognizable

genres (myth, fiction, autobiography, fragment, etc.) represents previous moments of

creation that have been preserved by a literary culture. The culture's literary tradition

consists of innovative moments, during which members of a culture juxtaposed what was

already known with something that was not yet known.[42]

> Let us understand by this term [tradition] not the inert transmission of
> some already dead deposit of material but the living transmission of an
> innovation always capable of being reactivated by a return to the most

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[40] *TN*, 1:66. Ricoeur connects the unifying capabilities of emplotment with the Kantian notion of judgment: "I cannot overemphasize the kinship between this 'grasping together' proper to the configurational act, and what Kant has to say about the operation of judging" (*TN*, 1:66, cf. 68). A further connection between Ricoeur and Kant may be found in the interplay between the unconditioned and experience in narrativity. Time (or the experience of time) and narrative are mutually conditioning: "Time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence" (*TN*, 1:52).

[41] *TN*, 1:45.

[42] We will return to the simultaneity of expectation and surprise in our consideration of plunderphonics. My argument is that a public theology concerned with both publicness and theological recognizability should pursue moments of meaning-creation that, like narrative, push that which is known by a religious culture (e.g., the "genre" of theology) into moments of surprise (e.g., liberation or self-critique).

creative moments of poetic activity. So understood, traditionality enriches the relationship between plot and time with a new feature. In fact, a tradition is constituted by the interplay of innovation and sedimentation.[43]

Emplotment thus plays a "mediating role" between "practical experience" and narrativity,[44] meaning there is a kind of ternary "dynamic"[45] that culminates in the narrative. Ricoeur calls the three moments of this event "mimesis$_1$," "mimesis$_2$," and "mimesis$_3$."

Mimesis$_1$ consists of the structural, symbolic, and temporal features which converge in the ability to produce a recognizable work. Structural features represent that "semantics of action" yielding a "competence we can call practical understanding."[46] It is the ability to distinguish such things as the agents (Who?), goals/motives (Why?), means (How?), and effects (With whom? Against whom?) of an action (What?). Symbolic features are the cultural processes that articulate experience. They are the always-already articulated signs, rules, and norms that saturate human action.[47] The temporal structures of Mimesis$_1$ reference the recognition that temporal experience calls for narration and that narration, in turn, cannot occur apart from temporality. It is the "Being-'within'-time" that "is above all to reckon with time and, as a consequence of

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[43] *TN*, 1:68.

[44] *TN*, 1:54.

[45] *TN*, 1:53.

[46] *TN*, 1:55.

[47] *TN*, 1:57.

this, to calculate."[48] Mimesis$_1$, in short, is constituted by the pre-understandings which

enable functionality in a world and, consequently, energize the possibility of narration:

> Whatever the innovative force of poetic composition within the field of
> our temporal experience may be, the composition of the plot is grounded
> in a pre-understanding of the world of action, its meaningful structures, its
> symbolic resources, and its temporal character.[49]

In turn, "with mimesis$_2$ opens the kingdom of the as-if."[50] Here, we find the

"pivot" from an experience informed by cultural preunderstanding to a risk of

emplotment. The plot functions as a dynamic confinguration integrating experiences into

a re-configured unity. The dynamism of plot…

> lies in the fact that a plot already exercises, within its own textual field, an
> integrating and, in this sense a mediating function, which allows it to bring
> about, beyond this field, a mediation of a larger amplitude between the
> preunderstanding and, if I may dare to put it this way, the
> postunderstanding of the order of action and its temporal features.[51]

As mentioned briefly above, the narrator utilizes plot to transpose a diversity of events

into a meaningful story that may be "taken as a whole."[52] Synthesizing expectation and

surprise,[53] plot unites the heterogenous but identifiable aspects of narrative (agents, goals,

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[48] *TN*, 1:62. Of course, here Ricoeur is engaging with Martin Heidegger. Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* , trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 456-488.

[49] *TN*, 1:54.

[50] *TN*, 1:64.

[51] *TN*, 1:65.

[52] *TN*, 1:65.

[53] Coincidentally, the reader can again find a foreshadowing to chapter six in our understanding of emplotment as a synthesis of pleasure and surprise. Readers are pleased by the readability of a story but pleasantly surprised by plot twists. Ricoeur put the matter this way: "To understand the story is to underand how and why the successive episodes led to this conclusion, which, far from being foreseeable, must finally be acceptable, as congruent with the episodes brought together by the story" (*TN*, 1:67).

means, interactions, circumstances, and plot twists) into a "syntagmatic order."[54]

Mediating the aporias of temporality by a temporally construed narrative, plot creates a

"synthesis of the heterogenous."[55]

Finally, for mimesis$_2$ to achieve intelligibility it must reach a third stage "as its

complement," that of mimesis$_3$.[56] Here the time of the narrative reengages the time of

action and suffering. "Mimesis$_3$," Ricoeur says, "marks the intersection of the world of

the text and the world of the hearer or reader."[57] Analogous to the mutually constitutive

interaction between narrative and temporality, creativity and traditionality, and even self-

reflection and explanation,[58] narrativity and appropriation[59] embody a mutually

constitutive dialectic which emerges as a kind of interactive circle.

> On the one hand, the received paradigms structure readers' expectations
> and aid them in recognizing the formal rule, the genre, or the type
> exemplified by the narrated story. They furnish guidelines for the
> encounter between a text and its readers. In short, they govern the story's
> capacity to be followed. On the other hand, it is the act of reading that

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[54] *TN*, 1:66.

[55] *TN*, 1:66.

[56] In the background here for Ricoeur is Hans-Georg Gadamer's notion of "application" and Aristotle's idea that tragedy "effects the purgation of…emotions" (*TN*, 1:70). Cf. H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (op. cit.), 306-321. Gadamer engages with Aristotle as well. Ricoeur is in dialogue with *Poetics*, Gadamer with *Nichomachean Ethics*.

[57] *TN*, 1:71; cf. 77.

[58] "Explanation is nothing if it is not incorporated as an intermediary stage in the process of self-understanding" ("What is a Text?" 159).

[59] Elsewhere, Ricoeur references appropriation as the moment when "the interpretation of a text culminates in the self-interpretation of a subject who thenceforth understands himself better" or differently or "simply begins to understand himself" Ricoeur refers to this point of interaction between subject and text as the point at which "hermeneutics and reflective philosophy are correlative and reciprocal" ("What is a Text?" 158). This mutually correcting relationship between hermeneutics and reflective philosophy is reminiscent of Ricoeur's concerns in *OA*; cf. *OA*, 1-26, where Ricoeur works from a "positing of the *cogito*" in Descartes (4-11), through a consideration of the "shattered *cogito*" (11-16), in Nietzsche's response to Descartes, to a "hermeneutics of the self" (16-26).

191

accompanies the narrative's configuration and actualizes its capacity to be followed. To follow a story is to actualize it by reading it.[60]

Elsewhere, Ricoeur posits that reading "fulfills the text in present speech."[61] To read is "to conjoin a new discourse to the discourse of the text," which "reveals, in the very constitution of the text, an original capacity for renewal which is its open character. Interpretation is the concrete outcome of conjunction and renewal."[62] The text may only be interpreted through the "detour" of the reader's own world, her own textuality;[63] but, to the degree that the textual world is distinct from that of the reader, the latter is confronted by a new way of being-in-the-world.

> On the one hand, self-understanding passes through the detour of understanding the cultural signs in which the self documents and forms itself. On the other hand, understanding the text is not an end in itself; it mediates the relation to himself of a subject who, in the short circuit of immediate reflection, does not find the meaning of his own life.[64]

On the other side of the interpretational detour, therefore, the reader may achieve a new sense of self, or a new subjectivity informed by this confrontation.

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[60] *TN*, 1:76.

[61] Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics*, 158. Also, "Reading is the concrete act in which the destiny of the text is fulfilled" ("What is a Text?," 164). Both of these quotes highlight Ricoeur's understanding of a text's/statement's "directionality"—that is, to be engaged and understood by a reader/hearer.

[62] "What is a Text?," 158.

[63] As we would expect, given Ricoeur's insistence on placing reflexive, or phenomenological philosophy in a mutually critical juxtaposition with hermeneutics, he maintains that self-recognition is "nothing without the mediation of signs and works" ("What is a Text?," 159).

[64] "What is a Text?" 158. The last sentence of this quote highlights Ricoeur's insistence that self-understanding must always be mediated by the ever-expanding understanding occurring through confrontation with other self-understandings.

Subjectivity

For Ricoeur, "the constitution of the self is contemporaneous with the constitution of meaning,"[65] which serves as the culmination of the process of emplotment (mimesis$_1$, mimesis$_2$, and mimesis$_3$).[66] The reader follows the course of textually located recognition to its conclusion in an experience of subjectivity, to which she cannot but "attest."[67] Hermeneutics, or "text-oriented interpretation,"[68] mediates the move through reading into self-recognition. Appropriation is not arbitrary, since it recovers "what is at work, in labor, within the text. What the interpreter says is a re-saying which reactivates what is said by the text."[69] Reading involves the reader in a trajectory, or "course" of

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[65] "What is a Text?" 159.

[66] The course of self-recognition in Ricoeur includes his famous distinction between an *idem* identity and an *ipse* identity. Not unlike the notion of "incarnation" in Ricoeur's "incarnate freedom," the subject's *idem*-identity subsists as that spatio-temporal, embodied potential for maintaining *an* identity. Likewise, not unlike the notion of "freedom" in Ricoeur's "incarnate freedom," the subject's *ipse*-identity references that aspect of subjectivity which constitutes the subject as agent. Although never able to jettison embodiedness, or *idem*-identity, the self preserves the potential to act—to initiate new modes of being and thus to appropriate the poetic-narratival works that constitute her world. Some activities are especially recognizable as "*idem-ipse*" moments. In "the promise," for example, a singular act unites potentiality and actuality (as agency) in the singular subject. When a promise is made, the subject initiates a theretofore nonexistent trajectory toward the completion of a commitment to an "other"; in the promise fulfilled, the subject perfects the potential begun in the initial commitment and thus engages the self in a sense of moral completion. Cf. Hille Haker, "Narrative and Moral Identity in the Work of Paul Ricoeur," in Maureen Junker-Kenny & Peter Kenny (eds.), *Memory, Narrativity, Self, and the Challenge to Think God*, 134-152, for a consideration of narrativity and moral identity in the Ricoeurian notion of self.

[67] W. David Hall identifies three stages in Ricoeur's writings on the moral agent: capability, identity, and attestation, which he says, "marks an itinerary from a rather formal account of the capable subject to one of a self who attests to itself in its capability." W. David Hall, *Paul Ricoeur and the Poetic Imperative*, 19. Hall is following Kathleen Blamey's similar observation—one that recognized Ricoeur's shift "from the ego to the self." See Kathleen Blamey, "From the Ego to the Self: A Philosophical Itinerary," in Lewis E. Hahn (ed.), *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* (Chicago: Open Court, 1995), 597. Ricoeur himself marks this progression: "The evolution of my thought has gone from the culture of guilt of the 1950s and 1960s to the Gifford Lectures, which I gave in 1986, at the center of which was capable man. And therefore my last book on memory, history and forgetting [published after Hall's work] is related not to fallible man but to capable man" (Ricoeur, "Memory, History, Forgiving," 17).

[68] *IT*, 25.

[69] "What is a Text?," 164.

recognition.[70] The idea of "recognition" connotes the cognitive acknowledgement of identity, "the mastery of meaning by thought."[71] That which is recognized is identified "to be other than another."[72] When recognizing an other *subject*, the recognizer follows the course of recognition beyond self-identity to otherness, to the idea of a "someone." Following the course further, the recognizing subject passes through the ability to recognize an other into the ability to recognize oneself again. It is from the transition between "something" and "someone," intensified by the experience of the unrecognizable in the detour of interpretation, that the transition can be construed from "someone" to oneself…

> oneself recognizing him- or herself in his or her capacities. This transition is reinforced by the epistemic synonymy between attestation and recognition. I am confident that "I can," I attest to it, I recognize it.[73]

The veracity attained by self-attestation consequently gives way to an awareness of subjective capacities: "I can speak, I can narrate, I can act, I can feel responsible."[74] The self-attesting subject emerges from the detour of mutual recognition with a trust…

> in the power to say, in the power to do, in the power to recognize oneself as a character in a narrative, in the power, finally, to respond to accusation in the form of the accusative: 'It's me here!' [*me voici!*] and if one admits that the problematic of acting constitutes the analogical unity within which

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[70] I am relying here on Ricoeur's latest book on subjectivity, *The Course of Recognition*, trans. David Pellauer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), hereafter *CR*. Ricoeur called *OA* his "little book on fallible man," saying the book's "central concept" was "man [*sic*] insofar as he is able and capable. What man can do" (Ricoeur, "Memory, History, Forgiveness," 11). He differentiated his notion of a "course" of recognition from that of a "theory" of discourse (*CR*, xi).

[71] *CR*, 248.

[72] *CR*, 250.

[73] *CR*, 250.

[74] Ricoeur, "Memory, History, Forgiveness," 17.

all of these investigations are grouped, attestation can be defined as the *assurance of being oneself acting and suffering*. It is *this* assurance that remains the ultimate recourse against all suspicion.[75]

In this sense a hermeneutics of the self discloses a distinct mode of veracity enabling and protecting life. "We tell stories, because in the last analysis human lives need and merit being narrated."[76] Without stories culture would dissipate.[77] Attestation is thus "fundamentally attestation *of* self," told for the preservation of self, but informed by a hermeneutics disclosing different selves—"the fragmentation that follows from the polysemy of the question 'who?'"[78]

Ricoeur and Public Theology

Having analyzed Ricoeur's notions of metaphor, narrative, and subjectivity, we may return to the criteriology for public theology with which we concluded part two of this dissertation. In response to our questions regarding the semantics of theological and public expression, we located the crucial criteria informing public theologies as follows: the pursuit and evaluation of truth-claims, the facilitation of dialogue in response to pluralism, the embedding of self-critique and an openness to revision within a theological project, a concern with the memory and lives of marginalized subjects, and an awareness that the theology constructed in response to these criteria must remain recognizable to its uniqe, ecclesial public. Ricoeur's philosophy informs at least three of these criteria,

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[75] *OA*, 22, ital. his.

[76] *TN*, 1:75.

[77] "We have no idea of what a culture would be where no one any longer knew what it meant to narrate things." Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Vol. 2, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 28.

[78] *OA*, 22.

namely (1) the innovative pursuit of truth (2) in dialogue with a plurality of publics, while (3) remaining recognizably located within a tradition. Consider the following three examples.

First, in the Ricoeurian phenomenology of metaphor, both subject and predicate derive some sense of meaning from the linguistic context informing the metaphorical utterance. No matter how shocking a metaphor may initially be, its semantic innovation does not come from nowhere. "The labor of imagination is not born from nothing. It is bound in one way or another to the tradition's paradigms."[79] In the metaphor "nature is a temple," for example, the subject, "nature," connotes an ecological universe, while the predicate noun, "temple," connotes a place of worship. Each set of connotations has emerged within a unique cultural-linguistic framework. In this sense, the "event" of metaphorical meaning is energized by the metaphor's relative location. One cannot create a metaphor and thereby facilitate an event-like shock of recognition without the preexisting tradition in contrast to which a metaphor comes alive.

The phenomenology of metaphor thus functions as both a confession of relativity—a dependence on a particular cultural-linguistic tradition—and an affirmation of the human capacity for creation—remaining within yet moving beyond that tradition. Public theologians informed by Ricoeur's reflections will thus understand the hermeneutical necessity of speaking a particular theological language without thereby feeling compelled to remain in traditional parameters. Insofar as our five criteria are mutually informing, the projects of critique, pluralism, truth, and liberation cannot be pursued to the detriment of recognizability. Informed by the manner in which metaphor

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[79] *TN*, 1:69.

and narrative embody tradition and event simultaneously, public theologians may pursue an interrelation of theological and public expression in a moment of shocking re-cognition, a moment of "pleasant surprise."

Second, in the Ricoeurian phenomenology of reading, the public theologian will find a philosophical resource informing what David Tracy and John Courtney Murray highlighted in their revisionist approaches to tradition. For Ricoeur, the reader confronted by the "double eclipse" of the text is not concerned with disclosing "the intended meaning," "presumed intention," or "lived experience" of the author. She seeks instead "what the text means for whoever complies with its injunction."[80] As evidenced by Ricoeur's insistence on tempering reflexive philosophy with careful interpretive theory, the open relationship between text and interpreter does not conclude with relativism. The text has been doubly distanced from its author and subsists as a closed set of analyzable data. Even so, the text embodies a trajectory. It moves in the direction of being read and—as we saw in our analysis of $mimesis_1$, $mimesis_2$, and $mimesis_3$—the text is not completed as text, until it is read. The text "seeks to place us in its meaning…in the same direction."[81] As such, interpretation is not a subjective act on the text but opens up as "an objective process" initiated by the text. Reading is "an act *of* the text."[82]

The dynamic interplay between reader and text finds an analogue in the "long history" of dynamic interplay between tradition and interpreter. In Aristotle's *On*

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[80] "What is a Text?," 162.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Ibid., italics his.

Interpretation, for example, interpretation is not something done "in a second language with regard to a first." It is, rather, "what the first language already does, by mediating through signs our relation to things. …Interpretation is interpretation *by* language before it is interpretation *of* language."[83] Interpretation remains poetic, a kind of meta-language, insofar as all interpretation of something is already an instantiation of previous interpretation. We will return to this historical observation in our consideration of immanent critique in Walter Benjamin and meta-music in plunderphonics. For now, Ricoeur assists us in highlighting the observation that the criterion of theological recognizability should not be pursued to the extent that it reifies a theological tradition. Insofar as the texts, voices, and memories making up a tradition already participate in the activity of interpretation, the contemporary interpreter participates in an already active trajectory of meaning-creation.

Third, Ricoeur himself exemplifies a dialogical form that the public theologian sensitive to pluralism would do well to emulate. One sees this form, for example, in Ricoeur's uptake of Roland Dalbiez's "philosophical intrepidness": the very honest and vulnerable willingness to proceed not around, but directly through opposing thought on the way to a conclusion.[84] For Ricoeur, there is never "description without discussion,"[85] for "when there is an obstacle," the thinker "cannot go around it." She must "go right at

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[83] "What is a Text?," 163.

[84] Paul Ricoeur, *Critique and Conviction: Conversations with François Azouvi and Marc de Launay*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 7. Ricoeur says of Dalbiez's practice: It "sustained me throughout my life."

[85] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 1:6.

it."[86] Philosophers with differing points of view are never dismissed by Ricoeur without

a careful, if not meticulous, reading and summary.   Ricoeur the philosopher is, first of

all, Ricoeur the reader, and Ricoeur the reader is Ricoeur the reporter.[87] With a

purposeful movement away from "Lacanian invective,"[88] Ricoeur considers it important

not to discredit interlocutors without first displaying the degree to which he himself has

wrestled with the texts of those interlocutors. Such dialogical engagement allows

meaning to emerge as a moment of interaction between opposites, much like the way in

which metaphorical meaning emerges as a moment of interaction between semantically

opposed fields.

In symbiotic relation to dialogue is Ricoeur's dialectical approach to philosophical

problems. Consistently, Ricoeur responds to philosophical enigmas by facilitating a

mutually critical correlation between two apparently exclusive concepts. Whether the

theoretical interplay is occurring between the aporias of time and the synthesis of

narrative,[89] the phenomenology of memory and the epistemology of historiography,[90] the

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[86] Paul Ricoeur in Charles Reagan, *Ricoeur: His Life and Work* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 133.

[87] This observation is reflected in Alain Badiou's (pejorative) critique of *Memory, History, Forgetting*, "The Subject Supposed to be a Christian: On Paul Ricoeur's *Memory, History, Forgetting*," trans. Natalie Doyle and Alberto Toscano, *The Bible and Critical Theory* 2 (3): 27.1-27.9. In Badiou's rather scathing critique of *Memory, History, Forgetting*, he observes that Ricoeur withholds disclosing his own controversial point on human subjectivity "until the very end. Just as God himself indeed took his time, with respect to the history of men and their sins, to organize the redemptive coming of his son" (27.2). Badiou here is referencing the not-so-latent Christianity which he believes informs Ricoeur's theory of subjectivity. Ricoeur himself says of the Epilogue, "First of all, I would like to recall and emphasize the space taken by this problem in my book. Strictly speaking, it is not part of the book. It is an epilogue, which was asked of me as a matter of intellectual honesty. The question of the relation between memory, history and forgetting is entirely closed upon itself at the end of the book. Therefore, we are only talking about an epilogue" (Ricoeur, "Memory, History, Forgiving," 9).

[88] Reagan, *Paul Ricoeur*, 60.

