

## *David Tracy's Theology-in-Culture*

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### **Introduction**

David Tracy's theological enterprise is an ongoing endeavour to reflect on the Christian tradition in relation with a cultural context in which that tradition must resound meaningfully. As his theology has unfolded, it has expanded into an increasingly complex web of multi-layered and interconnected nodes. This inner complexity develops in four directions: God, tradition, culture, and the way understanding and doing theology are conceived.

New partners have been joining the Tracyean *symposium*, enriching the depth and the breadth of the conversation. His revisionist theology has gone through the lenses of hermeneutics, bringing along conversation and the 'classic', opening the conversation more and more to a multiplicity of others, discovering the relevance of those marginalised, taking into account the intrinsic instability and fragmentation of being and meaning in history, and, finally, he has brought it all to bear on the task of naming God in dialogue with – mainly but not only – the Christian classics.

Although Tracy has never developed a full-fledged theory or understanding of culture, his entire project is an ongoing dialogue with those expressions of culture related to the meaning of cosmos, life (individual and communal), and history: science, philosophy, theology, art, fiction and non-fiction literature, religions, and so on. Tracy understands doing theology as a task intrinsically linked with culture. As he told Eugene Kennedy in 1986, '[t]heology is what we call this attempt to think on religion culturally and on culture religiously'.<sup>1</sup> In Tracy's view, 'theologians ...

<sup>1</sup> Eugene Kennedy, 'A Dissenting Voice', an interview with David Tracy, *New York Times Magazine* (9 November 1986), 25. As Tracy went on to emphasise to Kennedy: 'a theologian *does* think about religion and its resources in culture'. Cf. here Bernard Lonergan: 'A theology mediates between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of religion in that matrix' (Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972), xi).

relate principally to the realm of culture and, through that realm and its notions of practical reason, to the realm of polity. Religion, after all, is a key cultural index.<sup>2</sup>

Tracy's interest in culture relates precisely to his focus on the crucial category of the 'classic', that is, that 'expression of the human spirit on a particular journey in a particular tradition [that] ... discloses permanent possibilities for human existence both personal and communal'.<sup>3</sup> Tracy's concern with the danger of a hegemonic instrumental reason taking over public reasoning has been key to his efforts to redefine the public realm with regard to the cultural indexes that the classics reveal: for, '[a]ny classic ... is always public, never private'.

Tracy's theology can be fruitfully approached as a theology-in-culture, both in its scope and in its actual development. In other words, and taking for granted that Tracy's theological milieu is mainly academic, intellectual, and literary, this chapter will try to show that culture is Tracy's pervasive *locus theologicus*. This in no way denies that Tracy's theology's main referent is the Christian tradition as manifested in and through its classics: Christian scriptures, symbols, doctrines, theological texts, art, and other manifestations, and, most of all, the Jesus-the-Christ event.

Key for Tracy, though, is that this Christian tradition, transcendently inspired and actualised by the Holy Spirit, is in-culturated, that is, expressed in cultural terms. Moreover, and most crucially, the Christ event takes place in and through the God incarnate, that is, Jesus the Christ, who fully shared our human condition except in sin. Culture is embedded in revelation and vice versa. Both terms must be clearly distinguished but not separated. On this basis, Tracy's theological project is an ongoing exploration of both culture at large and Christian tradition. He tries to show, critically and dialectically, not only the intrinsic mutual connection of culture and Christian tradition, but also how the Christ event reverberates in the best cultural classics, and how that event offers hope to the anxieties and failures of 'our situation'.

This chapter seeks to focus first, diachronically, on how Tracy has fared theologically through different cultural times, analysing in a second section, more synchronically, some key features of Tracy's theology-in-culture.

<sup>2</sup> David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981), II.

<sup>3</sup> Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, 14.

## David Tracy: A Theologian in Culturally Shifting Times

The way Tracy has developed his project and his construal of 'our times' has shifted over the years, involving different ways of approaching and interpreting modernity. Overall, after his pre-modern formative years, early Tracy focusses on modernity; middle Tracy's diagnosis of our times is post-modern; later Tracy expands the view, retrieving classical Greece, Neo-Platonism, early Christian theologians, pre-modernity, early modernity, and both Reformation and Eastern Orthodox traditions, all as a way of illuminating 'our times'.

### *Encountering Modernity*

Tracy belongs within the stream of theologians for whom faith is not something extrinsic to humanity. That stream has been present in Christian theology since its very inception, trying to show that, in fact, the God made manifest in Jesus the Christ is the source and the goal of every human being. In Tracy's case, Bernard Lonergan, under whom he studied in Rome, was a key figure in bringing about this insight. Like other theologians who tried to incorporate the turn to the subject into their endeavours, Lonergan was unhappy with Neo-Scholastic theology. Instead, transcendental method allowed Lonergan to introduce human consciousness and its ways into the task of theology.<sup>4</sup> This, in turn, placed the experience of grace internally, as implicit within all human knowing and acting.

For his part, Tracy's seminarian education was double-edged. On the one hand, he received an intensive classical formation,<sup>5</sup> an exposure to the rich medieval traditions in theology and spirituality after Augustine, and a way of thinking that took seriously metaphysical reflection and the dignity of reason. All these are foundational assets in Tracy's theology. On the other hand, he was exposed to an anti-modern Neo-Scholastic philosophical framework that he profoundly disliked because it was barren and used for anti-modern purposes.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, rev. ed. (London: Longmans, 1958) and Lonergan, *Method in Theology*.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Kenneth L. Woodward, 'In Praise of Fragments: An Interview with David Tracy', *Commonweal* 156/15 (October 2019), 60.

<sup>6</sup> Barnabas Palfrey, 'Appendix: Interview with David Tracy, Oxford, 25/26 October 2009' in Barnabas Palfrey, 'Theology as Dialogue and Fragment: Saying God with David Tracy', University of Oxford doctoral thesis, 2013 (unpublished), where Palfrey records Tracy affirming: 'Neo-scholasticism, which I hated, was collapsing around me.'