[89] Exemplified especially in the movement of *Time and Narrative*, Vol. 1.

nowhere of utopia and the now here of ideology,[91] or the pluriformity of biblical genre and the multiplicity of religious interpretations,[92] one finds in Ricoeur a consistent wager: the most fecund forms of reflection construct new meaning by juxtaposing apparently divergent concepts. Critique and conviction, freedom and necessity, history and fiction, attestation and suspicion, text and metaphor, sense and reference, oneself and another, forgiveness and memory—all are polarities appropriated by Ricoeur with a unique degree of optimism. By responding sympathetically to the philosophical impetuses which gave rise to notions on both sides of such polarities, Ricoeur is able to move through apparent disagreement into newly creative moments—not of synthetic agreement but of a reconstituted conversation and the consequent possibility for new frames of reference. The public theologian informed by Ricoeurian dialectics will thus see the potential in juxtaposing such apparently exclusive ideas as innovation and tradition, publicness and theological recognizability, liberation and confession, and self-critique and truth.

From Ricoeur to Benjamin

> Nothing is more necessary today than to renounce the arrogance of
> critique and to carry on with patience the endless work of distancing and
> renewing our historical substance.
>
> – Paul Ricoeur[93]

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[90] *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 1-280.

[91] Paul Ricoeur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, ed. George H. Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986). See also Paul Ricoeur, "Ideology and Utopia as Cultural Imagination," in Donald M. Bochert and David Stewart (eds.), *Being Human in a Technological Age* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press), 107-125; and Paul Ricoeur, *From Text to Action*, trans. John B. Thompson and Kathleen Blamey (Evanston: Northwestern University Press), 308-324.

[92] "Toward a Hermeneutics of the Idea of Revelation," 19-37.

[93] *From Text to Action*, 269.

Even so, there remain tendencies unique to Ricoeur that give the public theologian pause before rushing into a public-theological project dependent on Ricoeur alone. We may enter our consideration of these tendencies by way of Enrique Dussel.

The experience from which Dussel's liberationist philosophy departed—that of the Latin American—was an experience lying "outside of history."[94] For Dussel, the philosopher's response to this marginalization should be to rediscover Latin America's "hidden being"[95] by disclosing—without reduction—the "massive 'fact' of domination"[96]:

> The poor, the dominated, the massacred Amerindian, the Black slave, the Asiatic of the opium wars, the Jew of the concentration camps, the woman as sexual object, the child under ideological manipulation (or the youth, popular culture, or the market under the imperatives of publicity and advertisement), can never simply depart from the *l'estime de soi* (self-esteem). The oppressed, tortured, destroyed, in her suffering corporeality, simply cries out, clamoring for justice.[97]

As an attempt to construct meaning out of an otherwise meaningless situation, Dussel initially turned to Emmanuel Levinas. Levinas constructed an ethical ontology, informed by a phenomenology of the face. Looking into the face of an other, the observer

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[94] I will be relying on Enrique Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation*, trans. and ed. Eduardo Mendieta (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996), esp. 74-102. For Ricoeur's own response, see pp. 205-212. This latter text is based on the transcript of Ricoeur's answer to Dussel's presentation occasioned by the seminar 'Hermeneutics and Liberation' in Naples, 16 April 1991.

[95] Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity*, 77.

[96] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969). Cf. Enrique Dussel, *Para una ética de la liberación latinamericana* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1973).

[97] Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity*, 80.

experiences a claim: "Thou shalt not kill."[98] But, Dussel found Levinas inadequate.

Although instructional for suggestions toward peaceful interrelationality, Levinas did not

provide the necessary resources to "place in question the ruling Totality (which

dominates and excludes the Other)" and thereby "develop a new Totality."[99] Dussel did

not need a creative, poetic means of mutual respect. He needed a new set of categories, a

new architectonic from which disruptive history and politics could be constructed. He

needed a new "ontology" for suggesting a "negation of the dialectical negation."[100]

He thus turned to Ricoeur. Ricoeur's paradigm seemed to hold promise for

liberation based on a hermeneutical construction of social symbolics.[101] Yet as with

Levinas, Dussel found Ricoeur's philosophy ultimately inadequate. Although Ricoeur

provided Dussel "with immense hermeneutical material for the description of the *identity*

of cultures," he did so merely "at the popular level, for intercultural dialogue, out of a

daily narrativity."[102] Assumed in Ricoeur's hermeneutical rendering was a relatively

peaceful situation, one where the subject needed merely to "read" societal structures to

disclose a poetics of meaning. But the subject of liberation philosophy could not read:

> Hermeneutical phenomenology places the subject as a "reader" before a
> "text." Now, Liberation Philosophy discovers a "person in hunger" before
> a "no-bread" (that is to say, without a product for consumption, because of
> poverty or because of the robbery of the fruits of labor), or an "illiterate"

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[98] Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre Nous: Thinking-of-the-Other*, trans. Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), esp. 4-35.

[99] Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity*, 82.

[100] Ibid.

[101] See especially Paul Ricoeur, "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as Text," in *From Text to Action*, 144-167.

[102] Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity*, 77.

before a "non-text" (which she cannot buy, or a culture which cannot express itself).[103]

Dussel eventually constructed a rather radical critique of social-scientific symbolics to allow the irruption of other, the negation of totality, and the process of liberation. Ricoeur's philosophy was ultimately inadequate to such a project.

Was Dussel's critique of Ricoeur merited? Ricoeurian commentators diverge on this issue.[104] Using Ricoeur's philosophies of social science and historiography as my own point of departure, I suggest a sympathetic response to Dussel's critique. We may illustrate our caution with the Ricoeurian paradigm by considering a 1971 essay subtitled "Meaningful Action Considered as a Text."[105] Here, Ricoeur suggests an analogical relation between human-scientific method and textual interpretation.

As elsewhere,[106] Ricoeur's primary foil in "Meaningful Action," is Wilhelm Dilthey. For Dilthey, explanation controls the act of understanding. It is the scientific counterpart to the divinatory moment in the act of reading. Correcting Dilthey, Ricoeur posits that reading is better understood as a dialectic, not a process, an irreducible "give and take" between explanation and understanding carried out in the unitary event of reading. A phenomenology stressing the dialectical dynamic between explanation and

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[103] Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity*, 81.

[104] For a rendering contrary to that of Dussel, see David M. Kaplan, *Ricoeur's Critical Theory* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003); for a critique similar to that of Dussel, see Kevin Aho, Elena Ruiz-Aho, and Glenn Whitehouse, "Ricoeur and Latin America: An Interpretation of Selfhood, Memory, and Cultural Trauma," paper presented at 2011 Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, pre-SPEP Ricoeur Session, "History, Memory, Forgetting, and Postcolonial Critique," Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, October 19-22, 2011.

[105] Op. cit. I will be using the page numbers from the 1991 reprint of this text published by Northwestern University Press. This essay simplifies a number of themes found in the larger work Paul Ricoeur, *Le conflit des interprétations. Essais d'herméneutique* (Paris: Seul, 1969).

[106] E.g., "What is a Text?" Cf. fn. 608 above.

understanding will inform the human sciences by shifting the approach to human action from social scientific to textual, or hermeneutical analyses[107] informed by the "strong paradigmatic character" of reading's "dialectical arc."

The most appropriate forms of textual and social interpretation dwell "between a naïve interpretation and a critical interpretation."[108] When the reading of social structures is considered analogous to the reading of a text, the plurivocity disclosed by hermeneutics becomes a "specific plurivocity": interpretations of human action are limited to a "field of possible constructions."[109] The meaning of human actions, historical events, and social phenomena may be construed in a variety of ways, but this does not leave the social scientist faced with a wager between dogmatism and skepticism. The interpreter engages in a hermeneutical circle of guesses and validations in conversation with other interpreters. In this process of conversation "I put my wants and my beliefs at a distance and submit them to a concrete dialectic of confrontation with opposite points of view."[110] This then enables a kind of explanatory objectification of the process of interpretation, open to critique from other members of the guild.

The process of validation in the community of interpreters is not unlike the manner in which a tribunal imputes motives and/or actions to a person on trial.

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[107] Ricoeur highlights the centrality of textuality elsewhere, when he says, "Inasmuch as texts are, among other things, instances of written language, no interpretation theory is possible that does not come to grips with the problem of writing" (*IT*, 25).

[108] "Model of the Text," 164; cf. "What is a Text?," 161.

[109] "Model of a Text," 160.

[110] "Model of a Text," 161.

Borrowing from the legal philosopher H.L.A. Hart,[111] Ricoeur suggests that better and

worse interpretations are determined as a series of "defeats." Defendants and accusers

refute arguments that aim to "defeat" the claim or accusation.

> In saying that human actions are fundamentally "defeasible" and that
> juridical reasoning is an argumentative process that comes to grips with
> the different ways of "defeating" a claim or an accusation, Hart has paved
> the way for a general theory of validation in which juridical reasoning
> would be the fundamental link between validation in literary criticism and
> validation in the social sciences.[112]

The plurivocity of texts and actions engenders a conflict of interpretations carried out in

the court of validation. Eventually the appeals may be exhausted, but—unlike an actual

court of appeals—there is never in the human sciences a decision of the judge

implemented by force. "Neither in literary criticism, nor in the social sciences, is there

such a last word. Or if there is any, we call that violence."[113]

This both-and approach to skepticism and interpretation exemplified by Ricoeur

appears quite amenable to a public theology concerned with dialogue in the context of

pluralism. Positing an analogous relationship between social structures and texts—

especially when the reading of texts is informed by an open-ended, dialogical approach to

interpretation—would inform a public theology concerned with protecting the

irreducibility of dialogue. However, I would like to posit that the social poetics informed

by Ricoeur's textual-social construction assumes a level of equality and peacefulness that

is not always indicative of specific situations. In moments of radical inequality, those

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[111] H.L.A. Hart, "The Ascription of Responsibility and Rights," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 49 [1948]: 171-194.

[112] "Model of a Text," 161-162.

[113] "Model of a Text," 162.

underneath pluralism need a mode of expression that is more like an interruption than a conversation.

Consider the initial interaction between James Cone and whites wanting to "help out" the black project. In his seminal, 1970 work, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, Cone says, "To whites who want to know what they can do (a favorite question of oppressors), Black Theology says, 'Keep your damn mouth closed, and let us black people get our thing together.'"[114] For Cone, the conversation between blacks and whites had been so one-sided for so long, so dominated for so long, that the theretofore objects of white supremacy—blacks in America—were still emerging as subjects, actors instead of recipients, struggling to construct their own theology without perpetuating the destructive tendency toward codependence that was such a horrific part of their heritage. In these initial stages of "impertinent attribution,"[115] what was needed was not a space of "mutual recognition," where blacks and whites could meet equally—where, if they would but admit their respective hermeneutical points of view, they would find new interpretive frameworks formed from their newly embraced affinity. What was needed was an entirely new space that did not include whites, a space wherein the experience of the black theologian could be given primacy of place, and the necessary culture-specific discourse could be carried out without interruption. Positing a correlational mutuality of relations may assist the public theologian in navigating the "daily narrativity" of

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[114] James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1970), 194. Cited in Jon Nilson, *Hearing Past the Pain: Why White Catholic Theologians Need Black Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 2007), 39.

[115] *TN*, ix.

plurality, but when the very possibility of narrating one's own story is compromised by structures of violence, a more robustly revolutionary theory is necessary.

Of course, the interpreter must recognize the manner in which critical theory often "floats as the unsaid"[116] over Ricoeur's project or even serves as the "background music"[117] to his meticulous philosophical performances. However, for those convinced of the irreducibility of suffering, the public theologian needs modes of thought that do not reduce suffering to a step in a process.[118] In this regard, we may take Dussel's critique seriously and posit that Ricoeur's hermeneutical philosophy may enable dialogue in moments of justice but is ultimately inadequate for a fragmentary, disruptive mode of expression informed by liberationist versions of public theology.

Conclusion

Even so, we must conclude with an appreciative complement to our suspicion. Ricoeur's notion of metaphor suggests the possibility of meaning-creation in the juxtaposition of opposites, which addresses our concern with theological and public expression in the re-presentation of recognizable fragments. His notion of narrative likewise suggests the possibility of meaning-creation when this re-presentation is mediated by a recognizable mode of discourse, or genre such as "theology." And, finally, Ricoeur's notion of the self highlights both a unique locatedness and the potential to move beyond this location, as the subject offers new interpretations within her textual genealogy. These theoretical foundations deeply informed Ricoeur's method, including

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[116] *MHF*, 138.

[117] *MHF*, 139.

[118] This is Dussel's response to Ricoeur and Apel in *The Underside of Modernity*, 213.

his embrace of dialogue, his own intrepid engagement with tradition, and his dialectical

constructions.

However, given the assumption of equality that we located in Ricoeur's notions of

mutual recognition and social poetics, we have opened the way for a turn to Walter

Benjamin, whose philosophy of history and theory of the fragment will complement our

Ricoeurian starting point. When juxtaposed with Ricoeur's philosophy (in a

metaphorical moment, no less), Benjamin's philosophy will provide a framework for

public theologies convinced of their complicity in violence and thereby more adequate to

the criteria of liberation and self-critique.

CHAPTER FIVE

PUBLIC THEOLOGY AND WALTER BENJAMIN

We need history, but our need for it differs from that of the jaded idlers in
the garden of knowledge.

– Friedrich Nietzsche[1]

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to complement our Ricoeurian response to

contemporary, public theology by turning to the Jewish, German philosopher, Walter

Benjamin. In the conclusion of our chapter on Ricoeur, we found that the phenomena of

metaphor and narrative suggest a human capacity for meaning-creation that is

recognizable to the members of a shared, textual tradition. For public theologians

informed by revisionist concerns, such phenomenological observations provide a

philosophical framework for their projects. We likewise observed, however, that the

foundational role of textuality in the phenomena of metaphor and narrative may

hamstring a liberationist public theology, insofar as the very notion of textuality is not

essentially attendant to marginalized perspectives. In instances of extreme suffering,

where mere textuality will not suffice, theologians need a paradigm more substantially

informed by the irreducibility of suffering. By turning to Benjamin in this chapter, we

will locate a means by which this exigency may be addressed.

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[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben* (1874); English trans.
Peter Preuss, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980), 7.

We may begin by recalling two of the five public-theological criteria with which we closed part one. These two criteria inform the need for self-critique and liberation: First, we suggested that public theologies must remain aware of the potential for technocracy and totality in so many modern forms of theology and thus must place a self-critical posture at the very center of their projects. A self-critical, even self-deconstructing form characterizes Benjamin's philosophy. Susan Sontag observes this tendency, when she writes:

> [Benjamin's] intensity and exhaustiveness of attention set natural limits to the length at which he could develop his ideas. His major essays seem to end just in time, before they self-destruct. His sentences do not seem to be generated in the usual way; they do not entail. Each sentence is written as if it were the first, or the last.[2]

We will see momentarily how this focus on singularity eventuated in Benjamin's uptake of montage. Second, we suggested that public theologians sensitive to the realities of marginalization and suffering must re-engage their own traditions to disclose levels of culpability in perpetuating oppression. In response to such disclosures, public theologians re-turn to their respective textual heritages to energize fellow believers toward both confession of culpability and hope for continued liberation. Benjamin famously concluded his essay on Goethe's *Wahlvervandtschaften*[3] by saying, "Only for

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[2] Susan Sontag, *Under the Sign of Saturn* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1980), 129. Marcus Bullock likewise highlights Benjamin's attentiveness, saying that for Benjamin, "it takes greater intellectual discipline to wander at a loss in the streets of a city than to find one's way in it." Marcus Bullock, review of *Walter Benjamin and the Antinomies of Tradition* by John McCole (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), in *Monatshefte*, 87.2 (Summer 1995), 264 (264-266, inclusive).

[3] Cf. Walter Benjamin, "Goethe's *Elective Affinities*," trans. Stanley Corngold, in *SW*, 1:299-300. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) first published *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* in 1809. For a recent English translation, see Goethe, *Elective Affinities*, trans. David Constantine (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). Although cumbersome, I have chosen to keep the title "Elective Affinities" to facilitate an easy point of reference with most English version.

the sake of the hopeless have we been given hope."[4] The sense of responsibility (not to

historical "accuracy" but) to those hopeless "underdogs" of history, like the fragmentary

genre Benjamin uses, sits as a (de)centralizing concept in Benjamin's philosophy

uniquely amenable to the criterion of liberation by way of self-critique.

Our analysis of Benjamin consists of two steps.[5] First, we engage in a brief

summary of Benjamin's fragment on history, *Über den Begriff der Geschichte*.[6] In

contrast to a Ricoeurian philosophy of history, where "the reality of the past" functions as

a corrective to the merely rhetorical retrieval of the past,[7] Benjamin's philosophy of

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[4] *SW*, 1:356.

[5] As with so many of the thinkers analyzed in this dissertation, Benjamin's philosophy is incredibly dense. Even a Jacques Derrida has noted this density. In his commentary on Benjamin's early essay, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," trans. Edmund Jephcott, in Walter Benjamin, *SW*, 1:62-74 (German original: Walter Benjamin, "*Über Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen*," in Walter Benjamin, *Gessamelte Schriften*, herausgegeben von Rolf Tiedemann und Hermann Schweppenhäuser [Frankfurt am Main: Surkamp, 1974], 2.1.140-157), Derrida highlighted the "overly enigmatic character" of the essay and "its wealth and overdeterminations" (175). Jacques Derrida in "*De Tours de Babel*," trans. Joseph F. Graham, in Joseph F. Graham (ed.), *Difference in Translation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 165-205. Jacques Derrida in "*De Tours de Babel*," trans. Joseph F. Graham, in Joseph F. Graham (ed.), *Difference in Translation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 165-205.
　　In a more complete analysis of Benjamin, we would want to situate his philosophy of history in his rich, post-Kantian philosophy of experience. We may also note that a fuller consideration of Ricoeur on metaphor, Benjamin on naming, and even Derrida on translation is in order but beyond the scope of the present project. My concerns here are with the public theological criteria outlined at the conclusion to part one, confining me to questions more directly related to notions of tradition and innovation.

[6] "On the Concept of History," trans. Harry Zohn, in *Selected Writings*, 4 Vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1996-2006),4:391 (389-400, inclusive) For a recent, critical edition of the German original, complete with color photos of original manuscripts, see Walter Benjamin, *Über den Begriff der Geschichte*, herausgegeben von Gérard Raulet (Suhrkamp Verlag: Berlin, 2010). Hereafter *Selected Writings* will be referred to as "*SW*."

[7] Cf. Paul Ricoeur, *Reality of the Historical Past* Aquinas Lectures 1984 (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1984). As Ricoeur says at the outset of this work, and as is exemplified elsewhere, the question of "the reality of the past" is unavoidable for the historian, for it is a connection with "real history"—and the obligation to prove an accurate reading of that "real history"—which differentiates the historian from the novelist. The historian accesses this real by way of history's "documents," those moments of experience preserved for anterior analysis and available for the suggesting of publicly defensible hypotheses. To be sure, Ricoeur problematizes a philosophy of history like that of R.G. Collingwood, whose notion of re-enactment is not sufficiently sensitive to the asymmetry between "the thought of the past as mine" and "the thought of the past as other." Yet, as becomes much more apparent in

history reflects a rather "ascetic" insistence[8] not to reduce the particularities of history—

especially those of the suffering—into an all-encompassing narrative. *Über den Begriff*

der Geschichte insists that suffering is a central, urgent reality for the historian, begging

not to be reduced to one aspect of a broader story. Second, we will observe how

Benjamin's approach to history informed his eventual uptake of the fragmentary form

and the genre of montage. Central to Benjamin's philosophy of history was the idea that

some historical moments "stand still" against the ambitions of historical progress. In

such moments, "where thought suddenly stops in a constellation filled with tensions,"[9]

the historian finds a "monad," a particularly intense interpenetration of "now" and "then,"

where a repressed story breaks through in an explosion of singularity. For the historian

sensitive to the disruptive power of such moments, there is a sense of urgency to retrieve

history in a manner that energizes the very tension such moments embody. When the

power of these moments is invigorated by a similarly disruptive re-presentation, the

possibility of emergence is enabled in the present. The interpenetration of "now" and

"then" confronts cultures with the ambiguous simultaneity of utopic hope and lingering

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his own version of a Thomistic mediation between "Sameness" and "Otherness," Ricoeur still insists on maintaining a concern with "the real" as "the real past" to govern the use of what he calls a tropological imagination. Unrealistic as an assumed, fully transparent notion of historical recounting may be, rhetorical re-enactment must still be controlled by what really happened: "By placing the accent almost exclusively on the rhetorical process, we are in danger of concealing the intentionality that crosses through the 'tropics of discourse in the direction of past events.' …In other words, a certain tropological arbitrariness must not make us forget the kind of constraint that the past exerted on historical discourse through known documents, by demanding an endless rectification on its part" (34-35).

[8] The notion of an "ascetic" insistence on *not* constructing theoretical connections was a regular theme in Benjamin's philosophy of history. See, e.g., *SW*, 4:393: "The themes which monastic discipline assigned to friars for meditation were designed to turn them away from the world and its affairs. The thoughts we are developing here have a similar aim."

[9] *GS*, 1.2: 702. I will return to this idea momentarily.

pathologies. The re-presentation of the fragment in montage is thus experienced as a kind of mirror energizing cultures toward new possibilities for redemption.

On the Concept of History

Barbarism lurks in the very concept of culture.

– Walter Benjamin[10]

In his classic text *Über den Begriff der Geschichte*,[11] Benjamin contrasts two approaches to history: that of the "chronicler" (*der Chronist*), which Benjamin problematizes, and that of the "historical materialist" (*historischen Materialistische*), which Benjamin celebrates.[12] The method of the chronicler is "additive: it mobilizes the mass of facts to fill a homogenous and empty time."[13] Pursuing such projects as "the history of civilization," the chronicler "makes an inventory, point by point, of humanity's life forms and creations." In the "*aerarium* of history,"[14] he amasses his riches for

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[10] *AP*, 468; N5a.7

[11] Op. cit., fn. 726

[12] George Steiner observes that Benjamin's *habilitationsschrift* (1925) marks the transition from a "dialectical" to a "dialectical materialist" framework. "The book and its academic mishap [the *habilitationsschrift* was never accepted] mark the close of an essentially romantic-metaphysical period in Benjamin's thought. His highly ambiguous contacts with Marxism came immediately after" (George Steiner, "Introduction," in Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (New York: Verso, 1985), 15. Gershem Scholem would later say, "The philosophical background" of *Ursprung* was developed "on the dialectics of the phenomenon of *Trauerspiel*," remaining "rooted in the metaphysical realm from which they derive in their execution as well. Marxist categories do not figure in this work." Scholem, *Story*, 150.

I cannot address in this context the multiple issues that informed Benjamin's dis/continuity with the materialist philosophy of Marx and Hegel. I intend, instead, simply to use Benjamin's dichotomization of the chronicler and the historical materialist as a way of contrasting better and worse approaches to a unique, theological tradition in public theology. For a survey of Benjamin's interactions with materialism in Russia—and the changes this interacton induced in his own thought, see Uwe Steiner, *Walter Benjamin*, 80-104.

[13] *GS*, 1.2.702: "*Ihr Verfahren ist additiv: sie bietet die Masse der Fakten auf, um die homogene und leere Zeit auszufüllen*."

[14] The *aerarium* was the treasury of ancient Rome, stored in the Temple of Saturn. One of the essays accompanying the *Arcades* is entitled "The Ring of Saturn, or Some Remarks on Iron Construction," written in 1928 or 1929. Cf. *AP*, 885-887, trans. Eiland and McLaughlin. The essay begins as a reflection

display and presents them, constructed for all time. Since the present is merely a moment

of transition, fitting nicely into the "eternal" narrative accessible to the observer, the

chronicler's role is the easy narration of events from an objective point of view.[15] For

Benjamin, the point of view required by the Chronicler is disembodied, eschatological,

indeed, divine:

> Only a redeemed mankind is granted the fullness of its past—which is to
> say, only for a redeemed mankind has its past become citable in all its
> moments.[16]

The easy narrative of the chronicler threatens to overwhelm every individuality in its

universalizing ambitions. "Historicism culminates, rightfully, in universal history."[17]

Such conceptions fail to appreciate that the riches thus amassed "owe not only their

existence but also their transmission to a constant effort of society."[18] History does not

sit "there" as a set of static data whose interpretation is transferable from epoch to epoch.

History is constructed, preserved, protected.

In reality, then, the chronicler's primary virtue is not "objectivity" but

"empathy"[19] with history's victors.[20] His method is lazy, indolent, and *acedic*, "the

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on "on a small vignette which has been extracted from the middle of the century (as from the middle of the thick book that contains it)" (885). The "vignette" is a picture from the book *Another World* by the French artist J. J. Grandville. The essay functions, finally, as a reflection on the emergence of iron and the controversy surrounding the embrace of it.

[15] Among Benjamin's theoretical foils is Fustel de Coulanges, who recommended that the historian "blot out everything he knows about the later course of history" (*SW*, 4:391). Benjamin responds by saying, "There is no better way of characterizing the method which historical materialism has broken with" (*SW*, 4:398).

[16] *SW*, 4.390. Of course, here Benjamin is using eschatological language in a satirical manner.

[17] *GS*, 1.2.702: "*Der Historismus gipfelt von rechtswegen in der Universalgeschichte.*"

[18] *AP*, 14.

[19] *GS*, 1.2:696: "*Es ist ein Verfahren der Einfühlung.*" ("It is a process of empathy.")

strongest narcotic of the century."[21] Giving himself over to "the whore called 'once upon

a time' in historicism's bordello," the historian is not "'man enough' to burst open the

continuum of history."[22] He loses himself before the spoils of prior conquerors, those

currently in power, totally unaware that "cultural treasures" owe their existence not

merely to the efforts of those geniuses who created them but to "the anonymous toil of

others," those underneath the narrative, on whose backs the treasures had been forged.

Using this observation as his primary point of departure, Benjamin can say:

> There is no document of culture which is not at the same time a document
> of barbarism. And just as such a document is never free of barbarism, so
> barbarism taints the manner in which it was transmitted from one hand to
> another.[23]

The chronicler's aspirations, insufficiently sensitive to "the tradition of the oppressed"

(*Die Tradition der Unterdrückten*)[24] and to historicism's connectivity with those in

power, emerge as nothing less than an "emergency situation" (*Ausnahmezustand*).[25]

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[20] *SW*, 4:391: "With whom does historicism actually sympathize? The answer is inevitable: the victors."

[21] Walter Benjamin, *AP*, 463, N3.4.

[22] *GS*, 1.2.702: "*Manns genug, das Kontinuum der Geschichte aufzusprengen*." Obviously, Benjamin's language is not sufficiently sensitive to its own perpetuation of dominant categories, here sexual. For studies in this paradox, see the essays by John Docker, Sigrid Weigel, Margaret Mahony Stoljar, and Michael Hollington in Gerhard Fischer (ed.), *'With the Sharpened Axe of Reason': Approaches to Walter Benjamin* (Washington: Berg, 1996), 67-128.

[23] *SW*, 4:391.

[24] *GS*, 1.2.697.

[25] *GS*, 1.2.697. Benjamin reflects on the insensitivity typical of philosophers/historians in such quotes as the following: "The current amazement that the things we are experiencing are 'still' possible in the twentieth century is *not* philosophical. This amazement is not the beginning of knowledge" (*SW*, 4:392). Cf. also Benjamin's critique of Napoleon: "Just as Napoleon failed to understand the functional nature of the state as an instrument of domination by the bourgeois class, so the architects of this time [here, 19th-century] failed to understand the functional nature of iron, with which the constructive principle begins its domination of architecture" (*AP*, 4). Walter Benjamin, "Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century (1935)," trans. Edmund Jephcott and Howard Eiland in *AP*, 4 (3-13 inclusive); this essay was one

Those underneath the power, underneath the narrative, are caught up in an overwhelming storm of cultural progress. Benjamin famously reflected on this progress in the following paragraph:

> There is a painting by Klee[26] called *Angelus Novus*. An angel is depicted there who looks as though he were about to distance himself from something which he is staring at. His eyes are opened wide, his mouth stands open, and his wings are outstretched. The Angel of History must look just so. His face is turned towards the past. Where we see the appearance of a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it before his feet. He would like to pause for a moment so as to awaken the dead and to piece together what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has caught itself up in his wings and is so strong that the Angel can no longer close them. The storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the rubble-heap before him grows sky-high. That which we call progress is *this* storm.[27]

"*Und seine Flügel sind ausgespannt.*" ("And his wings are outstretched.") In an effort to reconstruct the catastrophic chain of events that has been hurled before his feet, the angel of history has opened his wings so as to move *towards* and fix that which has been. His desire is to rebuild; yet this unfolding creates a drag against the stormy winds blowing

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of two "*Exposés*" Benjamin wrote in 1935 and 1939, respectively; the first in German, the second in French (*AP*, 14-26). They function as an introduction and summary to the *AP*. Also found in *SW* 3:32-49 (1935 version), and *GS*, 5:45-77 (both versions). The latter essay was requested by Max Horkeimer as a way of obtaining an American patron for the project.

[26] Benjamin is referring here to Paul Klee (1879-1940), the Swiss expressionist.

[27] My translation. For the German original, see *GS*, 1.2:697-698: "*Es gibt ein Bild von Klee, das Angelus Novus heißt. Ein Engel ist darauf dargestellt, der aussieht, als wäre er im Begriff, sich von etwas zu entfernen, worauf er starrt. Seine Augen sind aufgerissen, sein Mund steht offen und seine Flügel sind ausgespannt. Der Engel der Geschichte muß so aussehen. Er hat das Antlitz der Vergangenheit zugewendet. Wo eine Kette von Begebenheiten vor uns erscheint, da sieht er eine einzige Katastrophe, die unablässig Trümmer auf Trümmer häuft und sie ihm vor die Füße schleudert. Er möchte wohl verweilen, die Toten wecken und das Zerschlagene zusammenfügen. Aber ein Sturm weht vom Paradiese her, der sich in seinen Flügeln verfangen hat und so stark ist, daß der Engel sie nicht mehr schließen kann. Dieser Sturm treibt ihn unaufhaltsam in die Zukunft, der er den Rücken kehrt, während der Trümmerhaufen vor ihm zum Himmel wächst. Das, was wir den Fortschritt nennen, ist dieser Sturm.*"

from Paradise. The storm has caught the angel up in an unavoidable gust, driving him "irresistibly into the future."[28]

Motivated by the oppression of *Die Unterdrückte* and the overwhelming ambitions of progress, the historical materialist takes a significantly different tack from the chronicler. He disciplines himself to foster an experience with the past that is not distracted[29] by the ambitions of history and the "eternal return of more of the same."[30] The materialist "cannot look on history as anything other than a constellation of dangers," which begs to be redeemed.[31] He responds in kind by searching for those moments which break through the easy narrativity of tradition. Whereas the chronicler "offers the 'eternal' image of the past, the historical materialist supplies a unique experience with the

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[28] For Benjamin's twenty-ninth birthday, Gershom (Gerhard) Scholem composed a poem entitled "Gruss vom Angelus," which Benjamin quotes to open paragraph IX of *Über den Begriff der Geschichte*: "My wing is ready for flight, / I would like to turn back. / If I stayed everliving time, / I'd still have little luck" (*SW*, 4:392). The position of the wings is not insignificant. If the wings of history were folded, if the angel did not look hopeless in the face of the approaching storm, one could assume that the events historians analyze stand on their own against the gusty deluge of destruction compounded by progress. There would be no significant sense of urgency. If, however, the wings of the angel of history are *un*folded, as Benjamin says, there is a certain inevitability of violence, a prediction of "drag" against the and the unavoidability of crisis. One's interpretation of this inevitability is directly connected to one's adoption—or lack thereof—of the call to sound the "fire alarm" of historical materialism and to name our situation as nothing less than an *Ausnahmezustand*, an "emergency situation."

Paul Ricoeur misquotes Benjamin in the final pages of *Memory, History, Forgetting*. Ricoeur says, "How could we not mention—echoing André Breton's apostrophe on the joy of memory and in counterpoint to Walter Benjamin's evocation of the angel of history with *folded* wings [*En contrepoint à…l'ange de l'histoire aux ailes repliées*]—Kierkegaard's praise of forgetting as the liberation of care? (*MHF*, 505). Cf. *L'memoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, 656.

[29] An analogous concern was behind Benjamin's analysis of nineteenth-century "world exhibitions," which "open a phantasmagoria which a person enters in order to be distracted" (*AP*, 7).

[30] *AP*, 340.J62,5; 854.M^o,14; or, "sense for sameness in the world." The phrase belongs to Johannes V. Jensen, *Exotische Novellen*, trans. Julia Koppel (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1919), 41-42. Benjamin quotes him in "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," *SW*, 3:105; and in "Hashish in Marseilles," *SW*, 2:677; cf. *SW*, 3:123, fn. 6. Cf. also *AP*, 4: the first instances of emergence were "ruled by the form of the old."

[31] *AP*, 470, N7, 2.

past."[32] In a manner analogous to Robespierre's adoption of Rome,[33] the historical

materialist makes a "dialectical leap" [*einen dialektischen Sprung*] through "the open air

of history." He sees certain epochs as particularly explosive,[34] where a "now-time"

[*Jetztzeit*] waits to be engaged in the present. Aware that such moments exemplify an

instant when "time takes a stand [*einsteht*] and has come to a standstill [*Stillstand*

gekommen ist],"[35] the historical materialist maintains a hope that the "now" of the

standstill may be appropriated to facilitate an analogously shocking event of recognition

in her own present.

> Where thought suddenly stops in a constellation filled with tensions, there
> it gives a shock to the same, through which it crystallizes itself as a
> monad. The historical materialist goes to a historical subject solely and
> alone, where he confronts it as a historical monad. In this structure he
> discerns the mark of a messianic standstill of events, in other words, of a
> revolutionary chance in the struggle for the repressed past.[36]

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[32] *GS*, 1.2.702: "*Der Historismus stellt das >ewige< Bild der Vergangenheit, der historische Materialist eine Erfahurng mit ihr, die einzig dasteht.*" Harry Zohn notes that the final word of this sentence "chimes" with *einsteht* ("takes a stand") in the first sentence of section XVI (Zohn, *SW*, 1.400, fn. 26).

[33] *SW*, 4:395: "The French Revolution viewed itself as Rome reincarnate. It cited ancient Rome exactly the way fashion cites a bygone mode of dress."

[34] "What characterizes revolutionary classes at their moment of action is the awareness that they are about to make the continuum of history explode" (*SW*, 4:395).

[35] *SW*, 4:396; cf. *GS*, 1.2.702.

[36] My translation. *GS*, 1.2:702-703: "*Zum Denken gehört nicht nur die Bewegung der Gedanken sondern ebenso ihre Stillstellung. Wo das Denken in einer von Spannungen gesättigten Konstellation plötzlich einhält, da erteilt es derselben einen Chock, durch den es sich als Monade kristallisiert. Der historische Materialist geht an einen geschichtlichen Gegenstand einzig und allein da heran, wo er ihm als Monade entgegentritt. In dieser Struktur erkennt er das Zeichen einer messianischen Stillstellung des Geschehens, anders gesagt, einer revolutionären Chance im Kampfe für die unterdrückte Vergangenheit.*"
The quote continues, "*Er nimmt sie wahr, um eine bestimmte Epoche aus dem homogenen Verlauf der Geschichte herauszusprengen; so sprengt er ein bestimmtes Leben aus der Epoche, so ein bestimmtes Werk aus dem Lebenswerk. Der Ertrag seines Verfahrens besteht darin, daß im Werk das Lebenswerk, im Lebenswerk die Epoche und* in *der Epoche der gesamte Geschichtsverlauf aufbewahrt ist und aufgehoben. Die nahrhafte Frucht des historisch Begriffenen hat die Zeit als den kostbaren, aber des Geschmacks entratenden Samen in ihrem* Innern.*"*
Benjamin's italicizing of the spatial prepositions *im* and *in* and the noun *Innern* highlights the disclosive potential of the fragment in and of itself. The various "objects" of historical study—which

For the historical materialist, therefore, "the true image of the past *flits* by."[37] It does not perdure in a kind of perennial obviousness, recognized as "the way it really was."[38] The construction site of frozen dialectics is not "empty" and "homogeneous." It is "filled full," compressing the history of humanity "in a tremendous abbreviation."[39] History is thus messianic, eschatological, and it longs to remain as such in an ever-present event of resurrection.[40] "Image" [*Bild*] is not realized, as the past "casts its light on the present," or the present "casts its light on what is past."[41] Image gives way to understanding, insofar as "what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation."[42] Image is the moment where dialectics stands still. The emergence of historical knowledge is not progressive but event-like, "suddenly emergent.[43] The "now" characterizing such flashes of insight is not merely anticipatory. It does not predict. It is.

Benjamin catalogues in a kind of crescendo, moving from "lifework," "epoch," to "cumulative course of history"—are not found "through" the work, on its other side, as it were. They are found "in" the work, not unlike the way in which a thing's communicable being is communicated "in" its language. At the risk of oversimplifying, we could say that, for Benjamin, the universal and the particular cannot be dichotomized. The "universal" (lifework, epoch, cumulative course of history) is found *in* the "particular" (the work, the fragment, the monad).

[37] *SW*, 4.390; cf. *GS*, 1.2:695: "*Das wahre Bild der Vergangenheit* huscht *vorbei*."

[38] According to Harry Zohn, this phrase belonged to Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886), whose method of historiography—along with de Coulange (cf. fn. 739 above)—influenced the type of history Benjamin wants to correct—one not sufficiently aware of concealed political and social motives. *SW*, 4:398.

[39] *SW*, 4:396.

[40] Coincidentally, David Tracy's commentary on Benjamin is insightful here: "What Benjamin attempted was not a representation of history but a reconstellation of historical images to show the diachronic relationship of certain fragments as images from a past epic to related images that proliferate for us in every present moment." David Tracy, "Fragments: The Spiritual Situation of Our Times," 178.

[41] *AP*, 462, N2a.3; cf. 463, N3.1.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

It is there. It is now, and it demands to remain now in the redemptive re-presentation of the historian.[44]

When appropriately re-presented, these pure moments of revolution may be "reborn" into a present "capable of receiving" them,[45] where the "now of recognizability" [*Jetzt der Erkennbarkeit*[46]] informs contemporary events of historical awakening:

> Dialectical thinking is the organ of historical awakening. Every epoch, in fact, not only dreams the one to follow but, in dreaming, precipitates its awakening.[47]

Benjamin's goal was thus "the awakening of a not-yet-conscious knowledge," achieved by juxtaposing the forward-looking, productive, and lively alongside the abortive, retrograde, and obsolescent.[48] Not unlike Ricoeur's notion of metaphor, such creative collocation would allow distinct contours of "then" and "now" to be set off through contrast and thus create sufficient pressure to foster explosion.[49]

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[44] Coincidentally, Benjamin's goal is not to challenge the perceptibility of history. His is not a nihilistic approach. However, in "carrying over the principle of montage into history," the historian betrays a concern less with assembling a unified "whole" out of the "parts" than with allowing the "smallest and most precisely cut components" to create their own assemblage. The purpose in so doing is "to discover in the analysis of the small individual moment the crystal of the total event. And, therefore, to break with vulgar historical naturalism. To grasp the construction of history as such" (*AP*, 461; n2, 6).

[45] Eiland and McLaughlin (xii).

[46] Benjamin, *GS*, 1.3.1237; cf. 1.2.695: "Only as an image, that flashes up in the moment of its recognizability—never to be seen again—is the past seized" ("*Nur als Bild, das auf Nimmerwiedersehen im Augenblick seiner Erkennbarkeit eben aufblitzt, ist die Vergangenheit festzuhalten*"). "Each 'now' is the now of a particular recognizability. In it truth is charged to the bursting point with time" (*AP*, 463; N3.1).

[47] *AP*, 13.

[48] *AP*, 458; N1, 9.

[49] "A remark by Ernst Bloch apropos of *The Arcades Project*: 'History displays its Scotland Yard badge.' It was in the context of a conversation in which I was describing how this work—*comparable, in method, to the process of splitting the atom*—liberates the enormous energies of history that are bound up in the 'once upon a time' of classical historiography" (*AP*, 463, N3.4, italics mine).

By confronting a culture's dreamlike sense of comfort with the revolutionary

moments of transition in its own history, the critic set free a latent, "Messianistic

power"—a utopia that had "left its trace in a thousand configurations of life, from

enduring edifices to passing fashions."[50]

> Ambiguity is manifest imaging of dialectic, the law of dialectics at a
> standstill. This standstill is utopia and the dialectical image, therefore,
> dream image.[51]

In those eschatological moments when cultures engaged their utopian power, they

confronted the unintentional compulsion to remain comfortably in the eternal newness of

hell,[52] and they were empowered to awaken from their dream.[53] "As flowers turn toward

the sun," Benjamin could say elsewhere, "what has been strives to turn—by dint of a

secret heliotropism—toward that sun which is rising in the sky of history."[54]

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[50] *AP*, 4. György Márkus calls this phenomenon a "utopian potential…dominant even in the most depraved forms of experience as collective, unconscious, meaning-creating activity." Márkus, "Walter Benjamin," 10.