However, his time at the Gregorian University in Rome for his theological studies (1960–1964) and theological dissertation (1965–1967), under Bernard Lonergan, gave him the opportunity to rethink Thomas Aquinas and come up with a fresh framework, apt to deal and converse with modernity and its turn to history and the subject. In addition, while in Rome Tracy witnessed the dramatic theological and pastoral turn of the Second Vatican Council. Using his own later term, Vatican II was a true ‘frag-event’ that shattered a hitherto undisputable and entrenched orthodoxy, went back to the sources (*ressourcement*), revalued the Word of God, retrieved tradition afresh, and disclosed open possibilities for understanding the *novum* of Christianity (*aggiornamento*). The Tracy who came back home had undergone a deep process of conversion.

Tracy analysed Lonergan’s contribution to theology in *The Achievement of Bernard Lonergan*, published in 1970.<sup>7</sup> Openness and dialogue, key to Tracy’s work, and the centrality of conversation within this, are indebted to Lonergan’s transcendental precepts: ‘Be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible, develop and, if necessary, change.’<sup>8</sup> Lonergan’s theological turn made it possible for Tracy to be a native nature-grace, faith-culture, church-society theologian: a nativeness that has grounded his whole theological enterprise. Grace (God’s self-communication, in Rahner’s terms) is not simply superimposed on a grace-free nature, but instead, while distinct, can never be separated from nature. Theology’s task is to render intelligible the complex relation between the two or, put another way, the relation between God and creation. Always using the tools of culture (language and knowledge), theology will have to fathom and name God in a way that simultaneously understands creation, its purpose, and its goal.

When developing his own project in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Tracy thought that Lonergan’s achievement, although precious, was not enough to respond (as he would put it in 1975) to ‘the cognitive, ethical, and existential crises which confront any theologian who finds himself or herself personally committed to both the modern experiment and to the Christian vision of human possibilities’.<sup>9</sup> According to Tracy, the theologian must face a twofold crisis: ‘the crisis of meaning of traditional

<sup>7</sup> David Tracy, *The Achievement of Bernard Lonergan* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970).

<sup>8</sup> David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* [1975], with a new preface (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 96. This Tracyean version is a slightly modified version of Lonergan’s imperatives (Cf. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 20), based, according to Tracy, on Lonergan’s own version ‘towards the end of his life’, Palfrey, ‘Appendix’, lines 471–473).

<sup>9</sup> Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 4.

Christianity in the modern “post-Christian” period and the present crisis of traditional modernity in the contemporary “post-modern” world’.<sup>10</sup> Tracy gave up the vantage point of faith as a theologian, stating that ‘the Christian theologian *qua* theologian need not be an explicit believer’.<sup>11</sup> Unveiled at the Lonergan Congress of 1970, Tracy’s critique of Lonergan would be that the latter did not develop his foundational task ‘critically but dogmatically’, whereas Tracy required that the dogmatic principle at the foundational level of Christian theology ‘be critically justified’.<sup>12</sup> In this way, theology could be neither expelled from culture nor spared from justifying critically its stand in the midst of a complex crisis of the modern project.

As a game-changing cultural movement, modernity had challenged the meaningfulness of traditional Christianity. Theology faced that challenge by developing a liberal-modernist approach, which would find itself challenged by neo-orthodox theology. In a new turn, an almost self-defeating radical theology confronted both liberal and neo-orthodox theologies. Yet in the meantime, modernity had shown itself to be a tradition that had to confront its own crisis of meaningfulness in a shifting cultural context, when its own fatal flaws, especially in the light of twentieth-century wars, genocides, and massive crimes in the name of human-liberation ideologies, were exposed.

The pluralistic cultural context Tracy addressed in the 1970s would be not only the cause of a twofold crisis but also the provider of new tools for finding a way out of it. New cultural developments in the domains of social critical theory, linguistics, history, hermeneutics, exegesis, philosophy, theology, metaphysics, and a cohort of different sciences, allowed Tracy to approach afresh what at that time he described as ‘the meanings present in common human experience and the meanings present in the Christian tradition’.<sup>13</sup> Methodologically, Lonergan’s attention to the empirical and his interdisciplinary approach had equipped Tracy with the resources needed to overcome a self-centred and intellectualist theological way of thinking.

In developing his revisionist theology, Tracy found his pivotal and bridging point in ‘*the* common faith shared by secularist and modern Christian’

<sup>10</sup> Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 36 n.16.

<sup>12</sup> David Tracy, ‘Lonergan’s Foundational Theology: An Interpretation and a Critique’ in Philip McShane (ed.), *Foundations of Theology: Papers from the International Lonergan Conference* (Dublin: Gill & MacMillan, 1971), 216.

<sup>13</sup> Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 34.

in 'the ultimate significance of our lives in this world'.<sup>14</sup> This point helped Tracy formulate a multifactorial equation to relate both sides of contemporary situation and tradition, critically correlating these in order to find a way of managing reasonably the twofold crisis of traditional Christianity and modernity. After performing the basics of the equation in the first part of his 1975 *Blessed Rage for Order*, in the second part of that work Tracy tried to show how the solution worked as Christian theology, mainly in his interpretation of Christology.

In all this, while continental thought (mostly but not solely French) was and has remained important, then and since, the American context and 'way' has continued to impinge foundationally on Tracy's theological enterprise down the years. Tracy's two-legged North American and European cultural matrix should be taken into account when interpreting his insistence that 'a theologian *does* think about religion and its resources in culture'.

### *The Hermeneutical Shift*

Tracy's decisive turn to hermeneutics first became visible in *The Analogical Imagination*. In this work, the emphasis of his correlational method shifted from relating tradition and the contemporary situation rather like two sides in an equation, as noted, to a more generally hermeneutical reading of both of these sides together.<sup>15</sup> Existential and theological truth is not attained by discursive reason but manifests itself, although never fully, in sparks that shine through the intensification of particularity in concrete works, which, for that reason, are called 'classics'. Yet, because every cultural marker is laden with its own matter and form, hermeneutics needs a moment of critique and even of suspicion. Hence, there is no 'clean classic', but every classic at once manifests and darkens truth's light.

Hermeneutics implies that at each crossing of culture, no matter how infinitesimal and apparently meaningless, both culture and history change in unforeseeable and unfathomable ways. Every expression, from cooking to religion, forges production-creation and final products intrinsically related to all the productions and expressions preceding them throughout history.

<sup>14</sup> Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 8.