[51] *AP*, 10. In the original, the first sentence of this quote runs as follows: "*Zweideutigkeit ist die bildliche Erscheinung der Dialektik, das Gesetz der Dialektik im Stillstand*" (*GS*, 5.1:55).

[52] *AP*, 842-843, G°,17: "Modernity, the time of hell. The punishments of hell are always the newest thing going in this domain. What is at issue is not that 'the same thing happens over and over'…but rather that the face of the world, the colossal head, precisely in what is newest never alters—that this 'newest' remains, in every respect, the same. This constitutes the eternity of hell and the sadist's delight in innovation. To determine the totality of traits which define this 'modernity' is to represent hell." In addition to Jensen's notion of sameness, Baudelaire's definition of "modernity" plays a sort of background music to Benjamin's eternal sameness: "By 'modernity' I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable." Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life" in Jonathan Mayne (ed. and trans.), *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* (London: Phaidon Press: 1995), 12.

[53] "Just as Proust begins the story of his life with an awakening, so must every presentation of history begin with awakening; in fact, it should treat of nothing else. This one [*The Arcades Project*], accordingly, deals with awakening from the nineteenth century" (*AP*, 464; N4.3). Rolf Tiedemann puts it this way: "According to Benjamin, the images of dreaming and awakening from the dream are related as expression is related to interpretation. He hoped that the images, once interpreted, would dissolve the spell" (Tiedemann, "Dialectics at a Standstill," 935).

[54] Benjamin, *SW*, 4:390.

Re-Presentation as Montage

An intention to teach is inimical to the chance to learn from actual history.

– Marcus Bullock[55]

Benjamin found a particularly noteworthy moment of interpenetration in nineteenth-century Paris, a culture marked by panoramic photography, world exhibitions, interior decorating, the market streets, neighborhood barricades, and especially *les passages*.[56] Each of these phenomena represented a tensive juncture, where old and new converged in an epochal shift. In *les passages*, the emerging mechanistic existence was contrasted with a nostalgia for "the land of milk and honey;"[57] in panoramas, the emergence of urban photography was contrasted with a nostalgia for the landscape of the country;[58] in world exhibitions, an emerging global economy was contrasted with a

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[55] Marcus Bullock, "Teaching a Classic in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Walter Benjamin and the Case of Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften*," *Monatschefte*, 85.1 (Spring 1993): 8 (6-23, inclusive).

[56] The 1935 "*Exposé*" names six such phenomena and key thinkers associated with the type of emergence they represent: (1) arcades (Fourier), (2) panoramas (Daguerre), (3) world exhibitions (Grandville), (4) interior decorating (Louis Philippe), (5) streets of Paris (Baudelaire), and (6) barricades (Haussmann). The 1939 French "*Exposé*" names only five: arcades, world exhibitions, interior decorating, streets of Paris, and barricades. It is interesting to note the similarities between Benjamin's understanding of these nineteenth-century phenomena and the seventeenth-century German *Trauerspiel*: "In the ruins of the great buildings the idea of the plan speaks more impressively than in lesser buildings, however well preserved they are; and for this reason the German *Trauerspiel* merits interpretation. In the spirit of allegory it is conceived from the outset as a ruin, a fragment. Others may shine resplendently as on the first day; this form preserves the image of beauty to the very last" (Benjamin, *Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 235). According to Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, the "Origin of the German Mourning-Play" has the "most comprehensive formulation of the idea of the monad." Eiland and McLaughlin, "Translator's Foreword," x.

[57] *AP*, 5. Cf. "The Ring of Saturn," *AP*, 886-887: "Whereas we allow our steel furnishings of today to be what they are, shiny and clean, a hundred years ago men took great pains, by means of subtle coating techniques, to make it appear that iron furniture—which was already being produced by then—was crafed from the finest wood. It was at this time that manufacturers began to stake their reputations on bringing our glasses that looked like porcelain, gold jewelry resembling leather stragps, iron tables with the look of wickerwork, and other such things."

[58] Photography created a crisis for painting that gave rise to Impressionism and Cubism—areas into which photography could not follow. Thus, the emergence of panoramas.

global proletariat, whose "use value" was receding into the background;[59] in the interior

("the office"), the emergence of a public persona at the place of work was contrasted with

a nostalgia for privacy in the dwelling place;[60] in the streets of Paris, the emergence of a

crowded marketplace was contrasted with a nostalgia for isolated, objectivist critique;

and in the barricades, the emergence of boulevards was contrasted with a nostalgia for

communes as permanent monuments to class warfare.[61]

The Arcades Project[62] functioned as an exploration of these moments of

emergence, quintessentially captured by *les passages*,[63] which Benjamin considered the

most revelatory architectural form of the period.[64] *Les passages*, built primarily between

1822 and 1837, were "glass-roofed, marble-paneled corridors" characterizing the

"industrial luxury" of nineteenth-century Europe. Extended "through whole blocks of

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[59] *AP*, 7, 18. The proletariat for Benjamin is the laboring class, the class of workers whose means of production is their own labor.

[60] The interior "represents the universe." "The real gravitational center of living space shifts to the office. The irreal center makes its place in the home" (*AP*, 9). Ornamentation in a home is like the signature of an artist on a painting, but it is also more than this. It is an escape from the siege of technology upon the artistic expression. "The interior is the asylum where art takes refuge" (*AP*, 19).

[61] *AP*, 23.

[62] *Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Prepared on the basis of the German volume edited by Rolf Tiedemann (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap / Harvard University Press, 1999), 3; hereafter *AP*; German original *Gesammelte Schriften, Band V-I: Das Passagen-Werk* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982). Benjamin had to abandon his work on the *Arcades Project* in 1940, when he was forced to flee Paris, as the German army approached. His life ended during this escape.

[63] The German title of *Arcades Project*, *Das Passagen-Werk*, reflects the importance of *les passages* for the work as a whole.

[64] Eiland and McLaughlin (ix). Benjamin cites J.A. Dulaure, *Histoire physique, civile et morale de Paris depuis 1821 jusqu'à nos jour* (Paris, 1835), 2:28-29 and Edmond Beaurepaire, *Paris d'hier et d'au jour d'hui: La Chronique des rues* (Paris, 1900), 67. Both of these historians blamed the initial rise and popularity of the *passages* on the fact that the streets of Paris were constantly "besieged by carriages." The *flâneur* could not walk on the streets, so the *passages* became a commodity enabling the distraction of a daily stroll. However, once the streets were widened, the *passages* were no longer needed, and so they did not maintain a monopoly on *flânerie* (*AP*, 32).

buildings," they functioned as a singularly unique confluence of commerce (a booming

textile trade), industry (the beginning of iron construction), economy (the growth of street

shops in Paris), and culture (the *flâneur*, a casual, Parisian walker who "seeks refuge in

the crowd"[65]). *Les passages* captured the economic aspirations of the bourgeoisie and, in

this sense, functioned as a uniquely dense instantiation of the collective: "Lining both

sides of these corridors, which get their light from above, are the most elegant shops, so

that the *passage* is a city, a world in miniature."[66]

The very form of *The Arcades* reflects the phantasmagoric experience elicited by

a stroll through *les passages*. Outside of a handful of essays which bookend the project,

The Arcades is simply a massive amount fragments, collected by Benjamin over a course

of thirteen years,[67] grouped into "convolutes"[68] ("sheafs" or "bundles"), and placed

alongside Benjamin's periodic, brief notes of commentary.[69] As literary form,[70] *Arcades*

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[65] *AP*, 21.

[66] From the "Illustrated Guide to Paris" as quoted by Walter Benjamin, "Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century," trans. Howard Eiland, *AP*, 3; see also *SW*,3.3 (3-15 inclusive), also trans. Howard Eiland; cf. *GS*, 5.32-49. Benjamin liked this quote from the "Illustrated Guide," calling it "the *locus classicus* of the *Arcades*" (*AP*, 3, 31).
　　The nineteenth century itself was quite fragmentary. It was the century of Nietzsche, Marx, Hegel, and Kierkegaard; of Proust, Goethe, Flaubert, and Thoreau; of the Napoleonic wars and the worldwide decline of slavery; and of a rather major shift in the conception of history. Prior to the nineteenth century, it was thought that "the course of the world is an endless series of facts congealed in the form of things" (*AP*, 14).

[67] Benjamin worked on *Arcades* from 1927 until his death in 1940. Cf. Rolf Tiedemann, "Dialectics at a Standstill," 929. Benjamin explained the experience of writing the project as being drawn by a magnetic force to the North Pole. Everything he thought was incorporated into the project and placed alongside other portions in order to let the collective interact toward an emergence of awareness. *AP*, 458.

[68] The term was originally coined by Adorno, after his perusal of Benjamin's manuscript, called "Auzeichnungen und Materialien" ("Records and Materials") by Rolf Tiedemann. *Konvolut* was "a larger or smaller assemblage—literally, a bundle—of manuscripts or printed materials that belong together," a folder, file, or sheaf. Eiland and McLaughlin (xi).

[69] The book reads, in fact, as a draft. Like the overwhelming majority of Benjamin's works, the book was not published in his lifetime. Rolf Tiedemann maintains that it was first mentioned in an essay by Theodor Adorno in 1950, ten years after Benjamin's death. Prior to Adorno's exposure, *The Arcades*

disrupts the expectations accompanying the conventional book form[71] and its typical

mode of analysis, grounded "on the premise of a continuous and homogenous

temporality."[72] By sprinkling multiple, illustrative monads collected from the nineteenth

century with his own moments of awareness, Benjamin facilitated a sort of collision that

challenged easy assumptions of meaning and gave way to moments of awareness:

> Method of this project: literary montage. I needn't *say* anything. Merely
> show. [*Ich habe nichts* zu sagen. *Nur zu zeigen.*] I shall purloin no
> valuables, appropriate no ingenious formulations. But the rags, the
> refuse—these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to
> come into their own: by making use of them.[73]

Such radical montage functioned as a kind of "citing without quotation marks"[74] that

enabled the recognition of unnoticed resonance—hints or blinks—sending vibrations

across the landscape of history, cracking open the assumptions of the historian, and

exhibiting a world of secret affinities.

Benjamin and Public Theology

Our brief analysis of Walter Benjamin yields two responses to the public-

theological criteria we developed at the conclusion to part one. First, attending to

Benjamin's fragmentary style, we may suggest that his philosophy informs a self-critical

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had been hidden in the *Bibliothèque National* during World War II. Cf. Theodor Adorno, "A Portrait of Walter Benjamin," in T.W. Adorno, *Prisms*, trans. Samuel Weber and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1981), 221-241.

[70] Benjamin calls Charles Fourier's *phalansteries* "the architectural canon" of the Arcades. (*AP*, 4, 16-17). Other literary precursors can, of course, be found in the German Romantics, Kierkegaard, etc.

[71] *AP*, 13: "Literature submits to montage in the feuilleton." The "feuilleton" was a supplementary section of the French newspaper containing reviews, fiction, political commentary, and gossip.

[72] Eiland and McLaughlin (xi).

[73] Walter Benjamin, *AP*, 460; cf. *GS*, 5.1:574.

[74] *AP*, 458; N1, 10; *GS*, 5.1:572.

and liberationist public theology. Theologians dependent on a Benjaminian paradigm may suggest a re-turn to unique religious traditions, engaged for the purpose of disclosing theological pathologies. Aware of the potential for technocracy in so many historical and etymological approaches to tradition, public theologians strive, always anew, "to wrest tradition away from the conformism that is working to overpower it."[75] They urge their ecclesial public to look critically at their traditions in order to let the "luster" [*Schein*] of truth shine through as a kind of "vanishing point."[76] In our public-theological criteriology, we suggested that this moment of truth be disclosed as a confession of sin: public theologians redirect the attention of the ecclesial public to their past, admitting complicity in the textual "chronicling" of truth and thus the perpetual silencing of voices underneath the easy narrative constructed in the bordello of traditionalism. Benjamin's fragmentary style likewise protects against a totalizing ontology. As Benjamin's philosophy matured, he gradually left the didactic style of the monograph and wrote in an increasingly suggestive manner, ultimately culminating in his adoption of the fragmentary genre. The fragment functioned for Benjamin as a way of dwelling in the both-and of historical reconstruction. Although most academic theologians would balk at the proposal of emulating Benjamin's fragmentary style in an academic work, it is not inappropriate to argue for the use of a fragmentary mode in the retrieval of a theological tradition. Doing so enables dialogue, liberation, and an elusiveness that does not yield easily to reification and marginalization. How might such a project look?

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[75] *SW*, 4:390.

[76] The moment of interpretation is "the precise spot in the present my historical construction would take as its vanishing point." Walter Benjamin, *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin*, trans. Manfred R. Jacobson and Evelyn M. Jacobson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 509.

In continuity with Benjamin's uptake of montage, we may suggest that the public theologian construct contemporary, recognizable theologies as a collection of a unique tradition's fragments. As in Kathryn Tanner's appropriation of Hans Urs von Balthasar in *Christ the Key*, the goal is not to produce a scientifically defensible account of static, textual or historical data. Neither is the goal to say whatever one feels. Having been chastened by an awareness of her own tradition's complicity in the sins of marginalization, the theologian re-presents the recognizable fragments of her tradition as a montage juxtaposing the known with the unknown, the now with the then, and thus facilitating the shared project of liberation. She does not claim that hers is a "better" interpretation of the tradition, if such an interpretation is defined scientifically. But insofar as Christianity claims the quintessentially monadic event as its very (decentralizing) center—the cross—the contemporary public theologian may boast significant precedent. We may again invoke James Cone.[77] Cone's juxtaposition of the cross with the lynching tree creates a poignantly disjunctive experience for contemporary audiences, thus preserving the cross's fragmentary power. For Cone, any contemporary theology of the cross that does not facilitate contemporary evocations of suffering must be rejected. Further, any theology that does not publicly confess complicity in the sin of marginalization is not a theology of the cross.

We have thus introduced a second Benjaminian response to our criteria. Benjamin's philosophy of history provides a framework wherein the theologian may look backwards to those moments of theological standstill, where the intersection of the same

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[77] "I read the Bible through the black tradition of struggle and not as the objective Word of God." Cone, "Preface to the 1997 Edition," *God of the Oppressed*, xi.

and the new gives way to a uniquely tensive monad exploding the easy comfort with traditional modes of thought. The oppressed of theological history look to the public theologian as one who can fulfill a waning hope. She has a "weak Messianic power," the ability to usher in a new future, to fulfill a promise for those whose story has been sacrificed on the altar of "the tradition." Motivated by this expectation of justice, the public theologian breaks open the indefatigable hunger of progress and the all-too-easy cataloguing of events in the perpetuation of traditionalism. Engaging a kind of mystical discernment to locate those dreams from which her ecclesial public must awaken, the public theologian gathers "what is left" in the margins of history to facilitate new moments of awareness in her own present.

Segue to Chapter Six

Our philosophical response to the theological problems outlined in part one has emerged as a dialectic between Ricoeur and Benjamin. Balancing Ricoeur's turn to hermeneutics is Benjamin's very central concern with the oppressed, with the inevitability of barbarism in tradition, and with the consequent need always to appropriate tradition in a non-totalizing, even self-deconstructing manner. At issue on the other side of our analysis is the possibility of dialogue in a fragmentary framework. A Ricoeurian may make this observation by asking how one might keep the sense of urgency in Benjamin's philosophy from devolving into new ideologies. Are montage and the fragment *merely* critical? In our final chapter we will further explore the amenability of the fragment to the project of public theology. As a kind of bookend to the project as a whole, we will do so by reengaging the five-part criteriology constructed at the conclusion to part two.

CHAPTER SIX

THEOLOGICAL PLUNDERPHONICS:

PUBLIC THEOLOGY AND "THE FRAGMENT"

Plundered music is "very normal and familiar sounding, at the same time
as it probably seems extremely weird.

– John Oswald[1]

Introduction

It is expedient at this point to provide a brief summary of our project thus far. In

the opening pages of the dissertation, we defined public theology as the engagement of

theological and non-theological semantic domains, a "theology" and a "public" (page 1).

The dissertation as a whole has reflected this distinction. It was presented in two parts:

one theological (or related primarily to the works of "theologians") and one philosophical

(or related primarily to the works of "philosophers"). In our theological part one we

surveyed contemporary forms of public theology (chapter one) before delving into a

rather detailed analysis of the Tracy-Lindbeck debate (chapters two and three). Our

philosophical part two consisted of a turn to Ricoeur (chapter three) and Benjamin

(chapter four) in response to the observations made in part one. The conclusions of our

four chapters ran as follows: (1) Our survey of contemporary forms of public theology

gave way to a set of questions, which we suggested were determinative for the type of

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[1] John Oswald, in Norman Igma, "Plunderphonics: An Interview with John Oswald."
http://www.plunderphonics.com/xhtml/xinterviews.html. Accessed July 25, 2012.

public theology a theologian constructs. We constructed these questions by using the Tracyan notions of meaning, meaningfulness, and truth and by naming the interrelationality of theological and non-theological expression as a particularly determinative factor in various public theologies. (2) The Tracy-Lindbeck debate highlighted the consistent tension the public theologian experiences between the demands internal to theological and non-theological expression, respectively. In an attempt to engage sympathetically with a multiplicity of concerns internal to the debates in public theology, we concluded part one with a suggestion for a post-Lindbeckian appropriation of David Tracy, complemented by a criteriology for public theology. This criteriology included five aspects: (a) Public theology must remain recognizable to members of a religious community. (b) Public theology is aware of the potential for technocracy and totality in so many modern forms of theology and thus maintains a self-critical posture at the very center of its project. (c) Public theology pursues "what is true." (d) Public theology responds substantially to pluralism. (e) Public theology re-engages its own tradition in order to disclose levels of culpability in perpetuating oppression; in response to such disclosures, public theology re-turns to its unique textual heritage to energize its members toward confession of culpability and hope for continued liberation. (3) Our subsequent turn to philosophy yielded suggestions for navigating these potentially divergent criteria. Beginning with Paul Ricoeur's philosophies of metaphor, narrative, and subjectivity, we located a philosophical framework adequate to the tasks of recognizability, dialogue, and truth (as poetic/pluralistic). (4) We complemented Ricoeur's philosophy by introducing Walter Benjamin's critical approach to history and his uptake of montage as a genre preserving the centrality of self-critique. Our

suggestion was that Benjamin's philosophy was more adequate to the criteria of

liberation and critique than was Ricoeur's, thus providing a complementary framework.

On the other side of our Ricoeur-Benjamin dialectic, we opened the way to chapter six by

asking how a Benjaminian complement to Ricoeur may not devolve into new ideologies,

newly privatized conversations.

Our task in chapter six is to address this final question by evaluating the adequacy

of Benjamin's fragmentary[2] form to contemporary exigencies in public ctheology. My

conclusion is that, indeed, contemporary public theology is best construed as a critical

theology, in-formed as a collection and re-presentation of the religious fragments unique

to a particular, religious community. *We may thus name the primary thesis this*

dissertation defends: by re-presenting the classics of their unique theological traditions

as a montage-like collection of fragments, public theologians locate a means of

navigating the various impasses in contemporary discussions of public theology. The

present chapter defends this thesis by returning to the criteriology we constructed at the

conclusion to part one. My suggestion is that by observing the adequacy of the fragment

to these criteria, the public theologian will open a way to move through the various

particularist critiques of fundamental public theology without compromising fundamental

theology's most central exigencies. As the reader will observe, our sources in this last

chapter are rather eclectic, exemplifying the manner in which montage energizes the

analogical imagination central to public-theological constructions. The chapter thus

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[2] As will become clearer in what follows, I do not use the notion of "fragment" or "fragmentary" in its merely negative connotation. Here I follow the lead of both Benjamin and David Tracy (as well as Susan Ross; cf. fn. 883 below). The fragment does connote a shattering of totalizing systems, but it may also be disclosed as a source of hope, resistance, and quintessentially human expression.

plays with the possibility that a fragmentary form may be amenable even to academic

public theology.

The Fragment and Dialogue: Jena Romanticism

> An idea is a concept perfected to the point of irony, an absolute synthesis
> of absolute antitheses, the continual self-creating interchange of two
> conflicting thoughts.
>
> – Friedrich Schlegel[3]

We begin with a consideration of the extent to which the fragmentary form lends

itself to dialogue. If a substantial response to pluralism is of central concern for public

theologies, the amenability of the fragmentary form[4] to dialogue is of central importance.

Following the lead of the Jena Romantics, I suggest that a fragmentary public theology

embodies dialogue in its very form and thus encourages dialogue in its reception. We

have already observed (chapter four) that the metaphorical form of meaning-creation

lends itself to a poetic ontology sensitive to pluralism. By facilitating the juxtaposition of

the known with the unknown, montage likewise facilitates an explosive experience of

innovation. In what follows, I build on this Ricoeurian observation by following the lead

of David Tracy and turning to a particularly fecund moment of fragmentary reflection—

the turn of the 19th century in Jena, Germany.[5]

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[3] Friedrich Schlegel, Athenaeum Fragment 121, in Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 33.

[4] For the sake fo brevity, I will use the idea of "fragmentary form" to refer to the collection and re-presentation (montage) of a unique tradition's classics.

[5] Tracy called the Romantics the "inventors" of the fragment. "Form and Fragment," 65. It could be suggested that Tracy's writings on the fragment reflect a certain equivocation. He says, on the one hand, that the Romantics were unable to accomplish their assumed goal of fragmentation "with their development and privileging of the metaphor 'fragments' over any category of wholeness." In this interpretation, the Romantics sensed the difficulty of balancing both the "classical modern" (eighteenth-century) tendency of locating an all-encompassing "ism" and the fragmenting tendency to disrupt any attempt at totality. Tracy says further, however, that the Romantics' use of fragments, "as Derrida and others correctly argue, never quite broke out of the modern totality, because the metaphor 'fragments' always suggested a kind of

The so-called "Jena Romantics"—Friedrich and August Wilhelm Schlegel,

Novalis, and Friedrich Schleiermacher[6]—utilized the genre of the fragment as a means of

literary-philosophical critique in a post-Kantian milieu. With historical roots in the

French moralists Michel Montaigne, Blaise Pascal, and Nicolas Chamfort, the fragment

connoted a particularly dense form of reflection. It was a saying, maxim, pensée, quip,

often with ethical ramifications, stated in an ironic or witty manner. This literary genre,

especially in its use by Chamfort, was attractive to a thinker like Friedrich Schlegel, who

enjoyed the play of multiple intellectual pursuits. The pace, velocity, and movement of

the fragment were amenable to his intellectual curiosity and the encyclopedic set of

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nostalgia for a lost totality rather than breaking through into infinity and thereby calling into question all notions of totality itself' ("African American Thought," 30).

We may contrast Tracy's comments in "Form and Fragment," 68: "There is in the category 'fragment,' pace Derrida, no necessary connection of the fragment to a Romantic nostalgia for a lost unity." We may further contrast the fact that Tracy claims the German Romantics "invented" the fragments in his 1998 article "Form and Fragment" but that the African American community "discovered" fragments in his 1999 article, "African American Thought." He says, for example, "Fragments were first invented by the great German Romantics Schlegel and Novalis in their books of that name—Fragments" (65). In "African American Thought," however, Tracy says, "Fragments, as far as I can see, were first discovered and employed in African-American culture and thought" (29). This difference is perhaps not indicative of equivocation but of the difference between the Romantic notion of fragment and (1) fragments in the African-American heritage and (2) Tracy's own use of fragments. This observation highlights the distinct difference between philosophical and theoretical fragmentation exemplified by the Romantics and religious fragmentation exemplified by black religion and Tracy's theological appropriation of the fragmentary genre. The latter two are more essentially resistant and hopeful. Tracy's observation that "The Impossible" need not function as a "purely negative" concept in a post-Enlightenment situation is indicative of this point (cf. "Form and Fragment," 68-70). Tracy's own potential ambiguity further suggests a need to turn to the Romantics ourselves.

For a brief exposure to Derrida's take on Romanticism, see his response to David Tracy in *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism* (op. cit.), 181-184. For a recent scholarly treatment of Derrida's response to Romanticism, see *Romanticism and the Legacies of Jacques Derrida*, Parts 1 and 2, *Studies in Romanticism*, 46.2-3 (Summer/Fall, 2007), 161-267.

[6] From 1798 to 1800, Schlegel's *Critical Fragments*, the *Athenaeum Fragments*, and *Ideas* and Novalis's *Grains of Pollen* and (less in continuity with the originary expression of fragment), *Faith and Love*. Although an explicit theory of the fragment was not developed by the Jena Romantics themselves, a theoretical course can be charted by following the lead of a handful of philosophical reflections on this explicitly literary genre that emerged in the late twentieth century. My reading is primarily informed by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*; Rodolphe Gasché, "Foreword: Ideality in Fragmentation," in Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

interests his group represented. Yet, there were more fundamental reasons for the

Romantics' appreciation of fragmentary expression, reasons which hint at the genre's

usefulness in our exploration of public theology.

Perhaps the most obvious of the fragment's qualities was its emphasis on the

undoing of rationality's claim to universality. The accidental, involuntary character of

the aphorism—that epiphanic "a-ha!" event the fragment captured—highlighted progress

as a constitutive aspect of reason, while the fragment's apparent incompletion and

absence of discursive development postponed the sense of wholeness and totality that

static systematization could connote. Reflecting the ancient appreciation for dialogue,

Schlegel could speculate:

> If in communicating a thought, one fluctuates between absolute
> comprehension and absolute incomprehension, then this process might
> already be termed a philosophical friendship. For it's no different with
> ourselves. Is the life of a thinking human being anything else than a
> continuous inner symphilosophy?"[7]

Engaged in interior dialogue, the thinker fluctuates between comprehension and

incomprehension in the back and forth movement of reason. The fragment, capturing a

moment in that ongoing process of reflection, represents the relative incompletion

indicated by the limits of reason. It was in response to these observations that Schlegel

could consider "project" a synonym for fragment, that the fragment could be called a

"subjective embryo of a developing object,"[8] and that the "real essence" of romantic

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[7] Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 17; included in Novalis's *Blütenstaub* (Pollen), his own collection of fragments published by the Schlegel brothers in the Athenaeum, 1798.

[8] Peter Szondi, "Friedrich Schlegel und die romantische Ironie," in *Schriften*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1978), 20; also cited in Gasché, "Foreword," xii.

poetry could be located in its perpetual "state of becoming," since it was forever

"becoming and never perfected."[9]

      Yet the Romantics did not utilize the fragment simply to highlight a nostalgia for

a lost whole. As is notable in the very term "fragment," one may be tempted to discern

the genre and the philosophical notions it engenders as purely deconstructive, "sad," and,

finally, relativistic. But to interpret fragmentary expression in this way—at least in

accordance with its use in Jena, Germany—is not to understand the hopeful aspect of

dialogue the fragment engendered. The Romantics were not content to allow the

fragments simply to reflect…

> a piece struck by incompletion, a detached piece, a piece left over from a
> broken whole, or even an erratic piece…structurally linked with the whole
> or totality of which it would have been, or of which it has been, a part.[10]

It was not adequate to define the fragment negatively, in terms of what it is not, or in

terms of what it used to be or could have been—a whole. The fragment of the Romantics

was not so defined. Instead of expressing a longing for a bygone era—during which time

there was a perceived, shared sense of ontological, ethical, political, and theological

wholeness—the Romantics' unique use of the genre functioned to highlight the self-

constituting and, ironically, *complete* character of the fragment *per se*. In the terms used

above, the fragment embodied the universality of particularity without thereby defining

particularity by way of universality. The fragment was irreducible: "A fragment, like a

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[9] Schlegel, *Athenaeum Fragment* 116.

[10] Gasché, vii.

miniature work of art, has to be entirely isolated from the surrounding world and be complete in itself like a porcupine."[11]

     In the published collections of fragmentary sayings in *The Athenaeum*—the short-lived journal of literary criticism founded by the Jena Romantics—fragments were not simply collected into homogenous, undifferentiated ensembles,[12] thrown together willy-nilly for the simple sake of deconstruction. Each was indeed individual, punctiliar, and self-contained; but insofar as they were fragment*s*—plural[13]—they were also representative of something bigger, an ideal toward which they collectively pointed.[14] The Romantics understood knowledge and its ordering as an organic, always arriving (indeed, eschatological) process. Insofar as a fragmentary mode of expression might invoke an experience of expectation, the fragment likewise captured the sense of "becoming" reflected in the irreducibility of "pure" knowledge—the place where ideas reach their culmination in the irresolvability of antinomies.

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[11] *Athenaeum Fragment* 206.

[12] Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, 40.

[13] Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, 44: "The romantics did not publish a unique *Fragment*; to write the fragment is to write fragments."

[14] The reader should not assume this observation involves a totalizing trajectory. As will become evident momentarily, for the German Romantics, the "ideal" toward which fragments collectively pointed was the nonclosure of an antinomy. Exemplary of authentic conversation, the "realized" antinomy preserved multiplicity without compromising its vision of a kind of eschatological ideality. Franz Kafka would later reflect this Romantic ideal in a conversation with Max Brod. Walter Benjamin relays the conversation as follows: "'I remember,' Brod writes, 'a conversation with Kafka which began with present-day Europe and the decline of the human race. "We are nihilistic thoughts, suicidal thoughts that come into God's head," Kafka said. This reminded me at first of the Gnostic view of life: God as the evil demiurge, the world as his Fall. "Oh no," said Kafka, "our world is only a bad mood of God, a bad day of his." "Then there is hope outside this manifestation of the world that we know." He smiled. "Oh, plenty of hope, an infinite amount of hope—but not for us."'" Walter Benjamin, "Franz Kafka: On the Tenth Anniversary of His Death," in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1968), 177.

It is with this sense of idea as process and the incumbent sense of incompletion which the fragment engendered that we can reenter the universal-particular dynamic that is so important for public theology. The fragments together, in the plural, represent the whole as "system" but only insofar as the whole might itself be considered in a fragmentary manner. Since the idea *per se* and the achievement of a system based on the idea are considered a work [*Werk*] in progress, that system is fragmentary. Since the fragment itself embodies the temporal, epiphanic mode of expression, it evokes the organic nature of system-formation and in its singularity points to the need for further development by way of cooperation with all other fragmentary "works." The consequent, necessary activity of *collecting* fragments serves as a "specific mode in which the fragment aims at, indicates, and in a certain manner posits the singular [particularity] of its totality [universality]."[15] Rodolphe Gasché's equation is helpful in this regard:

$$\text{fragment} = \text{system} = \text{work} = \text{individual}^{16}$$

To the degree that the fragment thus expresses the temporally punctiliar character of the system, it also expresses the individuality, anticipation, and even hope of the system.[17] Gasché explains the fragment's epiphanic form by saying…

> Fragments, strictly speaking, are then ideas in presentation. They are not leftover pieces of an integral whole, broken parts of a former or anticipated totality; they are that whole itself *in actualitas*—the only way in which the supersensible substrate occurs, or becomes present. Fragmentation, consequently, rather than implying some loss or lack of presence, represents the *positive* mode in which presentation of the whole

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[15] Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, 44.

[16] Gasché, xii.

[17] Gasché, xiii.

occurs. More precisely, it is an index of thinking's shift to conceptualizing the very occurring, or coming into presence, of the idea.[18]

The focus of the fragment lies in its nature as *essentially* incomplete, an incompletion that is itself a mode of fulfillment.

The fragment—in its perpetual incompletion—is perpetually conversational. We may observe this conversational trajectory in a co-authored work on Benjamin's *Arcades*.[19] The authors' account of their interaction with this fragmentary text and their explanation of their own text's "unGuided" approach serve as fitting examples of the type of experience the fragment provokes. The readers "came at [*Arcades*] from different disciplinary contexts, each with…individual baggage of differences and critical perspectives," from which each devised her or his "own tactics, inroads, and tangential takes on its thousand or more pages."[20] Since Benjamin's fragmentary expression eschews any formalized framework *a priori*, it gives itself quite readily to such interdisciplinary, intercontextual, even interreligious discussions—indeed, not serving merely as a discussion-starter but as a discussion-protector, "increasing the gambit" of conversation:

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[18] Gasché, xxvii-xxviii.

[19] Peter Buse, Ken Hirsckop, Scott McCracken, and Bertrand Taithe (eds.), *Benjamin's Arcades: An unGuided Tour* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2005), vii. Adorno's negative response to Benjamin's essay "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire" (*SW*, 4:99-105) likewise reflects the anti-closure of the fragmentary form. After reading Benjamin's essay—a submission to the journal *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*—Adorno eventually wrote a letter to his friend Benjamin expressing the journal's intent not to publish *Arcades*. Adorno's primary issue with the text was its ascetic discipline not to offer *any* theory. Without mediating the juxtapositions of monads with some theoretical armature, the work mixed magic with positivism. This did not allow an adequate uptake of Marxist materialism, which was "possible only when mediated through the *process as a whole*" (ital. his), that is, through *some* formulation of "the whole."

[20] Buse et al, vii.

> From the beginning we recognized that, as a work, the *Arcades Project* invites raiding rather than reading. One starts from the *Exposés*, from the sketches, from the list of Convolutes, from the index, from the cross-references, the notes, and bibliography. One dives in rather than swims through. …We took our time to begin, investing in idleness, before we began to ask each other, alighting on a dense and impenetrable passage—what is this about?—expressing both frustration and admiration at the incomplete work."[21]

This portrayal of a rich experience of discussion displays what a fragmentary approach to public theology pursues: the evocation of sparks, the facilitation of difference, and the preservation of a living tension in the "quivering" dynamic at work in the fragment itself. When the fragmentary mode is appropriated not only in reading but in a secondary expression departing from this experience, it results in a similarly nonreductive style of writing. I point to Buse again as an example:

> Only towards the end, as the object that had brought us together began to recede, when excuses for evenings and 'working' lunches diminished, did we think of writing. But what? To continue the pleasure of our discussions, the same mode had to be perpetuated. Nothing like an argument would do. We didn't have a theory of Benjamin. We had to sieze on the topics that had animated us, the passages that had perplexed, then enthused. …The result is seventeen short entries on topics that reflect our collective sense of what needed to be discussed.[22]

The goal here is not didactic. There is no totalizing framework into which all others are expected to be assumed. It is, merely—although not simplistically—a continuation of the discussion, a seizure of animating topics, a settling on the ideas that both enthuse and perplex.

A fragmentary approach to public theology aims to protect ongoing dialogue in a similar manner. Fragmentary public theology is not a merely contextualized, potentially

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[21] Buse et al, vii.

[22] Buse et al, viii.

ideological and thus private construction. Fragmentary public theology constructs a

theological kaleidoscope that may be useful for those who—like the theologian—want to

navigate the apparently divergent exigencies of common reason, subjective experience,

and religious tradition. Robustly self-aware, such a project refuses to gloss over its own

ruptures and discontinuities. It does not assume perfection, and it is suspicious of

systematicity. Collecting the fragments of a particular tradition into a perpetually self-

renewing constellation, the theologian provokes a response adequate to the demands of

dialogue and thus completes and protects the incompletion of previous theological

expressions. In this sense, the theologian's project is not unlike a wind-up toy. It "can

only go so far without fresh input. It does not summarize the unsummarizable. It awaits

the fresh conversations it hopes to provoke."[23]

The Fragment and Liberation: Jürgen Habermas

> Communicative action is not exhausted by the act of reaching
> understanding.
>
> – Jürgen Habermas[24]

We may thus posit that public theology encourages dialogue by adopting a

fragmentary form in its re-presentation of an ecclesial culture's religious fragments.

Reminiscent of the persistent interplay of antinomies in the pursuit of the idea, the

collected re-presentation of fragments embodies the persistent interplay of conversation

in a collective pursuit of truth. The goal here is less scientific than suggestive, but neither

is it merely relative. Guided by a criteriology such as ours, the public theologian engages

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[23] Buse et al, ix.

[24] Jürgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1: *Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984); German original, Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981);

the religious memory of a particular culture to encourage dialogue and thus to keep theologies from drifting into ideologies.

Rebounding in a Benjaminian direction from this Ricoeurian sensitivity to dialogue, we may challenge the extent to which an easy adoption of conversation actually induces liberation. For the various liberationist and critical theologians surveyed in this dissertation, conversation itself is often a shibboleth for "more of the same." How might the dialogical re-presentation of a religious tradition's fragments lend itself not only to conversation but to liberation? Is liberation intrinsic to dialogue? For a social theorist like Jürgen Habermas,[25] the answer to that question would be a qualified "yes."

In his carefully crafted, two-volume work, *The Theory of Communicative Action*,[26] Habermas suggests a "linguistification" [*Versprachlichung*] of Max Weber's "purposive" rationality [*Zweckrationalität*]. Observing the linguistic character of purposive rationality allows Habermas to suggest that civic relations are guided by a

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[25] Like Ricoeur's (cf. fn. 607 above), Habermas's work has been mined for its usefulness in public theology. Cf. Marueen Junker-Kenny, *Habermas and Theology* (London: Continuum, 2011). Junker-Kenny's work helpfully distinguishes the theological reception of Habermas's work as respective responses to Habermas's own changing view of religion: from supersessionism, where the functional trumps the religious in civic discourse, to pleas for co-existence and finally cooperation.

Cf. also Don S. Browning and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza (eds.), *Habermas, Modernity, and Public Theology* (op. cit.; cf. fn. 70 above). Tracy's paper, "Theology, Critical Social Theory, and the Public Realm" (likewise, op. cit., fn. 70), functioned as a response to Habermas on religion in the public square. The original impetus for this book was a conference at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, entitled, "Critical Theory: Its Promise and Limitations for a Theology of the Public Realm." The second portion of Tracy's article addresses Habermas's *The Theory of Communicative Action*, to which I turn presently. For Habermas's response to Tracy's critique, see Jürgen Habermas, "Transcendence from Within, Transcendence in this World," in *Habermas, Modernity, and Public Theology*, 226-250.

[26] Volume two of this work is entitled *Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987); German original, Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns, Band 2: Zur Kritik der funktionalistischen Vernunft* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981).

"communicative action."[27] Habermas conceptualizes his linguistification of social

interaction as an interpenetration of "lifeworld" and "system." Lifeworld, very basically,

refers to the "prereflective," "taken-for-granted background assumptions and naively

mastered skills"[28] that inform the manner in which reason functions in a self-serving,

purposive manner.[29] System, very basically, refers to the normative, cultural covenants

that are manipulated toward such ends: the "ordered set of elements that tend to maintain

existing [societal] structures."[30]

In the post-Weberian milieu of sociology, systems were believed to represent

varying degrees of societal and individual reification, parallel to the tendency toward

rational reification observed by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in their classic

[27] Junker-kenny helpfully defines "communicative action" as Habermas's "sustained attempt
supported by interdisciplinary efforts to elaborate the human orientation towards cooperation against
Friedrich Nietzsche's vitalistic reduction of agency to the will to power" (*Habermas and Theology*, 2).
Habermas himself unpacks this notion by turning to (1) the "ritually secured, basic normative agreement"
in George Herbert Mead and (2) the "sacred foundations of morality" and "social solidarity" in Emile
Durkheim. Habermas associates the idea of a "ritually secured, basic normative agreement" founding
communicative rationality with twentieth-century, critical sociologist George Herbert Mead. Habermas
looks to Mead in order to posit "the basic conceptual framework of normatively regulated and linguistically
mediated interaction" (*Lifeworld and System*, 2). George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society from the
Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*, ed. Charles W. Morris (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972)
plays a primary role in Habermas's study. Habermas refers most often to Emile Durkheim, *Sociology and
Philosophy*, trans. D. F. Pocock (New York: Free Press, 1974); *The Division of Labor in Society*, trans.
George Simpson (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1960); and *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*, trans.
Cornelia Brookfield (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1957).

[28] Habermas, *Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, 335. Importantly, the notion of lifeworld
includes (1) the sociological appropriation of "understanding" [*Verstehen* / *Verständigung*] in hermeneutics
associated with Dilthey, Husserl, Heidegger, and Gadamer; and (2) the observation that the lifeworld
contains a "symbolically prestructured" element. Cf. *Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, 107-108.

[29] This is Max Weber's notion. In the Enlightenment "disenchantment of the world," reason
serves purposive ends defined according to the desires of the individual, who manipulates his or her world
toward those ends. For Weber on disenchantment, see Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in
Sociology*, trans. and ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 155.

[30] *Lifeworld and System*, 225. As with any "prooftext" taken from a dense and careful writer such
as Habermas, this one needs some qualification. In the context, Habermas is explaining the aspect of
Talcott Parsons' theory of society. Parsons was a twentieth-century sociologist, whose writings on
Durkheim, Mead, Adorno, and Horkheimer Habermas treats as a kind of telos to the systems theory
movement.

text *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*.[31] Habermas uses his linguistic mediation of Weber

to "socialize" the individualized notion of rationality informing Horkheimer and

Adorno's critique.[32] Habermas escapes the "merely" negative dialectical circle he

observes in *Dialectic of Englightenment* by suggesting a "concept of communicative

rationality."[33] There is a "universal" or "formal" pragmatics informing intersubjectivity

and enabling not only mutual understanding but the achievement of individual ends:

> If we assume that the human species maintains itself through the socially
> coordinated activities of its members and that this coordination is
> established through communication—and in certain spheres of life,
> through communication aimed at reaching agreement—then the
> reproduction of the species also requires satisfying the conditions of a
> rationality inherent in communicative action.[34]

The liberationist (to use the terminology of this dissertation) payoff for Habermas comes

with his observation of a connection between rationality, language, and purpose.