<sup>15</sup> As Tracy would put it in 1989: 'To call theology a hermeneutical enterprise ... is to recognize that ... correlations of these two acts of interpretation [of contemporary situation and of Christian tradition] are always occurring in order to produce the single act of a given theological interpretation' (David Tracy, 'Hermeneutical Reflections in the New Paradigm of Theology' [1989] in Tracy, *Fragments: The Existential Situation of Our Time*, Selected Essays, Vol. I (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020, 131–144: 141)).

Culture always comes along, therefore, with an undecipherable genetic code that summarises its entire history. Consequently, interpretation entails a complex, ongoing decoding of an ultimately unencompassable code that keeps asking for continuation. In the process of interpretation, culture's markers are moveable. Reason here becomes 'human' beyond simple measurement and logic, since every conceivable cultural index – tradition, language, geography, history, reception and interpretation history, embedded distortions, personal and communal itineraries, and so on – is applicable in some degree to each production and each interpretation. Interpretative reason is incomplete and open, not only because the interpreter has a limited viewpoint but also because he or she is wounded by the colours and distortions of the glasses he or she wears. Every classic and each traditional matrix is properly subject to argument, critique, and suspicion.

At best asymptotical, interpretation only achieves clarity, following Dante's cosmic metaphor, in the Empyrean of the *Paradiso*. Theologically, interpretation, like culture in general, only can be deciphered eschatologically. In history, interpretation and culture remain open and ambiguous, produced and received in hope. Either their pursuit or the decision not to pursue them is always and necessarily done by risking our own self.

Despite the ambiguity of the classic, its permanence and openness (its experienced excess of meaning) make it culturally meaningful precisely because classics offer ways to unveil the meaningfulness of reality. It is in the essence of classics to provoke different levels of recognition of truth-as-meaningfulness, and this identification corresponds to the thought that truth – theologically, God's *Logos* – intrinsically *manifests* itself. The manifestation is never full, to be sure, but – at least – manifestation occurs enough to elicit trust. Although culture is never transparent, neither is it consequently fundamentally opaque.<sup>16</sup>

From a theological viewpoint, the classics in any culture can be seen as inspired works, that is, as special manifestations of the work of the Holy Spirit in history and culture. One could name this 'natural' revelation. As such, the classics have the power to enlighten reality and theology (e.g., Cicero and Virgil for Augustine, and Aristotle for Aquinas). Every real classic is, in this way, theologically disclosive. Works of art, with their power to reimagine reality, are particularly capable not only of disclosing reality but also of transforming it. For believers, the religious, biblical

<sup>16</sup> Cf. George Steiner, *Real Presences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 3–4.

classic is construed as that special form of God's self-communication that could be called 'supernatural' revelation. As such, the religious classic has a capacity to illumine the ambiguities of 'natural' revelation.

*The Radical Problematising of Interpretation and Culture*

'Our situation' became far more problematic when the post-modern critique of modernity went beyond the 'masters of suspicion', in a process commanded mainly by Foucault and Derrida in their rereading and rewriting of Nietzsche and Heidegger, which in effect questioned the stability of both the subject and its surrounding culture. If there is no transcendental subject and even the Freudian unconscious may be inside a 'structural unconscious' (which acts in and through language, formal thought, and certain social structures, according to Foucault), then, beyond Freud, the very basis of the self crumbles under this doubly compounded unconscious, making practically impossible its archaeological reconstruction. The modern self seems lost and dead.

With Jacques Derrida, direct speech retires as a witness to self-present communication, while writing exhibits the profoundly ambiguous and ultimately undecidable condition of thinking and communication. Derrida seeks the no-place, the never-reachable *au-delà, le désert dans le désert*, the absolute void, which is sheer *suressence*. Although out of fairness and respect for Derrida the step cannot be made, there is nevertheless here just one step from the 'meant' (*l'innomable*) of Derrida to the Christian God referred to by the images of, among others, Dionysius, Eckhart, and John of the Cross. Yet Derrida will never go beyond what 'might' be implied but never can be named. His is an uncompromising negative thought.

Both Foucault and Derrida are profoundly ethically serious in their diverging unmasking of the deceptions of cultural self-presence. Tracy sees a great degree of *noblesse* in their intellectual enterprises. He lauds Foucault for his profound refusal of any thinking that would perpetuate just 'more of the same'.<sup>17</sup> Derrida, meanwhile, developed a powerful feeling of true admiration for another key Tracyean conversational partner: Emmanuel Levinas.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Cf. David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 65.

<sup>18</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1999) is both a love letter – with a revealing nostalgic touch – and a meditation: 'One day, on the rue Michel-Ange, during one of those conversations whose memory I



Levinas is the foremost proponent of the 'other' in its irreducible, full alterity. His is an ethically grounded philosophy (ethics is first philosophy, prior to ontology), founded in alterity and in the demand to responsibility that the 'other' imposes on the 'moi'. To be is just to exist in an ineradicable solitude from which the self is, albeit neither completely nor ontologically, rescued by the alterity of the 'other'. The self, whose condition is to be *encombré de moi-même*,<sup>19</sup> is ethically constituted by the 'other'.

Jean-Luc Marion, whose work is more directly related to Christian theology, is another author who has been a key conversational partner for Tracy for decades. Marion also rereads and rewrites some preferred classics, especially Descartes, Husserl, and Heidegger. Marion's influential book *Dieu sans l'être* moved Tracy to a new level of dialectical enquiry concerning a fundamental question: ontology.<sup>20</sup> In this question, Tracy distances himself from Heidegger, Derrida, Levinas, and Marion, reasserting a non-ontotheological ontology. Furthermore, as much as he likes Marion's work, he disagrees with this author's non-correlational approach (of reason and revelation) to theology and his setting apart of reason and charity.<sup>21</sup>

For Tracy, the destabilising of some principal pillars of modernity – particularly its centeredness on the subject, its overconfidence in an almost despotic, narrow rationality, and its mirage of actual self-presence – does not have to imply doing away with the emancipatory-liberating thrust of the modern project. Modern culture and the modern self are exposed as systemic structures of power that oppress, marginalise, and seek to eliminate all the 'others' that, one way or the other, challenge it or cannot be reduced to the ruling patterns of those structures. The modern building crumbles, but the transcendental will to build up a 'free house' where

hold so dear, one of those conversations illuminated by the radiance of his thought, the goodness of his smile, the gracious humour of his ellipses, he said to me: "You know, one often speaks of ethics to describe what I do, but what really interests me in the end is not ethics, not ethics alone, but the holy, the holiness of the holy" (Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Lévinas*, 4).