"Communicative action," he says, "is not exhausted by the act of reaching

understanding." Language is "a means of communication which serves mutual

understanding, whereas actors, in coming to an understanding with one another so as to

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[31] Op. cit., fn. 147

[32] Horkheimer and Adorno paid particular attention to Weber's notion of instrumental reason, correcting Marx's assumption that science functioned as a rather unambiguously emancipatory project. Scientific rationality, for Horkheimer and Adorno, was merely another form of *Zwekrationalität*. In response to the relative failure of the revolutionary labor movement, Adorno and Horkheimer posited that the instrumentalization of rationality ironically resulted in the subject's inability to function as an agent. "Just as all life today tends increasingly to be subjected to rationalization and planning, so the life of each individual, including his most hidden impulses, which formerly constituted his private domain, must now take the demands of rationalization and planning into account: the individual's self-preservation presupposes his adjustment to the rquirements for the preservation of the system. …The triumph of subjective formalized reason is also the triumph of a reality that confronts the subject as absolute." Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (op. cit.), 222.

[33] Habermas, *Lifeworld and System*, 2.

[34] Habermas, *Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, 397.

coordinate their actions, pursue their particular aims."[35] In learning to speak a language,

communicatants adopt certain fundamental rules by which they may navigate the

symbolic infrastructure informing their respective lifeworlds and thus achieve individual

ends by way of cooperation.

Habermas's critical social theory provides a sense of hope for public theologians

informed by our mutually correcting criteria of dialogue and liberation. Trusting along

with David Tracy that the dialogues occurring in a religiously plural society function as a

"fundamental enrichment"[36] to the human condition, the public theologian likewise trusts

that the dialogues initiated by a fragmentary form of theology may result ultimately in an

individual's ability to follow dialogue to its liberative ends. Our uptake of Habermas is

ultimately only partially adequate, however, insofar as his primary point of departure is

the interrelationality of theological and public expression in a "civic" or non-theological

setting. Habermas's theory of "publicness" (if we could map our language onto his)

reflects the "civic" stream of public theology we surveyed in chapter one (primarily,

Kathryn Tanner, Michael and Kenneth Himes, and William Cavanaugh; secondarily,

John Courtney Murray). It has been argued[37]—and Habermas himself admitted[38]—that

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[35] Habermas, *Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, 101.

[36] *AI*, xi.

[37] David Tracy, "Theology, Critical Social Theory, and the Public Realm," 35. I am thankful to Andreas Telser for sharing his very informative paper, "How Their Minds Have Changed…Reconsidering Jürgen Habermas and David Tracy on Modernity and Public Theology," unpublished paper presented at a conference entitled "The Public Character of Theology: Prospects for the 21st Century: In honor of Dr. David W. Tracy," Loyola University Chicago; Chicago, IL (April 9, 2011).

[38] Habermas, "Transcendence from Within," 236-237; cf. Jürgen Habermas, "Replik auf Einwände, Eaktion auf Anregungen," in Rudolf Langthaler and Herta Nagle-Docekal (eds.), *Glauben und Wissen: Ein Symposium mit Jürgen Habermas* (Wien: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2007), 407 (366-414, inclusive),

religion played a "functional" role in *Theory of Communicative Action*, thus limiting religion to a merely aesthetic form of expression and essentially disallowing religious expression in public.[39]

As we have already made clear, our purpose is less to reflect on the role of theological expression in non-theological settings as it is to consider the function of publicness in explicitly theological, or "theologically recognizable" expression. What remains, therefore, is to fold our philosophical reflections back into the theological realm. We have already observed the liberative possibilities of dialogue. As a complement to this observation, we may ask to what extent a fragmentary theological expression may also embody self-critique in its unique form of expression. Analogous to our previous uptake of Habermas, we may posit an uptake here of "the later David Tracy." In our analysis of the fragment's critical potential, we will follow Tracy's lead by moving through a phenomenology of conversation into an observation that religious expression itself functions as a resistant form, preventing conversation from devolving into power dynamics. This latter suggestion is particularly noticeable in Tracy's reticence to perpetuate his earlier language of "religious classics" and, instead, to suggest that religion's resistant essence is more readily accessible by referring to the religious form as "fragment." For Tracy, the fragment highlights a resistant, hopeful identity characteristic of "intense" religious expression.

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where Habermas mentions the "functional contribution of religious communities to the reproduction of an ethos of citizenship." Again, I am thankful to Andreas Telser for these observations.

[39] See also Jürgen Habermas, "Religion in the Public Sphere," *European Journal of Philosophy*, 14 (2006): 1-25; and *The Future of Human Nature* (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity, 2003), 101-115.

The Fragment and Critique: "The Later David Tracy"

> All those involved in interpreting our situation and all those aware of our
> need for solidarity may continue to risk interpreting all the classics of all
> the traditions. And in that effort to interpret lie both resistance and hope.
>
> – David Tracy[40]

In the opening chapter of *Plurality and Ambiguity*, Tracy offers a transcendental-as-phenomenological analysis of the condition of possibility for conversation.[41] For those who give themselves over fully to the activity of conversation, there is the play of a "game." Although "conversation is a game with some hard rules,"[42] for the conversant who enters fully into the game, the experience is not unlike getting "lost," freeing oneself from oneself.[43] In such instances conversation participants "get in the zone."[44] They are taken over by the question and informed by the logic of questioning. The movement of

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[40] *PA*, 114.

[41] "Ideal speech" thus functions as a limit concept for the chapter as a whole (*PA*, 26).

[42] *PA*, 19: "say only what you mean; say it as accurately as you can; listen to and respect what the other says, however different or other; be willing to correct or defend your opinions if challenged by the conversation partner; be willing to argue if necessary, to confront if demanded, to endure necessary conflict, to change your mind if the evidence suggests it." Tracy says these rules "are merely variations of the transcendental imperatives articulated by Bernard Lonergan: 'Be attentive, be intelligent, be responsible, be loving, and, if necessary, change'" (*PA*, 19). Cf. Lonergan, *Method*, 231. For Tracy on the rules of "argument," which he associates with a "coherence" theory of truth, see *PA*, 26: respect for the sincerity of the other, assumption that all partners are equals, saying what one means, weighing all relevant evidence, abiding by rules of validity and coherence.

[43] *PA*, 17. To be exact, Tracy uses the first person pronoun here: "But if we allow some claim upon our attention from any game…then we can free ourselves from ourselves." As in *AI*, 99-101, Tracy uses the first person pronoun as a form of phenomenological argument, moving from personal experience to shared experience.

[44] Tracy has recently used this phrase, typically associated with sports commentary, to refer to the Gadamerian notion that understanding happens through dialogue. Cf. David Tracy, "Western Hermeneutics and Inter-Religious Dialogue," unpublished paper presented Sept. 25, 2009 at Boston College and April 8, 2011 at Loyola University Chicago.

conversation is thus "questioning itself,"[45] and authentic conversation is "an exploration of possibilities in the search for truth."[46]

The problem Tracy readily admits with this phenomenology is that in actual conversation, it is rare, "even for Socrates,"[47] to refrain from rhetoric and domination. Ideological and egological distortion, othering, fear, and unconfessed pathologies all keep actual conversants from achieving their intended goal—mutual, sympathetic engagement in a shared pursuit of truth. When conversation diverges significantly from its ideal parameters, the "hope for conversation" dissolves, and conversation partners find it necessary to inject "radical interruptions."[48]

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[45] *PA*, 18.

[46] *PA,* 20. To be clear, "truth" here is understood "in its primordial sense," as manifestation (*PA*, 29). Cf. Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," in Martin Heidegger, *Selected Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 111-138; "Plato's Doctrine of Truth," trans. Thomas Sheehan in Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeil (New York: Cmabridge University Press, 1998), 155-182.

[47] *PA*, 18.

[48] *PA*, 32. Tracy names three such interruptions in *PA*: those occurring by way of methodology (*PA*, 28-46), linguistic plurality (*PA*, 47-65), and historical ambiguity (*PA*, 66-81). It is worth noting that Tracy's consideration of methodology may be described as a transcendental-phenomenological analysis of the condition of possibility for conversation. "Ideal speech" functions as something of a limit concept, for Tracy; it is the (eschatological) horizon informing all authentic conversation. Admitting the inadequacy of any assumption that conversation may be formalized, Tracy yet maintains, "Arguments on ideal-speech conditions are transcendental in the sense that they claim to provide the necessary conditions for a contingent situatin" (*PA*, 26). It is interesting to note, coincidentally, that Tracy has maintained the transcendental Thomist (Lonerganian-Rahnerian) trajectory of the human as constituted by the freedom to ask questions as a response to the horizon of mystery. Defending his continued post-critical attention to method, Tracy says, "Transcendental arguments on argument can play a limited but real role in analyzing certain necessary conditions for the contingent reailty of human discursive communication" (*PA*, 27). Cf. also *PA*, 34-35.

For the theologian intending to mirror the ideal of conversation in her

appropriation of a tradition, the ambiguity[49] marking conversation gives way to an

ambiguity marking religious traditions. On the one hand, theologians are aware that their

traditions may function positively as the historical memory of a culture. The memories

constituting traditions carry the "history of effects of the classic texts, persons, events,

symbols, and rituals" that provide meaningfulness to a particular people.[50] A loss of

these memories "can be fatal," since without them, "we cannot act."[51] On the other hand,

"there are no innocent readings of the classics."[52] As we have already observed in

Benjamin (and as Tracy is wont to recall), "there is no document of culture that is not at

the same time a document of barbarism."[53] Alongside the fanaticism attached to tradition

"and its demonic history of effects" emerge "impacted memories" that remain constantly

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[49] In *Plurailty and Ambiguity* the dualistic notion of "ambiguity" emerges in full: "Ambiguity can mean, cognitively, the true and the false; morally, the good and the evil; religiously, the holy and the demonic" (*PA*, 131).

[50] *PA*, 36.

[51] PA, 36.

[52] *PA*, 36-37.

[53] *SW*, 4:391. Richard Bernstein called *Plurality and Ambiguity* an extended reflection on this Benjaminian idea. Cf. Richard Bernstein, "Review of *Plurality and Ambiguity*," *Journal of Religion* 69 (January 1989): 85-91; Tracy himself evaluated this comment as "entirely accurate" in Tracy, "The Christian Option for the Poor" in Daniel G. Groody, *The Option for the Poor in Christian Theology* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press), 119. In this latter article Tracy defends the following ideal: "Within Christian theology, as within the Christian churches, the option for the poor should be at the very heart of every serious Christian theology today" (119). He constructs this defense by constructing christology that facilitates a mutually correcting stress on "Incarnation," "Cross," and "Resurrection." In brief, in other words, is a theological construction sensitive to the philosophical turn to the other in Benjamin and Levinas.

on the verge of oblivion.[54] The classics, therefore, demand not only retrieval but critique

and suspicion."[55]

For Tracy, the classics themselves instantiate a uniquely disruptive form

amenable to this need for critical retrieval. Although it is common for the symbols,

language, and grammar of religious classics to devolve into banality, the classics

themselves—those original, "intense"[56] moments of productive distanciation[57]—perdure

in a particularly interruptive and elusive manner.[58] The classics elude easy assimilation.

They are no more predictable than the plurality of interpretations to which they give rise.

When retrieved and re-presented in a manner consistent with their "permanent

timeliness,"[59] religious classics[60] enable the resistance necessary to inform a

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[54] *PA*, 85.

[55] *PA*, 86.

[56] Tracy is appreciative of the attention to intense religious expression in William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*; cf. fn. 391 above. Tracy balances his attention to intensity with a celebration of the divine in "the everyday," or "the ordinary" (*PA*, 97; cf. *AI*, 266-268).

[57] *AI*, 124-139. I will inject some ideas from *AI* here to assist in unpacking discussion of the classic in *PA*.

[58] Though note Tracy's caution in positing a capability of resistance in religion: "Whoever comes to speak in favor of religion and its possibilities of enlightenment and emancipation does not come with clean hands nor with a clear conscience" (*PA*, 85)

[59] *AI*, 102: "The classical text is not in some timeless moment which needs mere repetition. Rather its kind of timelessness as permanent timeliness is the only one propoer to any expression of the finite, temporal, historical beings we are."

[60] The difference between "classics" and "religious classics," coincidentally, is more subtle in *PA* than in *AI*. Tracy covers the "classics" on *PA*, 68-73, while addressing "the question of history." Guiding his appropriation of the notion of historical classic is the following motif: "History is not only contingent; history is interruptive" (*PA*, 68). Included in this section are ancient biblical (Amos, Isaiah, Ruth, Jeremiah, Job) and Greek (Oedipus, Antigone, Medea, Herakles) classics as well as modern "archaeologies of 'the other'" (*PA*, 71). Tracy covers the "religious classics" on *PA*, 102-114. Cf. *AI*, 99-153, for the classic; 154-192, for interepreting the religious classic; 193-229, for the religious classic as manifestation and proclamation; 248-338 (chapters six and seven) for the transition to Christian classics as christology.

hermeneutics of suspicion.[61] To interpret a tradition's religious classics appropriately,

therefore, one must "allow them to challenge what we presently consider possible."[62]

Religious classics "entice us to hope for some other and different, yet possible, ways of

thinking" and thus empower contemporary projects of resistance.[63] How might the

theologian embody this resistant form in the appropriation of her own religious classics?

We may make suggestions along these lines by considering Tracy's most recent

reflections on the religious form, a form he no longer refers to as "classic" but as

"fragment."[64]

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[61] Tracy says the religious classics are, "above all," expressions of resistance (*PA*, 84). Tracy later adds, "Does anyone really wish that Luther, instead of simply stating, 'Here I stand; I can do no other,' had added *sotto voce*, 'But if it really bothers you, I will move'?" (*PA*, 91), attributing it to Philip Blackwell (*PA*, 138, fn.26).

[62] *PA*, 84.

[63] *PA*, 88. Elsewhere, Tracy says, "all interpreters of religion, whether believers or nonbelievers, can employ something like the theologian's sixth sense that to interpret religion at all demands being willing to put at risk one's present self-understanding in order to converse with the claim to attention of the religious classic" (*PA*, 98). Like the concluding chapters of AI (371-455), the concluding pages of PA represent Tracy's authentic appreciation of plurality and his attempt to encourage and engender the fundamental enrichment of theology that plurality may enable. Cf. PA, 114: "my principal concern in this narrative has been to describe a more modest but crucial hope, and one suggested by the conflict of interpretations on interpretation itself. That hope is this; that all those involved in interpreting our situation and all those aware of our need for solidarity may continue to risk interpreting all the classics of all the traditions. And in that effort to interpret lie both resistance and hope."

[64] Although Tracy does not use the term "fragments" in his 1995 address to the Catholic Theological Society of America ("Evil, Suffering, Hope: The Search for New Forms of Contemporary Theodicy," *CTSA Proceedings* 50 [1995]: 15-36), one may observe there a sort of isomorphism in Tracy's uptake of fragments and his suggestion for a Christian re-turn to the forms of thinking God. Attentive to the "shocking silence in most theologies of historical consciousness and historicity alike [one may observe a self-critical posture in Tracy here, given the central role of "historical consciousness" in his earliest writings] on the evil rampant in history, the suffering of whole peoples, the destruction of nature itself," (29), Tracy suggests a reclamation of theological forms invoking the "dangerous and disruptive God of the history narrated in Exodus and in the history of Jesus" (28). Not unlike his dramatic and climactic conclusion in *AI*, this article concludes with a litany of disruptive forms—a collection of religious fragments—re-presented for the purpose of invoking hopeful resistance in the face of radical suffering.

The Religious Classic as Fragment

Still utilizing a version of the transcendental-phenomenological mode of analysis that has informed so much of his theological career, Tracy calls fragments the "spiritual situation of our times."[65] The existence of fragments reminds the philosopher-theologian that we no longer live in a situation of modern "essentialism." "There is no longer a Western cultural center with margins. There are many centers now."[66] There are only "postmodernities."[67] In American and European thought, this means that the categories "postmodernity" and "modernity" need to be rethought according to the variety of repressed narratives which have informed our understanding of pluralism.

Fragments inform this rethinking in two ways. First, fragments embody a "negative" function, inasmuch as they "show the need to shatter any reigning totality system."[68] Aware of the connection between totalizing frameworks and marginalization, defenders of the fragment maintain, "any form which attempts totality or closure…needs fragmentation."[69] Second, and in contrast, fragments serve a "positive" function, inasmuch as they point to "a break out of totality into infinity" by their ability to disclose "one's own routes and one's own traditions."[70] Fragments in this sense are narratival, experiential, and emotive. They function as a unitary moment of productive

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[65] "Fragments: The Spiritual Situation of Our Times" in John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (eds.), *God, the Gift, and Postmodernity* (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), 170-184.

[66] "Fragments: The Spiritual Situation of Our Times," 170.

[67] "Fragments: The Spiritual Situation of Our Times," 170.

[68] "African American Thought," 30.

[69] "Form and Fragment," 64-65.

[70] "African American Thought," 30.

distanciation, where form and content are united in an explosive expression of particularity.[71] When such portrayals are received with sympathy, the interpreter may discern a means by which "all the others and the different" function "as possible disclosures of infinity."[72] In the fragment, the subject insists, "Do not reduce me or anyone else to your narrative."[73]

As a "saturated phenomenon,"[74] religious expression may function as the "most non-reductive" means of fragmentation (so long, Tracy says, as a variety of "cultural debris" is cleared away in preparation for labeling "religion" a "saturated phenomenon").[75] In "the intense religion of the black church traditions," for example, one finds the "unassimilatable other," where "repressed, intense, saturated, and fragmentary religious forms"[76] break through in an explosive claim to recognition. Exemplified in the black demand for liberation and justice, "the God of black religion is a

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[71] Though note Tracy's caution in claiming a unity of fragment and form. He is appreciative, for example, of Hans Urs von Balthasar's turn to aesthetics as form but does not appreciate the manner in which von Balthasar insisted "on the need for classical harmonizing forms, not fragmentary forms" ("Form and Fragment," 67-68).

[72] "African American Thought," 30. We may interpret the notion of disclosing "infinity" as an allusion to Emmanuel Levinas. Cf. fn. 702 and 704. Cf. also "The Church in Fragments," 124: "The real face of our period, as Emmanuel Levinas saw with such clarity, is the face of the other: the face that commands 'Do not kill me.'" Note the difference, coincidentally, between "infinity" and "totality" in Tracy. Whereas the latter "demands a closure" and consequent "reduction of everything to more of the same," the latter remains open in a kind of infinitely open gesturing toward the infinite. Cf. "Form and Fragment," 68. If we could posit an analogy between "the early" and "the late Tracy," we may say that the notion of "infinity" functions as a "limit-of" phenomenon (un)founding the fragment as a moment of productive distance in response to the experience of a "limit-to."

[73] "Fragments and Forms," 124.

[74] African American Thought," 30. Tracy is, of course, borrowing from Jean-Luc Marion for the notion of a "saturated phenomenon." For Tracy on Marion see, David Tracy, "Foreword" in Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being*, trans. Thomas Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), xi-xviii; originally published in 1997.

[75] "African American Thought," 30. We may again posit Marion in the background here.

[76] Ibid.

fragmentary, liberating God."[77] Here, the fragment engenders not only "a shattering of any totality system" but also "the possibility of positive rediscovery of the intense presence of infinity in religious forms."[78]

It is not accurate to assume that religion, "like the Jesuits of Voltaire's wonderful imagination…must always enter the rooms of modernity without warmth and leave without regret."[79] That, Tracy says, "is not religion."[80] Religion is vibrant, particularly in its most disruptive, excessive forms (gospel songs, love mystics, kabbalists, sufis, etc.); and it is indeed the recovery of these excessive forms that has energized so many recent theological, philosophical, and even sociological projects of resistance. When considered together, these various theologies represent the possibility that a fragmentary public theology should not only induce dialogue and liberation but radical critique.[81]

Embodying such forms of expression, fragments become not merely anti-totalities but "fragments of hope,"[82] suggestions for redemption that motivate believing

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[77] Ibid.

[78] "African-American Thought," 29-30.

[79] "African American Thought," 33.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Tracy points out that it is particularly womanist theologians who have successfully clarified "the need for a constellation of messianic Jesuanic, apocalyptic images." Tracy lists Jacquelyn Grant, Emilie Townes, and Linda E. Thomas (all included in *Black Faith and Public Talk*). Later he also mentions Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: New American Library, 1988), quoting a lengthy section from Morrison's work (214).

[82] This phrase is borrowed from Susan Ross, "Evil and Hope: Foundational Moral Perspectives," *CTSA Proceedings* 50 (1995): 46-63. In this response to David Tracy, Ross observes that even in the profound suffering recalled in the passion narratives, the attentive reader may find "fragments of hope." Such fragments inform a "hope for moral responses that are both cognizant of the ambiguity of all of human efforts in the face of evil yet refuse to let evil have the final say" (60). Ross sketches three responses which involve "some explicit acknowledgement of relation": first, the "moral response of presence and witness" (60); second, the "commitment to struggle and resistance" (61); third, forgiveness and resurrection (62-63).

communities toward resistance of oppressive structures. Fragmentary narratives—more typically forgotten than centralized—provide "hints and guesses of hope…fragmentary glimpses of light and redemption." [83] It is particularly these hope-filled narratives of religious experience that may provide an alternative "postsecular" resource for "our desiccated public realm."[84] In the "amazing theology" of slave narratives, gospel songs, and "the distinct theologies of the spirituals and the blues,"[85] one may find an especially potent corrective to the disembodied tendencies of so many fundamental rationalities.

The Fragment and Recognizability: Plunderphonics

So you shall plunder the Egyptians.

– God[86]

In our reflections thus far we have observed the amenability of the fragmentary form to dialogue, liberation, and critique. What remains is to complement these reflections by returning to the criteria of theological recognizability and the pursuit of truth. We will begin with the former of these two criteria. Does a fragmentary form compromise theological recognizability? We may consider this question by positing an analogy between fragmentary public theology and the musical form of "plunderphonics."

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[83] "African American Thought," 37-38.

[84] Ibid.

[85] "African American Thought," 31. Tracy has in mind here Dwight Hopkins, "Black Faith on Theological Education," in *Black Faith and Public Talk*, 41-52; and Dwight Hopkins, *Shoes that Fit Our Feet: Sources for a Constructive Black Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993). In the latter work Hopkins mines "folk religious experiences" to construct theologies of the Trinity (22-46), connectedness and embodiment (60-81), and "Democratized Political Power" (134-166, drawing from W.E.B. Du Bois). For a more recent construction, see Dwight N. Hopkins, *Heart and Head: Black Theology—Past, Present, and Future* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), where Hopkins covers liberationist, womanist, heterosexuality, interfaith dialogue in the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT), and globalization.

[86] Exodus 3:22.

Coined by John Oswald in 1985, "plunderphonics" references the utilization, plundering, or stealing of musical samples, originally recorded by other artists and secondarily "mashed up" into the production of a new song. Our turn to musicology is as much illustrative as substantial, but like the telling of a memorable story at the conclusion of a homily, our illustration is intended to evoke a sense of "pleasant surprise" not unlike the effect that metaphor and montage evoke for their audiences. By reflecting on the musicology informing plunderphonics, we will suggest that public theologians may energize moments of self-awareness, indeed manifested truth, by juxtaposing the known and the unknown, the recognizable and the unrecognizable, in a moment of pleasant surprise received optimistically by theological audiences.

<div align="center">Introducing Plunderphonics</div>

According to the plunderphonic's musicologists, we live in a "mashup culture," a "sampling machine," where "any sound can be you, and all text is only a tenuous claim to the idea of individual creativity."[87] Purchased music is no longer packaged, available merely "as is." Sonic moments no longer come and go in short life spans, and songs are not merely portable. They are electronic and thus can be shot across the globe with the click of a mouse. After decades of passively receiving packaged music, listeners are now active, assembling choices at will, free to collect, compile, and distribute as desired.[88] As the technological possibilities of our mashup culture have developed, the number and

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[87] Paul D. Miller aka DJ Spooky that Subliminal Kid, "In through the Out Door: Sampling and the Creative Act," in *Sound Unbound: Sampling Digital Music and Culture* ed. Paul D. Miller aka DJ Spooky that Subliminal Kid (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2008), 5.

[88] John Oswald, "Plunderphonics, or Audio Piracy as a Compositional Prerogative." A paper presented presented by John Oswald to the Wired Society Electro-Acoustic Conference in Toronto in 1985. http://www.plunderphonics.com/xhtml/xplunder.html. Accessed December 20, 2011.

complexity of eclectic musical genres has advanced as well. Musicologists differentiate between "plunderphonics" and "*music actuelle*," "cover" and "copy," and "intertextual" and "hypertextual" expressions. Together, these various genres reflect a form of art singularly exemplary of our post-millennial situation: the selection, collection, and re-presentation of sonic fragments.

The building block of such expressions is the "sample,"[89] a moment of sound "plundered" from a previously recorded event. The sample could be vocal, such as a song or speech, or merely circumstantial, such as a flame, gunfight, fracturing timber, or voodoo rite.[90] Once recorded, this sound acquires a life of its own, existing autonomously "in a permanent and alienable form."[91] Sampling artists utilize the sample to create their own re-presentation, thus instantiating a kind of "metamusic," or "music about music."[92] Utilizing and playing with the very medium of music, plunderphonics

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[89] John Borwick categorizes sampling under "recording" and relates it to the practice of "covering" a song. He specifically notes the similarities between the "quoting" of longer samples or even entire songs as a bed-track over which vocals are recorded as a form of covering. He places Run-D.M.C.'s "Walk This Way" (which featured Steven Tyler and Joe Perry in the cover-version itself), Puff Daddy's rapping over Led Zeppelin's "Kashmir" in "Come with Me," and Will Smith's use of Grover Washington Jr. and Bill Withers's "Just the Two of Us" for his song of the same title. Since these raps are considered new performances of the retrieved song, they can be considered "covers" and are related by Borwick to the Jamaican practice of "versioning," "in which a new popular song or rhythm pattern is very quickly copied, adapted, or modified in dozens of new permutations or 'versions.'" John Borwick, "Recording," in *Media, Industry and Society: Continuum Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World*, *Volume 1* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 616 (612-618 inclusive).

[90] John Oswald in Norman Igma, "Discosphere: An Interview with Norman Igma." http://www.plunderphonics.com/xhtml/xinterviews.html. Accessed December 20, 2011.

[91] Cutler, "Plunderphonia," 144.

[92] Jones, *Plunderphonics*, 7. To be exact, Jones is referring here to *musique actuelle*, plunderphonics' cousin. Coincidentally, we may also find an analogue in Paul Ricoeur's notion of "poetic discourse," which we defined earlier as a form of discourse directed "inward" toward the play of language in language, not "outward" toward a referenced object. Ricoeur says, for example, "A poem is like a work of music in that its mood is exactly coextensive with the internal order of symbols articulated by its language" (*IT*, 59). As we pointed out, Ricoeur believed that an assertion of language's poetic capabilities should be complemented by a recollection of language's referential function: the possibility to say "something to someone about something." We may also point out the similarity between meta-music and

challenges the assumption that artistic expression is merely a representation of

"something else," having no existence unto itself. By stripping a sound from its tradition,

plunderphonists "purify" a sound to the point of its irreducibility.

<div align="center">Plunderphonics and Recognizability</div>

When considering the amenability of theological expression to cultural change,

the public theologian would do well to reflect on the difference between "enjoyable" and

merely "odd"[93] plundered sound. Plunderphonic expressions which attempt a mixture of

"high-brow" and "low-brow"[94] expression—those which construct a collage of samples

while abiding by acceptable standards of musical expression—are recognizable,

enjoyable, [95] and emerge as a potentially powerful form of cultural change. Such

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Benjamin's notion of "immanent critique," where *l'art pour l'art* does not merely function as harmless self-reflection but as an opportunity to engage in social criticism. This minor observation highlights the difference we posited between Ricoeur and Benjamin. For Ricoeur, poetics is corrected by hermeneutics; for Benjamin, poetics is corrected by social criticism.

In his celebrated article "plunderphonia," Chris Cutler says, "As an attribute unique to recording, the history of plunderphonics is in part the history of the self-realization of the recording process; its coming, so to speak, to consciousness." Chris Cutler, "Plunderphonia," *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, ed. Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner (New York: Continuum, 2006), 143 (138-156, inclusive). This seminal essay was published originally in *MusicWorks* 60 (Fall 1994) and later in several instances: as a two-part essay in *Resonance* 3.2 and 4.1, in Richard Kostelanetz and Joseph Darby (ed.), *Classic Essays on Twentieth-Century Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1996) and finally in Simon Emmerson (ed.), *Music, Electronic Media, and Culture* (London: Ashgate Press, 2000), 87-114.

Cutler's idea is also noted by Jim Leach, "Sampling and Society: Intellectual Infringement and Digital Folk Music in John Oswald's 'Plunderphonics,'" in *The Arts, Community, and Cultural Democracy*, ed. Lambert Zuidervaart and Henry Luttikhuizen (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

[93] Thom Jurek's review of Christian Marclay's "More Encores: Christian Marclay Plays with the Records of…" is exemplary here: "Marclay cut slices from several records and pasted them back together on a single disc. On everything else the records were mixed together via several turntables simultaneously, then recorded and overdubbed in analogue. So what does it sound like? It's a mess, pure and simple." http://www.allmusic.com/album/more-encores-christian-marclay-plays-with-the-records-of-r318378/review. Accessed December 21, 2011. To be fair, Jurek concludes by adding, "But in many cases, it's a compelling mess."

[94] For an explanation of plunderphonics as a mixture of "high brow" and "low brow" art, see Chris Cutler, "Plunderphonia," 146-149.

[95] Leach asks of Oswald's "Pretender," "For whom…are these samples recognizable?" Leach explored this question by playing Oswald's "field" to two different audiences. He concludes,

expressions are received by mainstream culture as instantiations of the genre "song" and

are received with openness and joy.[96] The most successful plunderphonic artists assume

that any listener appreciates being surprised by what she enjoys.[97] By mediating the

unknown by way of the known, samplers challenge the tendency to reify a "bourgeois"

memory and push that memory into new possibilities.[98] The most successful

plunderphonic artists, in other words, are both participatory[99] and disruptive.[100]

"Interestingly, the two different audiences recognized widely different ranges of samples in the piece. My hunch is that plunderphonics, with its notion of a recognizable audio quotation, makes an audience into a thematic aspect of its technique" (Jim Leach, "Sampling and Society," 126).

[96] "The key to me is that when I hear a piece of music that's made of samples of other people's records, the bit that you like about it is not the fact that it has been assembled in this new thing, the bit that you like is remembering this other song that they've stolen: 'Oh yeah, that's that Creedence Clearwater song. I like that song. Therefore I like this thing.'" (p. 154). Steve Abini in *We Owe You Nothing: Punk Planet: The Collected Interviews*, ed. Daniel Sinker (New York: Akashic Books, 2001).
    Similarly, the group "Negativland," on the other hand, uses humor and irony to make their point. This differentiates them from punk music, whose primary quality is anger. "Negativland has done what it has done out of a sense of outrage," but "there's always a sense of humor behind it" (Mark Hosler in *We Owe You Nothing*, 225). Albini makes a similar point in "Copyright Criminals."

[97] Consider this (unedited) online comment offered in response to a Greg Gillis mashup: "OMG this is music to the max appealing all the senses I can somehow see the past and envision the future." Anonymous, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FtsxfquYHf0; accessed April 14, 2011.

[98] Chris Cutler observes this dialectic between the known and unknown in plunderphonics historical genealogy. Cutler, "Plunderphonia," 146.

[99] "All in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act." Marcel Duchamp, "The Creative Act," a talk originally given at the meeting of the American Federation of the Arts, April 1957 in Houston, Texas. Originally printed in *ARTnews* 56.4 (Summer 1957). Reprinted *inter alia* in *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 138-140; quote from p. 140.

[100] We do not want to perpetuate the "artistic cannibalism" decried by Steve Albini. Albini is rather famous for his opinion that "It's a hell of a lot easier" to play someone else's record and call it one's own. "I don't have a lot of respect for records that are made out of other people's records. It seems like a trivial task. I don't find it enlightening" in Daniel Sinker (ed.), *We Owe You Nothing: Punk Planet: The Collected Interviews* (New York: Akashic Books, 2001), 153. Appropriated theologically, this mode of expression is not unlike the slip into a lazy privatism decried by David Tracy.
    We may also find Serge Lacasse helpful in this regard. His essay on hypotextuality and hypertextuality offers a musical appropriation of Gérard Genette's literary-critical work, *Palimpsestes; la literature au second degré* (Lincoln, Nebreska: University of Nebraska Press, 1997). Genette developed the theory of "hypertextuality," a study of relationships occurring between literary pieces. In Lacasse's musical appropriation, Genette's theory was used to analyze interrelationships between popular songs.

We may briefly point to three examples of this recognizable-unrecognizable

plunderphonic form. Our examples are derived from cinematic versions of montage but

nonetheless represent the evocative power of plunderphonics. First, we may consider

Arthur Lipsett's 1961 film "Very Nice. Very Nice."[101] Lipsett utilized montage to

challenge the assumed pleasure accompanying societal norms. Snap shots (mostly faces)

of poor and rich, aged and young, and clowns and beauty queens are complemented by

audio samples illustrating both deep insight and sheer stupidity. The result is not so

much a clear message as an experience. Early in the film, the voice of an analyst

provides a kind of background to the presentation, when he says, "People who have made

no attempt to educate themselves live in a dissolving phantasmagoria of the world."

Lipsett's film critiqued the easy perpetuation of this phantasmagoria. In the lazy embrace

of business-as-usual, society is able to ignore the memories they so desperately want to

forget. Lipsett's disruptive montage makes this easy forgetfulness terribly difficult.

Second, Steve Reich's "Different Trains" is a similar case in point. Reich

combined live instruments with recorded voices to piece together a particularly startling

memory of suffering, that of the Jewish holocaust. Recalling the writing process, Reich

wrote:

> As the documentary voices on the tape (my nanny, then in her seventies, a
> black former Pulman Porter then in his eighties, and three Holocaust
> survivors) spoke, I wrote. Their speech melodies were doubled by viola
> for the women, and cello for the men. The violins often doubled the train

Lacasse concluded that practices of interrelationality could be distinguished into two types: intertextual practices and hyptertextual practices. The former involved quotation or allusion, while the latter involved imitation or even transformation. Serge Lacasse, "Intertextuality and Hypertextuality in Recorded Popular Music," in *The Musical Work: Reality or Invention?* Ed. Michael Talbot (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 43.

[101] Produced by the national film board of Canada, 1961.

whistles, also on the tape in the background.[102]

Those who have witnessed Reich's haunting montage will be able to attest to its power as memory, provocation, and motivation. By energizing multiple stimuli (both visual and audible), Reich created a sort of emotional and memorial vortex. Drawn into the experience of resonance and dissonance evoked by Reich's unique medium, the observer cannot but feel a sense of deep melancholy. Given the horrific weight of the event being memorialized, any tribute must be judged finally as inadequate; but Reich's unique form does not allow this inadequacy to inform a complacency in the face of such horrors.

Third, we may point to Christian Marclay's "The Clock," currently on display at White Cube art gallery in Nottingham, London. "The Clock" is a video mashup of cinematic moments that plays with traditional understandings of perception, distraction, and time. With the intentional juxtaposition of disparate cinematic moments, Marclay facilitates the experience of dispersion: that time could unravel in countless directions at any one moment, rupturing "any sense of chronological coherence."[103] Actors are seen aging throughout their career, while societal progress and regress are set against one another instantaneously. The piece thus confronts the viewer's desire for cinematic distraction. Normally, when watching a movie, audiences are caught up in the time being portrayed by the movie—the "ideal time." This time could be past, present, future or

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[102] Steve Reich, "An Introduction, or My (Ambiguous) Life with Technology," in *Sound Unbound*, ed. Paul D. Miller aka DJ Spooky that Subliminal Kid (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2008). In 1993 and 1997, Reich joined with Beryl Korot to write video operas. The first, "The Cave" (1993), was comprised of Israelis, Palestinians, and Americans answering the questions, "Who for you is Abraham?" "Sarah?" "Hagar?" "Ishmael?" "Isaac?" As Reich himself explains, "Their edited answers became the libretto" (Steve Reich, "An Introduction," 3) that is accompanied—often mirrored—by the remaining instruments. The second, "Three Tales" (1997), reflects on technology in the twentieth century.

[103] From description of the display at London's White Cube gallery: http://whitecube.com/exhibitions/christian_marclay_the_clock/. Accessed May 30, 2012.

some narratival amalgamation of all three; but when viewing Marclay's work, audiences are not allowed the luxury of distraction. Because the time of the cinema corresponds precisely to the time of the viewer,[104] viewers experience the dissonance between a desired distraction provided by film and a sense of responsibility to the tyrannically urgent "now." It is a work of art tempting the viewer to forget about time, while simultaneously reminding the viewer about time all the time.[105]

The Fragment and Truth: On the Interrelation of Unknown and Known

Ti estin aletheia?

– Pontius Pilate[106]

The concluding upshot of all these reflections is an awareness that the pursuit of truth in a fragmentary public theology may emerge in a variety of forms. Following the lead of the Jena Romantics, the public theologian is aware of the perpetually arriving character of any pursuit of truth, yet the theologian does not for that reason retreat into relativity. Informed by an eschatological hope, public theologians collect the religious fragments of an ecclesial tradition embodying dialogue in the form of montage and inducing dialogue in the reception of this form. Trusting in the potential of conversation to enable manifestations of truth, the public theologian trusts that the dialogue in-formed by the fragment will give way to collective awareness. Following the optimism of Habermas, public theologians trust that such conversations may give way to a

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[104] "At any moment, the viewer can look at the work and use it to tell the time." Description of the display at London's White Cube gallery.

[105] Marclay himself put the matter this way: "I see the piece as a giant *memento mori* [reminder of mortality]. Perhaps that's why I embarked on it—because I turned 50. Maybe I'm having a mid-life crisis and thinking about time and how little time is left. But everybody relates to it because we're all anxious about time going by." "Watching the Clock, Minute by Minute," BBC News article (November 4, 2010), http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11692234. Accessed May 30, 2012.

[106] John 18:38.

communicative rationality, even as they insist on allowing the explosive form of intense

religious expression to remain explosive in their re-presentation. Recalling such

fragmentary and marginalized narratives as those of the African American tradition

enables the public theologian to facilitate a disruptive reception of religious classics,

thereby protecting their disruptive character. Exemplified by James Cone's radical

juxtaposition of the cross and the lynching tree, a fragmentary public theology refuses to

let ecclesial publics remain in apathy. Following the lead of plunderphonics, public

theologians juxtapose the known with the unkown in an attempt to facilitate ecclesial

change. Contrasting expressions of joy and sadness in the theological history of an

ecclesial public, theologians disclose that public's ambiguity—its progressive and

regressive tendencies, the hints and gestures toward new possibilities ironically embodied

in antiquated cultural debris. Looking back at such instances of emergence enables the

public theologian to locate analogous moments of transition in her own ecclesial

situation. Public theology thus becomes a mirror, confronting ecclesial cultures with

their deepest and most repressed pathologies while reminding them of their ownmost

possibilities. Public theology "lets the future leak through, as [theological] worlds

collide."[107]

In such experiences truth "happens" in moments of awareness discerned

"mystically," as a culture analyzes its *Urgeschichte*, or "primal history"[108] stored "in the

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[107] Andrew Jones, *Plunderphonics, 'Pataphysics, and Pop Mechanics: An Introduction to Musique Actuelle* (Wembley, Middx.: SAF Publishing Ltd., 1995), 7.

[108] Benjamin says of the *Arcades Project*, "I was concerned with fathoming an origin…the origin of the forms and mutations of the Paris arcades from their beginning to their decline, and I locate this origin in the economic facts." In order to facilitate the discovery of this origin, Benjamin did not consider them as causes or according to a historical model based on causality, but as "primal phenomena" that, as they unfolded, gave "rise to the whole series of the arcade's concrete historical forms, just as the leaf unfolds

unconscious of the collective."[109] Because it is so deeply embedded in the theological

day-to-day, this *Urgeschichte* can only be discovered "indirectly, through 'cunning,'"

achieved by collecting the refuse, the detritus of history [*Abfall der Geschichte*[110]] to

disclose epochal "wish images" or "dreams." Energized by this awareness, public

theologians engage their unique traditions for the purpose of self-critique and liberation.

The goal of public theology in such instances is to reverse the overwhelming flow of

events by locating those tensive moments, where theological dialectics "stands still,"

enabling a similarly disruptive appropriation in the present.

Concluding Observations

In this chapter we responded to our Ricoeur-Benjamin dialectic by considering

the extent to which the fragment may actually embody dialogue, liberation, and self-

critique without compromising the criteria of theological recognizability and the pursuit

of truth. We made four primary moves in this consideration. First, following the lead of

David Tracy, we evaluated a particularly emergent moment of fragmentary expression,

the turn of the nineteenth century in Jena, Germany. Our consideration of "Jena

Romanticism" gave way to the suggestion that the fragment itself embodies a dialogical

form, thus protecting a fragmentary public theology from devolving into newly

privatized, merely ideological conversations. Second and third, we reengaged our

liberative and self-critical criteria by juxtaposing Jürgen Habermas and "the later David

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from itself all the riches of the empirical world of plants" (*AP*, 462; N2a.4). Rolf Tiedemann calls the *Arcades Project* "nothing less than a materialist philosophy of the history of the nineteenth century" (Rolf Tiedemann, "Dialectics at a Standstill: Approaches to the *Passagen-Werk*," trans. Gary Smith and André Lefevere, in *AP*, 929; 929-945, 1012-1015 inclusive).