<sup>19</sup> This could be translated as 'overcrowded by myself', which, although difficult to define exactly, is certainly different from 'full of myself'. It entails a certain sense of fundamental disorientation, confusion, and disorder. The family resemblance with the Augustine of *Confessions* seems plausible.

<sup>20</sup> To my knowledge, the first of Tracy's seminars in which this work by Marion was discussed (*The Symbol of God I*) took place in the Fall Quarter of the 1991–1992 school year at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. The translator of Marion's book into English, Thomas A. Carlson, was himself at the time a doctoral candidate under the direction of both Tracy and Bernard McGinn and participated in the seminar (Cf. Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being: Hors-Texte*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Tracy wrote the foreword). Since that time, Tracy's dialogue with Marion, both intellectual and face to face, has continued without interruption, being furthermore enriched by a fruitful and lively friendship.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. David Tracy, 'Foreword' in Marion, *God without Being*, ix–xv.

everybody can feel at home (a true *Polis – liberté, fraternité, égalité* – a City upon a Hill – Levinas' *chez-soi*) remains intact, even if its categorical materialisation is always 'different and deferred', because the 'others' will remain irreducible both in their ever-changing manifestation and in their ontological 'otherness'.<sup>22</sup>

Nevertheless, in Tracy's view, '[o]ur present cultural and intellectual situation – more exactly, our existential, spiritual situation – is both negatively and positively more fragmented than any earlier Western form of our traditions'.<sup>23</sup> Tracy relates to radical post-modernity through the complex concept of *fragment*.<sup>24</sup> Briefly said, the fragment is the paradigmatic non-system that can be interpreted either as a *residue* of a shattered, systematic whole (substance) or an *event* that shatters the systematic whole, that transforms reality and that opens reality to infinity (frag-event). The frag-substance (my naming) is usually nostalgic of a lost whole construed as the true bearer of meaningfulness, whereas the frag-event is liberating and creative.

In order to understand Tracy's move to fragment, it is appropriate to notice a sort of ingrained tragic character to all cultures. On the one hand, every culture is a response to the inescapable, transcendental drive for a meaningful reality, outside which everything seems doomed to absurdity, despair, and utter dejection. On the other hand, any categorical rendering of that drive will necessarily be based on one or another form of power-controlled narrative with its inevitable exclusion of all the disempowered. Walter Benjamin saw this clear-sightedly. This systemic, intrinsic distortion of every culture extends not only to the different elements of that culture but also to the process of its transmission (tradition).<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> 'Il n'y aurait ni accueil, ni hospitalité sans cette altérité radicale qui suppose elle-même la séparation. Le lien social est une certaine expérience de la déliaison sans laquelle aucune respiration, aucune inspiration spirituelle ne serait possible.' Jacques Derrida, *Adieu: À Emmanuel Lévinas* (Galilée, 1997), 163.

<sup>23</sup> David Tracy, 'Introduction' in Tracy, *Fragments*, 1–15: 9. Post-modernity is both fragmented and fragmenting.

<sup>24</sup> Tracy analyses the introduction of the category of fragment in six different fields: classical studies, biblical studies, archaeology, literary theory, philosophy, and theology (Cf. Tracy, 'Introduction' in *Fragments*), exhibiting the importance of culture for his theological work.

<sup>25</sup> 'Es ist niemals ein Dokument der Kultur, ohne zugleich ein solches der Barbarei zu sein. Und wie es selbst nicht frei ist von Barbarei, so ist es auch der Prozeß der Überlieferung nicht, in der es von dem einen an den andern gefallen ist.' Walter Benjamin, 'Thesen Über den Begriff der Geschichte' in *Sprache und Geschichte: Philosophische Essays* (Ditzingen: Reclam, 1992), These VII. The reverse must also be considered: Can there be a 'document' of barbarism without being at the same time one of *Kultur*? Ambiguity (theologically, our condition after being expelled from Paradise) works both ways.

Thus understood, as Tracy insists, culture is always in need of being fragmented and renewed, and most of all so in the present post-modern time. In order to achieve this, he sees potential frag-events in some fragments that have been marginalised by ingrained cultural distortions (e.g., patriarchy) and by the systems of modernity (the self-present subject) and functional (colonising) reason.

Other frag-events are best understood as fragments that have survived when a given people, culture, or tradition has been marginalised, oppressed, and subject to a process of elimination. As such, these fragments are not 'residues' or nostalgic ruins but rather active 'remnants' of promise: shattering frag-events of the oppressing system. Among others, Tracy identifies such frag-events in the entire complex range of feminist thought, in Jewish reflection on the Shoah, in every liberation-driven movement, and in the biblical God who hears the cry of the poor and the oppressed according to the prophets, the interruptive Mark, the justice–compassion-driven Luke, and the Book of Revelation.

Another genre of frag-events stems from the classics, which, by definition, resist manipulation and reduction, and – for that reason – can come back again with liberating power, showing new possibilities of being. Some candidates here include: the Greek tragedies (some of which, but not Euripides, offer hope), Plato's *Symposium* (among other dialogues), Virgil's *sunt lacrimae rerum*, Gregory of Nyssa on the Infinite God, the overdetermined Augustine, the medieval mystics (especially marginalised mystic women), William of Saint-Thierry, the Sufi tradition, Luther on the radical and terrifying hiddenness of God, Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*, T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*,<sup>26</sup> biblical wisdom literature, the meditative John, and the dialectical Paul.