[109] *AP*, 4.

[110] *GS*, 5.1:575.

Tracy." Habermas's unification of lifeworld and system in the linguistification of *Zweckrationalität* reminded us of the functionality of communicative action and the possibility of shared liberation. However, Habermas's theory was only partially adequate to our project, given his "functionalist" approach to religion and the political-theoretical concerns his philosophy represents. We thus complemented consideration of Habermas with a reconsideration of David Tracy. Tracy's phenomenology of conversation, particularly the possibility of a tradition-specific conversation with religious classics, and his later turn to fragments suggested that a disruptive form is rather intrinsic to intense religious expression and thus begs for a disruptive appropriation. Fourth, we suggested a contemporary analogy for public theology by pointing to the musicology of plunderphonics. By positing an analogy between public theology and plunderphonics, the theologian finds resources for facilitating an intersection of publicness and tradition in a moment of "pleasant surprise," energizing the potential for change unique to theological expression without perpetuating the potential for ideological and egoistic distortion that accompanies so many forms of traditional theology. In each of these situations the public theologian is confronted by unexpected modes of truth.

In our increasingly pluralistic world, there is a renewed freedom to return to one's religious center, one's unique cultural-religious heritage. However, for those of us informed by the critical reflections set loose by the critical moment accompanying public theology, this freedom cannot give way to a newly privatized conversation. Engaging the multiple voices struggling for recognition in our present, theologians pursue a critical return to their own tradition. Theology is refigured as critical dialogue with the religious fragments of its own tradition. Following the lead of plunderphonics, theologians

reengage the memory of their fellow believers by retrieving shared fragments, collecting, and re-presenting them in newly innovative moments of expression guided by a criteriology like the one we have constructed. Insofar as these fragments are collected—not systematized—in the process of re-presentation, they likewise retain a unique ability to instantiate a perpetually arriving, even self-deconstructing "vanishing point" for the community's interpretation.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

> It is small wonder his philosophy seemed to them like a concoction of preexisting givens. …But what great thinker is not at the confluence of diverse tendencies?
>
> – Hans Urs von Balthasar on Gregory of Nyssa[1]

Reviewing the Argument

Chapter One

The dissertation as a whole began with an observation of confusion in the

discipline known as "public theology." Since its inception in the 1970s, public theology

has emerged not only as an important aspect of theological reflection but as, perhaps, the

very "face" of theology itself.[2] Even among the most adamant supporters of traditional

expression, there is relative agreement among scholars that theological reflection should

not be confined to an intellectual ghetto. There is substantial disagreement, however,

over the manner in which publicness should be pursued. We addressed this disagreement

by suggesting the existence of four observable forms of public theology. First,

postsecular public theologians view the bifurcation of religion and society as a problem

for our moral future. Without a common religious framework, the "public square" is

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[1] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Presence and Thought: An Essay on the Religious Philosophy of Gregory of Nyssa*, trans. Mark Sebanc (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1995), 16. Also noted in Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), iix-ix, whose own theological method is exemplary of the Cappadocian trajectory von Balthasar appreciates.

[2] Aguilar, *Theology, Liberation, and Genocide*, 55; cf. fn. 1.

"naked" and must be "reclothed." Postsecular public theologians thus address the public as an "object" from a confessional point of view in order to reclaim a lost religious heritage and enliven a dying morality. Second, civic public theologians likewise observe the moral fragmentation of society, but they typically address this fragmentation by reflecting on the im/possibility of religiously informed dialogue occurring in the shared conversations of the public square. The majority of civic public theologians we surveyed conclude their theoretical considerations by turning to ecclesiology. Desiring not to compromise the uniqueness of the Christian narrative in the rush to make theology public, such theologians stress such notions as discipleship and identity on their way to celebrating the role of the church in societal transformation. Better Christians, so the argument goes, will make a better society. Third, liberationist public theologians challenged the easy identification of Christianity with the dominant narrative. From the perspective of the suffering, a concern with protecting "the" Christian identity masks a hunger for control and a profound unwillingness to open the tradition to critique from "the underside." By injecting repressed stories into the consciousness of the majority, liberationist public theologians challenge the all-too-easy complacency with the same. Theology becomes public to the degree that theologians are able to disclose forgotten narratives both inside and outside their unique theological heritage. As they do, theologians are compelled to address the complicity of their ecclesial public in the sins of oppression and violence—and to do so in a public forum. Finally, fundamental public theologians attempt a chastened continuation of the Enlightenment trajectory by evaluating their theology according to publicly available warrants and criteria. The profound fragmentation of rationality in our post-Enlightenment context is a consistent

concern for these theologians. Increasingly, fundamental theologians attend not merely to the Enlightenment disenchantment with mystification but also to the post-Enlightenment disenchantment with demystification. On the other side of public critique, fundamental theologians attempt a retrieval of their unique theological tradition informed by a carefully articulated religious self-understanding.

In conclusion to this survey, we offered three interpretive questions that, we argued, were constitutively related to the respective forms a public theology takes. Borrowing terminology from David Tracy, we posed those questions as follows: (1) How does a theologian locate meaning, meaningfulness, and truth in dialogue with the publics informing theological expression? (2) How does a theologian locate meaning, meaningfulness, and truth in dialogue with the publics informing non-theological, or "public" expression? (3) How does a theologian facilitate an interrelation of the meaning, meaningfulness, and truth disclosed in both theological and non-theological conversational domains? We likewise highlighted the existence of an ongoing tension in public theology between concreteness and universality. We differentiated public theologies according to their respective interpretations of publicness (adverbial and objectival), theological expression (intertextual and intratextual), and the directionality of the public-theology interrelation (unidirectional and bidirectional, or mutually informing).

Chapter Two

The observation of these tensions opened into a rather detailed analysis of two American theologians whose reflections on public expression and theological expression remain paradigmatic for many of the forms U.S. American public theology takes today.

In chapter two we surveyed the writings of "the early David Tracy," up to and including

his longest work to date, *Analogical Imagination*. Our analysis of Tracy's earliest

writings in the 1960s and early 1970s yielded the observation of two crises to which

Tracy responded: internal to his disciplinary context was an increasingly chaotic scene;

external to his disciplinary context was the awareness of historical consciousness, a

moment in Western consciousness which potentially relativized the theological project.

Tracy's response to these crises was to suggest that theologians reflect more carefully on

their methodological underpinnings. Tracy believed the explicitation of theological

judgment, or "horizon analysis" associated with Bernard Lonergan to be of particular

assistance in this regard. In *Blessed Rage for Order* Tracy engages in this project by

constructing a fundamental theology, the purpose of which was to facilitate a critical

correlation of common human experience and the Christian fact. Because this correlation

was mutually critical, fundamental theology was disclosed as a revisionist theology. In

Analogical Imagination Tracy constructed a systematic theology informed by the

revisionist fundamental theology of *Blessed Rage for Order*, where critical philosophy

thus served as the culmination of an inclusive and revisionist christology. Departing

from an awareness of crises internal and external to the theologian-as-subject, the

systematic theology of *Analogical Imagination* founded the systematic-theological

project on a sense of publicness as truth. This pursuit of truth was not only expedient; it

was intrinsic to the theological task itself. Theologians, by nature of their vocation, make

truth-claims and are thus required to evaluate the truth-status of their projects according

to publicly available warrants and criteria. As in *Blessed Rage for Order*, the public,

systematic theology of *Analogical Imagination* emerged finally as a pluralistic, critical

project informed by an inclusivist and disruptive christology.

Chapter Three

According to George Lindbeck, Tracy's fundamental theology rested on a theory of religion that was inadequately attentive to religious difference. Calling this theory "experiential-expressivism," Lindbeck posited that Tracy (and Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan) developed theology on the assumption that there was a religious aspect of existence common to all people, expressed differently but fundamentally the same. Lindbeck likewise posited that this assumption was essentially self-contradictory, since it did not allow for meaningful communication concerning religious difference. If all religious expressions were merely improvisations on a singular baseline, it became impossible to differentiate among religions, making inter-religious dialogue logically and empirically vacuous. Lindbeck thus suggested a cultural-linguistic althernative. Borrowing from the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein and the cultural anthropology of Clifford Geertz, Lindbeck suggested that religious meaning was best understood as intrasystematic expression. Religious doctrines reflect the language already being spoken by a particular community and thus do not reference metaphysical realities but the culture-specific language already occurring in a community. Doctrines are rules. They indicate "grammatical" patterns unique to a particular religious culture and, subsequently, inform members of that religious culture how to shape their lives in continuity with their unique religious expression. As a community's religious expression changes, their grammatical rules may change as well. Theological expression dependent on a cultural-linguistic model of religion remains in its intrasystematic parameters, rooting the narrative of the community in the "history-like" narrative of its textual foundations.

We concluded our foray into the Tracy-Lindbeck debate with an "excursus" on the question of cultural-linguisticality and dialogue and a suggestion for a post-Lindbeckian appropriation of David Tracy. Our excursus yielded the conclusion that Lindbeck's theory is not amenable to progressive dialogue. Inter-religious conversations informed by Lindbeck's theory result in a perpetually competing framework. Since there is no possibility for different religions to enter a shared space of mutual critique, inter-religious conversations devolve into competitions whose victors will not be determined "before the eschaton."

We thus suggested a post-Lindbeckian appropriation of David Tracy by returning to the questions we posed at the conclusion to chapter one. In an attempt to incorporate the major insights not only of Tracy and Lindbeck together but of all four streams of public-theological thought, we delineated a five-point criteriology that would guide our philosophical turn in part two. The five public-theological criteria we suggested included the following: (a) Public theology must remain recognizable to members of a religious community. (b) Public theology is aware of the potential for technocracy and totality in so many modern forms of theology and thus maintains a self-critical posture at the very center of its project. (c) Public theology pursues "what is true." (d) Public theology responds substantially to pluralism. (e) Public theology re-engages its own tradition in order to disclose levels of culpability in perpetuating oppression; in response to such disclosures, public theology re-turns to its unique textual heritage to energize its members toward both confession of culpability and hope for continued liberation. Of significant importance to this criteriology was the observation that the shared concerns of our global society have created a certain sense of freedom for theologians to return to their unique,

theological traditions in order to facilitate our global community's common trajectory toward shared goals.

Chapter Four

Our philosophical response to these criteria began with a consideration of Paul Ricoeur. We looked at Ricoeur's notions of metaphor, narrative, and subjectivity to suggest that Ricoeur's philosophy was particularly amenable to three of our criteria, namely (1) the innovative pursuit of truth (2) in dialogue with a plurality of publics, while (3) remaining recognizably located within a tradition. The existence of metaphor and narrative reminds speakers that they may energize traditional terminology to move beyond traditional parameters. Instantiating a moment of juxtaposition between the known and unknown, a metaphor creates meaning by way of an impertinent attribution. Narrative likewise creates meaning by collecting and organizing apparently disparate ideas into a recognizable form, while the subject who finds herself able to create meaning, especially by telling her own story, will find the capacity to recognize herself as capable and, consequently, to recognize capable others. We concluded with a suggestion that Ricoeur's philosophy alone was not sufficiently adequate to our criteria of liberation and self-critique. Ricoeur prioritizes textuality as the mode of understanding informing the human sciences, suggesting that a phenomenology of reading may enable a poetic interpretation of plurality. A phenomenology of reading is not attentive to the experience of those who cannot read, those whose potential for life has been stolen by easy poetics. In moments of crisis, where mutuality alone is not sufficient, the theologian needs a philosophy more amenable to alarms of injustice.

Chapter Five

We thus turned to Walter Benjamin, whose critical philosophy of history was more amenable to the criteria of liberation and self-critique without compromising the pursuit of truth and tradition-specific recognizability. Utilizing the idea of a universal-particular dynamic as our point of departure, we suggested that Benjamin's metaphysics may inform a pursuit of truth without reducing truth to a disembodied, easily technocratized idea. Constituting Benjamin's post-Kantian philosophy was a turn to religion and language. For Benjamin, traditions obscure the original purity of things, not the least of which are the stories of the marginalized and most vulnerable participants in a tradition. The goal in linguistic and historical philosophies is to reverse the overwhelming flow of words in a recovery of momentary purity instantiated as a tension between "now" and "then." Benjamin's philosophy of history thus yielded a construction of "publicness" dependent on a quasi-mystical approach to social analysis. Reminiscent of emerging from a dream, the epochs analyzed by the social critic reflect moments of transition. Participants in epochal transition experience a tension between what has been and what is emerging. The job of the social critic is to analyze the "detritus," the "rags" of history to discern, mystically, what moments of historical emergence find an analogue in the present. Finally, in the literary form of montage we located an especially helpful genre for the public theology we are proposing. Collecting a tradition's uniquely recognizable fragments into a montage evoking truth, liberation, self-critique, and dialogue enables an interrelation of theological and public expression sensitive to the demands of our present.

Our uptake of Benjamin thus yielded two responses to the public-theological criteria we developed at the conclusion to part one. First, attending to Benjamin's metaphysics and his fragmentary style, we suggested that his philosophy informs a non-totalizing approach to the exigency of truth; second, Benjamin's philosophy of history provided a framework wherein the theologian may look backwards to those moments of theological standstill, where the intersection of the same and the new gives way to a uniquely tensive monad exploding the easy comfort with traditional modes of thought. The new-old moment of the cross functions as the quintessential example of the monad, while the appropriation of marginalized, religious classics allows the tension of the monad to remain alive in our present. We thus found in Benjamin a complementary philosophy informing the public-theological criteria of liberation and self-critique that did not compromise the uniquely theological vocation of pursuing truth and tradition-specific recognizability. In short, Ricoeur assisted us in fulfilling the criteria of truth, recognizability, and dialogue, while Benjamin assisted us in fulfilling the criteria of liberation and self-critique without compromising truth and recognizability.

Chapter Six

Our final chapter served as an illustrative conclusion to the project as a whole. Observing the possibility that a merely critical framework may result ultimately in new ideologies, or newly privatized conversations, we asked whether the fragmentary form was amenable to all five of our public-theological criteria. Our conclusion was that, indeed, the fragment embodies the very form of dialogue thus inducing dialogue in its reception. Recipients of collected fragments find the fragment embodying a uniquely tensive moment in the pursuit of truth. Hope in truth as an ideal horizon is not

abandoned, but that hope, as Kafka reminded us, is never fulfilled in "us." We further asked whether there was a quality intrinsic to dialogue that lent itself to the pursuit of liberation and resistance. We answered this question by offering a very brief consideration of Jürgen Habermas and "the later David Tracy." Habermas's notion of communicative rationality provided a hope that liberation remains intrinsic to dialogue, while David Tracy's notion of the religious classic and especially the religious-classic-as-fragment suggested a hope that liberation remains intrinsic to religious expression itself and thus to theological reflection dependent on religious classics.

In response to the Ricoeurian possibility that meaning may be created in a juxtaposition of opposites (related incipiently to one another) and the Benjaminian possibility that history may be achieved by way of the tensive moments of standstill, we offered a final turn to plunderphonics as a singularly helpful illustration of what may count as public theology. Coined by the avant garde musician John Oswald, plunderphonics references the plundering, or stealing of musical fragments—recognizable to a particular culture—and the subsequent mashup of those fragments into a new song. Because of its uniquely evocative form, plunderphonics lends itself to the achievement of disruption and even self-critique while also inducing moments of pleasant surprise, as audiences hear songs they recognize.

Conclusion: Toward a Fragmentary Public Theology

> The joyfulness of infinite play, its laughter, lies in learning to start
> something we cannot finish.
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> – James Carse[3]

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[3] *Finite and Infinite Games* (New York: Free Press, 1986), 26.

Our concluding suggestion and the goal of the project as a whole is that theologians will be able to navigate the various impasses in contemporary discussions of public theology by re-presenting the classics of their unique theological traditions as a montage-like collection of fragmetns. Doing so enables fundamental public theologians to move through particularist critiques without shifting the primary trajectory of their project. Although fundamental theology pursues truth, it is aware of the potential for violence tied up with this pursuit. It thus places the need for dialogue, self-critique, and liberation into the very infrastructure of its project, retrieving—with suspicion—the recognizable classics of a religious tradition and re-presenting those classics in a form analogous to montage.

The fragment and its collection inform a point of entry into the dynamic interplay between particularity and universality. The fragment captures in an always-now moment both the irreducibility of particularity and the ironic completion of the idea in the achievement of its own incompletion. To the degree that the fragment instantiates a temporal, punctiliar expression (a *Werk*) which is itself an absolute re-presentation, it highlights the perpetually arriving, never finalized pursuit of the "most serious concern of humanity"—"the perfection of knowledge."[4] It is with such a use of the fragment in mind that we have cleared a way to move the public theological discussion forward by following its trajectory *through* the various particularist critiques that have been leveled against it.

Insofar as public theology might be considered a perpetually unique, always contemporary location of the relationship between the particularity of "the Christian fact"

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[4] Schlegel, *Athenaeum Fragments*, 259 [*Philosophical Fragments*, p. 54].

and the universality of "common human experience," the fragment functions as a mode of expression uniquely informative for public theology. The religious fragments (not merely "religious classics"), which form the tradition-historical fodder used by public theologians are best understood as explosive expressions of particularity. In the religious fragment's dense portrayal of a particular experience, often involving suffering, angst, and ambiguity, the fragmentary subject emits sparks, hints and guesses that evoke the infinite and thereby achieve a sort of impossible[5] recognizability. In this regard the religious fragment is no longer simply a "timeless classic" but a deeply temporal event that breaks through our all-too-easy complacency with more of the same. When the religious fragment is reappropriated in a manner consistent with its own fragmentary expression, the public theologian is able to respond substantially to contextualized critiques without drifting into newly privatized conversations.

Appropriating the analogous form of montage, exemplified by the musical genre of plunderphonics, the public theologian looks back at the samples of her unique theological tradition and claims them as her own. Embedded deeply in the memory of her unique religio-linguistic culture, such samples function as recognizable sound bites that may be energized to motivate members of an ecclesial public (not merely to engage in societal change but) to overturn the various power dynamics saturating their own ecclesial history. Collecting such fragments into a poetic mosaic frees the theologian and her religious public to facilitate new, metaphorical moments of meaning creation. Utilizing these fragments to confront an ecclesial public with its own complicity in suffering, the public theologian motivates her fellow believers toward confessions of sin

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[5] Tracy addresses the notion of the "impossible" in "Form and Fragment," 69.

and moments of collective repentance. Cautious of the danger of ideological distortion and systemic oppression inherent in a notion like "tradition," the theologian allows the disruptive form of collected samples to challenge existing totalities. By engaging the cultural memory of an ecclesial public, the theologian opens her audience up to receptivity. By creating moments of dissonance in her re-presentation of these fragments, the theologian likewise disrupts easy perpetuations of sameness. Reminiscent of a well-placed joke in a homily, the theologian opens the mouths of her audience with laughter and pours the truth down their throats.

The religious fragments of a tradition are collected into a message directed toward liberation, toward the disclosure of ideology, toward the memory of suffering and the retrieval of hope. By reading Tracy's notion of public theology through Lindbeck's narratival critique, Ricoeur's phenomenology of metaphor, Benjamin's philosophy of history, and a fragmentary form, we can make gestures toward a methodological strategy enabling a renewed engagement with particularity. Instead of moving "outward" toward an increasingly disappearing, public space, theologians turn "inward" to the classics of their own traditions. Now defined as "critical theology," public theology attends to the business of disclosing repressed memories of suffering and redirecting those memories into a shared trajectory of freedom and hope.

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VITA

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While at Loyola, William was elected as Vice-President, then President, of the Theology Department Graduate Student Caucus. He received a departmental research fellowship during the 2007-2010 Academic Years and won the Albert Clark Award in 2011, a national contest sponsored by the Theta Alpha Kappa theology honors society. William received an Advanced Dissertation Fellowship from the Loyola University Chicago Graduate School during the 2010-2011 Academic Year and was an alternate for the Pre-doctoral Teaching Fellowship in the 2011-2012 Academic Year.

William has published a number of book reviews and two essay-length projects. He has presented nationally and internationally on such topics as philosophical and theological hermeneutics, biblical interpretation, liberation theology, and theological method. Currently, William is an Adjunct Professor of Philosophy at Loyola University Chicago and an Adjunct Professor of Theology at Lewis University in Romeoville,

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