As Tracy has pointed out, after Heidegger and especially later Heidegger, eschatology-averse modernity changes into a situation where the 'Open' may signal a possibility for the return of certain traces of eschatology in history. Tracy sees such traces in a complex family of frag-events that exhibit similarities-in-difference that can be related to the actual 'Infinite', discarded by both Plato and Aristotle but recovered by Plotinus, by Cusa, and by the Descartes of the *Third Meditation* (and then also by the paradigmatic conjunction of the reflective Fénelon and the mystic Madame

<sup>26</sup> Cf. David Tracy, 'T. S. Eliot as Religious Thinker: Four Quartets' [1999] in Tracy, *Filaments: Theological Profiles* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 423–441, and David Tracy, 'Fragments: The Spiritual Situation of Our Time' [1999] in Tracy, *Fragments*, 19–33: 24–26. Tracy is fully aware of Eliot's manifold ambiguities, pointing out that, in a previous work (*The Waste Land*), Eliot uses the fragment as a nostalgic residue ('to shore up against our ruin').

Guyon on the 'Infinite'). All of these may help to disrupt any totality and, positively, open new possibilities for a transformed reality where otherness is given voice, open to Infinity.<sup>27</sup>

At certain points, Tracy seems to mention the possibility of 'gathering the fragments'.<sup>28</sup> But is this possible without betraying the very shattering nature of the frag-event? Tracy thinks *Jein!* Under the conditions of history, fragmentation is not accidental but constitutive and unavoidable. For Tracy, fragmentation itself can issue in liberating frag-events that can raise and preserve their irreducible, shattering power.

Tracy's gathering of the fragments knows of both the unquenchable longings and the unsurmountable limits of the human condition. Knowing that, he does not try to build up another form of absolute system, Hegelian or otherwise, but instead gathers frag-events of hope in front of every absolute claim either to totality or absurdity in 'our times'. His analysis of Eliot's 'Fourth Quartet' is, in this respect, paradigmatic.<sup>29</sup> Grand narratives are replaced, as in the case of Benjamin, by, at most, 're-constellations of fragmentary images', where the frag-events interact creatively to make possible a reconfiguration of reality open to unthought-of possibilities that point to Infinity.<sup>30</sup> For this reason, Tracy formulates a proposal: 'Learn to live joyfully, not despairingly, with and in the fragments we *do* in fact possess.'<sup>31</sup>

### Tracy's Theology-in-Culture

Tracy's theology-in-culture is radical in that it is rooted in an analogical paradigm that presupposes an unbreakable bridge (no matter how narrow and shaky) between God and creation. Tracy expresses this as the paradigm 'grace–nature–grace': that is, grace (original in Creation) leads to nature (Creation and Fall), which leads anew to grace (redemption towards eschatological fulfilment). In other words, Tracy is foundationally Catholic and Thomist: although this latter trait pertains mostly to

<sup>27</sup> Cf. David Tracy, 'The Ultimate Invisible: The Infinite' [2016] in Tracy, *Fragments*, 35–56; and David Tracy, 'On Longing: The Void, the Open, God' in Stephan van Erp and Lea Verstricht (eds.), *Longing in a Culture of Cynicism* (Berlin and Zurich: Lit Verlag, 2007), 15–32.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Malcolm Lois, 'The Impossible God', an interview with David Tracy, *The Christian Century* 119/4 (February 2002), 24–30: 28.

<sup>29</sup> 'In *Quartets*, Christianity does not provide a restored unity to our contemporary culture ... but a renewed sense of saturated fragments of gift, promise, body, and faith as a new kind of knowledge born of love' (Tracy, 'Fragments', 26).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Tracy, 'Fragments', 29–30.

<sup>31</sup> Tracy, 'Fragments', 31.

the basic approach or *Grundimpuls* of Tracy's theology rather than to the whole of it. Lonergan, with his fresh reading of Thomas, was crucial in this respect and has remained a referential figure throughout Tracy's theological development.

Tracy, however, is constantly journeying into his Catholicity by expanding his 'filaments' (using the title of his recent second volume of essays). He does so because he is a Catholic theologian whose scope is also foundationally and intrinsically catholic.<sup>32</sup> Trying to be truly catholic implies necessarily a journey of intensification, both spiritual and intellectual, through all the relevant irreducible others cordially invited to the table for a loving-honest conversation (entailing argument, critique, suspicion, and conversion) about the ultimate meaning of human life and the universe. One could say that, for Tracy, as for Cusa, the discovery of God as mystery (*ignorantia*) entails exploring as fully as possible, knowledge (in every respect) and what this knowledge implies (*docta*).

Methodologically, Tracy relates to culture in manifold ways, of which the cornerstone is his phenomenological-hermeneutical and transcendental-metaphysical reflection, best (but by no means solely) articulated by and through critical dialectical enquiry-in-conversation. For Tracy, Plato is indisputably the master of this kind of conversation. This is not, however, a *prima facie* Plato, but a Plato that Tracy has come back to again and again after going through the insightful Greek tragedies, the clear-sighted Aristotle (Tracy's mourning for the lost dialogues of Aristotle is inconsolable), the elegant Plotinus, the profound Gregory of Nyssa, the unique Augustine, the medieval 'beyond'-mystics, the overarching Aquinas, the creatively over-encompassing Cusanus, the genius-graced Luther, the Promethean modernity (Descartes, Kant, Hegel), the full-life-nostalgic romantics, the shrewd masters of suspicion, the singular-intriguing Wittgenstein, the *hors-classe* Weil, and the upending Heidegger and his post-modern, feisty (but, at its best, ethical) legacy.

Throughout his five-decade-long theological work, Tracy has remained methodologically correlational. First, he has always explored the concerns of the 'situation' (culture) and the questions that stem from it, in order to formulate the ultimate significance of those questions (pertaining to meaning, meaningfulness, and truth). In a second step, Tracy has sought to offer a reasonable and meaningful correlation of the situation, mutually and critically, with the worldview of the Christian texts and doctrines (on

<sup>32</sup> Here, capitalised 'Catholic' refers to the Roman Catholic denomination, whereas 'catholic' means ecumenical-universal.

nature, humanity, cosmos, history in relation to God). A central operation in this pursuit consists in applying transcendental-metaphysical reflection to the results of the dialectical enquiries that he develops in manifold dialogues with relevant partners, both secular and religious, especially, but not only, on the classics.<sup>33</sup>

In interpreting the religious classics, Tracy takes into account that they are expressed in concrete language and culture in particular times, being the work of particular human beings living in concrete times and cultures. In the case of the biblical religious classics, he is in line with the different Christian denominations, which, except for a tiny minority that defends revelationism, accept the 'double authorship' of the books of the Bible, and their being inspired rather than revealed in the sense that the Quran is revealed. This gives a particular cast to the ways in which culture becomes the necessary mediating con-text within Christian religion and theology.

This in no way means that religion and theology must, so to speak, put up with culture. On the contrary, they get fleshed out in and through culture. Furthermore, certain cultural achievements reveal their ability to be especially 'revelatory'. Tracy has clearly shown the far-reaching possibilities of what he calls an 'analogical imagination' in the world of art, music, and literature. Plato, of course, is always read by Tracy as a master of artistry in his dialogues, which carry both beauty and truth. The Greek tragedies also are a much-loved work of poetry for Tracy. He has not only written on Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, but he has done so tracing the history, meaning, and implications of tragedy in general in the Western tradition, as well as its interaction with literature, philosophy, and religion.<sup>34</sup> His written production on poetry, while always most insightful (his analysis of Eliot's *Four Quartets* is breathtaking),<sup>35</sup> is not plentiful. In general, in those instances, not infrequent, when he comments on art, music (seldom), and literature, the reverberations of those comments are deep, lasting, and substantively theological. One suspects

<sup>33</sup> The concept of dialectical enquiry is critical in Tracy's theology-in-culture project. He offers the following understanding of it: 'any mode of inquiry that involves a sustained and rigorous reflective analysis of the basic assumptions of any given belief or practice is dialectical' (David Tracy, 'Argument, Dialogue, and the Soul in Plato' [1989] in Tracy, *Fragments*, 307–323: 311). Tracy offers various examples of fundamental issues in Plato's dialogues: among others, piety, justice, love, Good beyond Being, the One, and the Cosmos. Lonergan was, beyond doubt, a master and a guide for Tracy in this kind of enquiry.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. David Tracy, 'Responses to Horror and Suffering: The Responses of Tragedy and Some Religions' [2014] in Tracy, *Fragments*, 57–81, for a paradigmatic example of Tracy's theology-in-culture.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Tracy, 'T. S. Eliot as Religious Thinker'.

Tracy's theology-in-culture could amply benefit from a further exploration of such a rich vein.

An excellent example is Tracy's 2018 essay on Michelangelo, a theological masterpiece that shows what a full-fledged reflection on art could contribute to the understanding of theology-in-culture. In Tracy's analysis of Michelangelo through his Sistine Chapel paintings, Michelangelo appears as a better theologian than the official Catholic theologians of his day, far more disclosive of the deep meaning of God's Creation and Last Judgment. In this sense, it seems appropriate to infer that, for Tracy, art (as a privileged *locus* of culture and meaningfulness) can have reasons unknown to written theology.<sup>36</sup> Art is a God-given talent (inspiration) to sow hope (through the revelatory power of Beauty and Truth) in the field of *lacrimae rerum*. In the last analysis, art, at its best, is an inextinguishable spark of hope in the midst of every barbarism, both as permanent threat and in actuality.<sup>37</sup>

Although wounded, human beings made in the image and likeness of God remain, on my reading of Tracy, transcendently driven in their never-ending quest for improving their lot, for getting to know reality, and for making that reality meaningful. This quest is the dynamic principle of culture. As Augustine wrote famously: 'Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee' (*Conf.* I, 1). Nevertheless, Tracy is also very aware of the severe damage inflicted by sin on creation. Here Tracy spies a difference between the earlier and the later Augustine, with the former leaning more on the 'nature-grace' paradigm, where the latter would come to lean more on a 'sin-grace' paradigm. Tracy cannot accept the latter, particularly in the radical Lutheran version of the 'whore reason'.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Michelangelo's friend and key figure in art criticism and history, Giorgio Vasary, wrote about the Sistine Chapel *Last Judgment*: 'This great painting is sent by God to men as an example to show what can be done when supreme intellects descend upon the earth, infused with grace and divine knowledge' (Giorgio Vasari, *The Life of Michelangelo*, new edition (London: Pallas Athene, 2018), 148).

<sup>37</sup> Benjamin's observation, 'Und dieser Feind hat zu siegen nicht aufgehört' ('And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious') is an excellent expression of that threat (Benjamin, *Thesen über den Begriff der Geschichte*, These VI).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Tracy's most insightful and extraordinary essay, 'Augustine our Contemporary: The Overdetermined, Incomprehensible Self' [2018] in Tracy, *Filaments*, 19–65. Particularly penetrating is his suggesting that Augustine could have benefitted from a third paradigm: tragedy-grace. The essay, beyond the particularity of being about Augustine ('Augustine was a Christian convalescent', 55), deserves to be termed a treatise on existential anthropology in a theological key. Tracy most complex and theologically meaningful move that can be generalised here consists in Tracy's reading of Augustine's 'penultimately comprehensible', overdetermined self as 'a self ultimately (i.e., theologically) an incomprehensible *imago dei* of the incomprehensible Trinitarian God in Godself' (61).

As mentioned above, Tracy's ongoing project to name God is intimately related to his reading of the post-modern situation. According to his prophetic-fragmenting-liberating view of modernity (Kant's *Sapere aude!* and French Revolution's *Liberté, Fraternité, Égalité* can be read as cries that give voice to the fragments that shatter the grip upon humanity that prevents it from coming of age), Tracy sees it as a necessary moment in the development of humanity. The problem is that the Enlightenment, whose thrust was to shatter the *Ancien Régime*, has been ensnared and blinded by its own light, becoming itself an oppressing totality.

Tracy is aware of the dangers of a post-modernity void of ethics, but he sees in some of its best practitioners a renewed prophetic-liberating drive that exposes modernity's fatal flaws and has the potential to shatter modernity as a putative totality.<sup>39</sup> These thinkers help open the way to new possibilities of being and of building up a culture-in-solidarity-and-hope: a solidary culture that would not exclude anyone, whether individual, collectivity or tradition; a culture that, at the same time, will bear meaningfulness because it offers an answer-in-hope to the anxieties, limit-questions and deepest longings of our current situation. Tracy would correlate the best of the unanswered longings and limit-questions of post-modernity with a *ressourcement* that brings to the conversation the Greek classics (mainly Plato and the tragedies) alongside the 'gang of modernity's outlaws' already part of the post-modern conversation: Plotinus and the Neo-Platonists (philosophers, theologians, and mystics), the medieval mystics, and the early moderns. Tracy adds to these testimonies of the victims of patriarchal, white-only Eurocentrism, who bitterly nail on the gates of modernity's 'temple of light' the theses that denounce its pride-driven prejudices as well as the histories of oppressions that surround it: women, 'discovered' native peoples, slaves, colonised countries-languages-cultures, minorities which do not fit, the non-relevant, the poor, the misfits, and the 'losers'.

On this basis, Tracy's major move over the last three decades has revolved around the notion of otherness. In his previous hermeneutical

<sup>39</sup> This is an important difference with Metz, who did not trust post-modernity. Metz, along the Frankfurt School, particularly Benjamin, was very critical of modernity, but did not see post-modernity as bringing along renewed liberating resources. Rather, he saw it as *Unschuldsmithologie* and a vehicle of a 'religion without God'. Despite this, Metz, in his own terms, defends the shattering power of every 'dangerous memory', and, for Christian theology, of the paradigmatic dangerous *memoria passionis, mortis et resurrectionis Jesu Christi*. The *halbierte Vernunft*, become mere instrumental reason of a truncated modernity, must be shattered by the *anamnetische Vernunft* of the biblical faith, in which every other dangerous memory can find its home. In my opinion, Tracy's insistence on the mystical-prophetic character of Christianity has benefited from Metz's view of Christianity as constitutively mystical-political.



explorations, analogy played a crucial role. Analogy for Tracy is always tensional and dynamic since it is based on the relation between God and creation, which is a relation of similarity-in-difference. Despite the Fall, nature never loses for Tracy its ability to be an analogical entry to God. There is never a radical, Barthian 'Nein' in Tracy.<sup>40</sup> Tracy knows that, in the vast range of possibilities of the analogical axis of similarity-in-difference, no matter how big the difference might get, it will not come to the point of cancelling the possibility of analogy. Nature is never totally lost and corrupted. Culture will always bear and pursue truth and meaning (still ambiguous, to be sure). Within the analogical framework, otherness relates to the essential difference between God and creation.<sup>41</sup>

With *Plurality and Ambiguity*, though, Tracy begins a turn to a different way of understanding otherness, which he starts developing in his work *Dialogue with the Other* and has kept working on thereafter.<sup>42</sup> Otherness becomes a central category for understanding both culture-history and God. In this respect, the turn to the other is, for Tracy, the most important trait of post-modernity. The latter is a way of devising reality (culture-history, cosmos, and God) that goes beyond either late modernity or a mere 'after modernity'. In fact, it first frees all the others excluded by modernity and, subsequently, reads reality from the point of view of those others, on an 'otherness key'.<sup>43</sup>

Far from being amenable to a modern grand narrative, reality is best understood as the complex and fragmented 'narrative of the others'. Culture is a fragmented tissue that, through its shining fragments, bears meaning and truth, even if the tissue can never become a seamless whole. True particularity, through which the universal may be glimpsed, gets intensified and stretched to its breaking point to the extent of becoming a revealing tiny fragment.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Tracy, 'Foreword' in Marion, *God without Being*.

<sup>41</sup> The Fourth Lateran Council in its second constitution puts it this way: *inter creatorem et creaturam non potest tanta similitudo notari, quin inter eos maior sit dissimilitudo notanda* ('between creator and creature there can be noted no similarity so great that a greater dissimilarity cannot be seen between them'). This is a great example of how to say more with less.

<sup>42</sup> David Tracy, *Dialogue with the Other: The Inter-Religious Dialogue* (Louvain: Peeters Publishers and Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1990). Besides his many subsequent articles and book chapters, Tracy has collected, ordered, and reworked some of them, in three books: *On Naming the Present: Reflections on God, Hermeneutics, and Church* (Maryknoll NY and London: Orbis Books and SCM Press, 1994), as well as *Fragments* (2020), and *Filaments* (2020).

<sup>43</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez expresses the same idea when he reads reality from 'el reverso de la historia' ('the underside of history'). Cf. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Teología desde el reverso de la historia* (Lima, Peru: Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1977).

On his road to devise the relevant Christian fragments, the weight of sin and its manifold effects have been increasingly important for Tracy's theology, chiefly because of sin's structural character. Everything is tainted by sin. Everybody is born into a social reality, marked by sin, which affects (and in some way determines) the self. Culture and history are far from being univocal, straight, and innocent. Neither are the classics, whether secular or religious. The weight of sin and the multifarious presence of evil both in the human being and in the different layers and threads of social structures are the cause of Horror that manifests itself through innumerable horrors.<sup>44</sup> This is why the grace-sin-grace paradigm cannot be forgotten. Furthermore, in another example of the interaction between culture and theology, Tracy suggests the introduction of a third paradigm, grace-tragedy-grace, where tragedy expresses a sort of an unavoidable dimension of human existence ('we are all damaged persons'<sup>45</sup>). For Tracy, 'Christianity is not finally a tragedy, but it is impossible to understand its vision and way without the tragic elements saturating the New Testament texts'.<sup>46</sup>

In and with this post-modern, fragmented narrative, Tracy explores new ways of naming God. Beyond analogy (but without denying it), God can be best described as the radical, absolute other, whose otherness cannot be either fathomed or controlled in any way. Breaking modernity's attempt to contain and control God, God returns absolutely free, incomprehensible, and even impossible. Building on this, Tracy starts developing his work on naming God.

In his theology-in-post-modern-culture, Tracy radicalises Christian particularity, using his theory of religion's forms, manifestation, and proclamation, which, in turn, issue in the meditative and the prophetic forms. Both may get intensified, but neither should get generalised and become exclusive. Generalised, manifestation risks reducing religion to mere aesthetic experience, while generalised proclamation may reduce it to ethics.<sup>47</sup> In a move that ecumenically expands his Christian 'filaments', Tracy affirms that God's otherness is best captured by the intensification of both the meditative and the prophetic dimensions of Christianity, which become apophatic (central in Eastern Christianity) and apocalyptic

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Tracy, 'Responses to Horror and Suffering', 57–60.

<sup>45</sup> Tracy, 'Responses to Horror and Suffering', 69. In his fascinating essay on Augustine, Tracy writes that 'a tragic consciousness is just as concerned to uncover the enormous suffering caused less by personal sin than by some mysterious necessity – whether fate, fortune, chance, or providence' (Tracy, 'Augustine Our Contemporary', 44).

<sup>46</sup> Tracy, 'Responses to Horror and Suffering', 64.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Lois, 'The Impossible God', 26.

(Luther).<sup>48</sup> The apophatic and apocalyptic fragments become a privileged entry into the mystery of God.

Within this main framework, Tracy wants to give not a final answer but a principle of hope to those limit-names (concepts, categories) of post-modernity (non-place, void, open, *innomable*, impossible, etc.) that seem to be wandering in a limitless wilderness and in a perpetual *errance*. To this end, he affirms that frag-events are capable not only, negatively, of shattering any closed totality, but also, positively, of being 'open to Infinity... [they] open one to difference and otherness. Classical frag-events open beyond all closed limits to liminal Infinity'.<sup>49</sup>

Tracy writes that in recent years he has 'become convinced that to attempt to name the Ultimate Real, one should turn to the complex concept of the Infinite',<sup>50</sup> and yet this must be understood not as a finished product but as an entry into a 'work-in-progress'.<sup>51</sup> In exploring the complex itinerary of this undertaking, Plotinus, Gregory of Nyssa, Nicholas of Cusa, Bruno, the Descartes of the *Third Meditation*, Pascal, and the pair Fénelon-Guyon are his main, but by no means only, 'Virgil-Beatrice' guides. Once again, Tracy's work is theology-in-culture. He endeavours to show that in many disciplines (philosophy, modern empirical science, art, religion, and theology), the invisible, whether the intelligible or the spiritual, has enough weight as to make us realise that 'We do not live mainly in the visible world. We live far more in the worlds of invisibility and infinity'. As he continues: 'The invisible past, present, and future encompass our visible worlds, not the reverse. Invisible Alps on Alps arise'.<sup>52</sup>

In his most recent essay on naming God, Tracy formulates how 'The one God who is love is the divine Trinity: infinite being (the Father–Mother, *esse*); infinite intelligence (the Son–*Logos*); and Infinite Love, goodness and beauty (the Holy Spirit)'.<sup>53</sup> While Trinity is the 'principal' Christian

<sup>48</sup> Tracy profoundly respects and admires Luther, despite some fundamental differences. In his brilliant essay 'Martin Luther's *Deus Theologicus*' [2015] (in Tracy, *Filaments*, 135–66), Tracy stresses the 'second hiddenness' of God in Luther, experienced as a terrifying *Anfechtung*, which issues in total darkness, void, and despair. This hiddenness is a most insightful expression of God's radical otherness and of a radical theological fragment.

<sup>49</sup> Tracy, 'Introduction' in *Fragments*, 1–2.

<sup>50</sup> Tracy, 'Introduction' in *Fragments*, 10.

<sup>51</sup> Tracy, 'Introduction' in *Fragments*, 13, where Tracy writes: 'I will try to address this renaming of the Infinite as God in a future book on the Christian naming of God as Infinite Love (i.e., as Infinite Trinity)'.

<sup>52</sup> Tracy, 'Responses to Horror and Suffering', 55.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. David Tracy, 'On Naming God', below in this volume, originally delivered as a lecture at Boston College, Annual Candlemas Lecture, Feb 3, 2021 (p. 214).

name for God, 'perfection and infinity together as Infinite Perfection is the primary name for the one majestic God of Christian faith and Christian philosophical theological reflection'.<sup>54</sup> The first name ('Trinity') is explicitly Christian, because it is soteriologically manifested and revealed in and 'through the event and person of Jesus Christ'.<sup>55</sup> The second ('Infinite Perfection') is also relevant, however, because 'the strictly metaphysical interrelationship of Infinity and Perfection help theologians understand the positive (cataphatic) possibilities for naming God in the Bible and in philosophy as well as the negative (apophatic) limits of our knowledge'.<sup>56</sup> This twofold naming, soteriological and metaphysical, is a very good example of Tracy's view of the relationship between faith and reason, and in this way, an excellent summation of Tracy's theology-in-culture.

Tracy's analogical, incarnational, correlational, conversational, interdisciplinary, ecumenical, interreligious, critical, public, in-culture theology is, in the last analysis, *Theo-logy*.<sup>57</sup> In other words, his is an inculturated theology-of-hope: naming God in 'our times'. That God, who is infinite love, is both triune-theocentric and Christomorphic. This Christian, triune God is further named, philosophically and theologically, Infinite Perfection. Yet, despite God's ultimate revelation in the incarnated Jesus Christ, and despite its being further named as Infinite Perfection, naming God remains always apophatically open as a horizon that is in itself an unbreakable promise that nurtures our existential situation with inexhaustible hope.

There is no doubt that *fides quaerens intellectum* (Tracy often quotes Whitehead's 'Christianity is a religion in search of a philosophy') is applicable to Tracy's enterprise, but far more important in Tracy is his powerful drive of *intellectus quaerens fidem*. In short, Tracy not only has been a most perceptive reader of 'our situation', that is, culture, but in reading it, he has decoded the limit questions and ultimate, liminal longings of that situation, and finally (in his explicitly theological move) has laboured to show how the Christian classics can fully converse with, and relate to, those questions and longings. His theology is a theology of hope for a time that unsuccessfully and frustratingly seeks to name itself, that is, give reason of itself.

<sup>54</sup> Tracy, 'On Naming God', p. 216 of this volume.

<sup>55</sup> Tracy, 'On Naming God', p. 218 of this volume.

<sup>56</sup> Tracy, 'On Naming God', p. 218 of this volume.

<sup>57</sup> *Theo-logy* as both *theo-logy* and *theo-logy*. Although both terms are not similar, in as far as that *logos* is human, they are intrinsically related: God's eternal *Logos* is made flesh in Jesus the Christ. Therefore, human *logos* (although it can damage itself and become the domineering *logos* of modernity) partakes in God's eternal *Logos* and cannot be thought as separate from God. The two terms of *theo-logy* are similar-in-difference. They have to be clearly distinguished but not separated from each other: the asymmetry of *Theos* does not annul the God-given dignity of *logos*.