

THE UNEASY ALLIANCE RECONCEIVED: CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL METHOD, MODERNITY, AND POSTMODERNITY

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EVERY GREAT religion, Friedrich von Hügel once observed, is comprised of three fundamental elements: the mystical, the institutional, and the intellectual.¹ Only when all three are flourishing may the religion itself be said to flourish. However limited the applicability of Hügel's observations may be for other religious traditions, it remains, I believe, the most fruitful hypothesis for understanding the Roman Catholic tradition.

THE UNEASY ALLIANCE

More exactly, Roman Catholicism is comprised of three elements which tend to clash at times and harmonize at other times. The first element, the mystical, may more exactly be named the religious element. The forms of Catholic piety, myth, ritual, liturgy, religious orders and movements, symbols of popular culture and elite cultures alike are those realities that anthropologists and historians of religion have taught us all to observe in new ways. Indeed, if Catholic studies are to flourish in the multidisciplinary modern academy, it will happen only when we not only possess the more familiar philosophical, theological, social-scientific, and historical studies of the Catholic religious element, but also encourage anthropologists and historians of religion to discern the forms, the interrelationships, and the history of the entire symbolic religious life of Catholic Christianity. We still await the Clifford Geertz to write *Catholicism Observed* in different cultures, or the Wendy Doniger to illuminate the great myths and symbols of Mexican, Polish, Italian, and Irish forms of Catholic life, or the Claude Lévi-Strauss to study the mythemes and binary oppositions typical of a characteristically Catholic analogical

¹Friedrich von Hügel, *The Mystical Element in Religion* (2 vols.; New York: Dutton, 1923). In another form the core of this paper was given as my inaugural lecture for the Andrew Thomas Greeley and Grace McNichols Greeley Chair in Catholic Studies at the University of Chicago in spring 1988. The critical comments of Anne Carr, Andrew Greeley, Mary Jule Durkin, and especially (on Bonaventure) Bernard McGinn allowed me to develop and revise positions. I should also like to thank colleagues at St. John's University (Collegeville), Georgetown University, and the University of Dallas for their reflections on different parts of this study.

imagination across the many different cultures formed by Catholicism.² Above all, we need not only philosophers and theologians but historians of religion and anthropologists to study the myths, rituals, symbols, and symbolic forms of this amazing, pluralistic, and rich Catholic tradition.

Such work has barely begun for Catholic studies—indeed, for the study of Christianity itself. Yet there is good reason to hope that many historians of religion, like their colleagues in anthropology (such as Mary Douglas and Victor Turner³), will turn their scholarly attention to such a curiously understudied phenomenon as Hügel's "religious element" in Catholicism.

In the meantime we do possess many first-rate historical and social-scientific studies of the second and third elements, the institutional and intellectual aspects of Catholicism. Indeed, thanks to the work in social history of scholars like Jay Dolan, Martin Marty, and Andrew Greeley in the U.S., and F. X. Kaufman and Jean Delumeau in Europe, Catholic institutional and intellectual history is no longer confined to studies of great events and personalities (like councils and popes).⁴ Rather, social history has forged new ways to clarify the long-term continuities as well as the significant discontinuities in the religious life of Catholic peoples in different cultures and periods. This social-scientific and historical work is already affecting the nature of much Roman Catholic thought, especially its ecclesiology.

Such historical, social-scientific, anthropological, and history-of-religion perspectives, in my judgment, are what are most needed to challenge, enrich, and change the familiar forms of Catholic studies, including Catholic theological method. Such work is at its beginnings in the modern academy, but that beginning is real and promising. No student of Hügel's third element, the intellectual, can afford to ignore that work. For Catholic thought, both philosophy and theology, will become more and

²See Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1971); Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *Other People's Myths* (New York: Macmillan, 1988); Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Jealous Potter* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1988). I have suggested myself how a Catholic analogical imagination may endure across Catholic cultures: "The Catholic Theological Imagination," *Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings* 32 (1977) 234–44. For a social-scientific study here, see Andrew Greeley, *Religious Change in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1989). The further need is for a semiotic and hermeneutic study of the similarities and differences of such an analogical imagination in different Catholic cultures.

³See, e.g., Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, 1984); Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (New York: Columbia University, 1978).

⁴Jay Dolan, *American Catholic Experience* (New York: Doubleday, 1985); Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion: The Irony of It, 1893–1919* 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1986).

more the locus where the challenges posed by the study of the religious element and the institutional element will come home for reflection on where we have been and where we may wish to go.

In the meantime, of course, those thinkers and scholars principally involved in understanding the intellectual element of Catholicism have further tasks of their own. For insofar as philosophy and theology are reflective and correlational disciplines, they attempt, in properly general terms, to correlate critically an interpretation of the tradition and an interpretation of the contemporary situation.⁵ Philosophy and theology inevitably pay attention to the shifts not only in the tradition but in the contemporary situation itself.⁶ Here the recent explosion of interest across the disciplines in the categories "rationality" and "modernity" are two principal candidates for new philosophical and theological study.⁷ To argue that our age is better characterized as postmodern than as modern is admittedly to solve very little. But it is to acknowledge that radical plurality and a heightened sense of ambiguity, so typical of all postmodern movements of thought with their refusal of premature closure and their focus upon the categories of the "different" and the "other," are here to stay.⁸ A major element in that acknowledgment is the abandonment of any claim of traditional and modern forms of philosophy and theology that cannot account for their own linguistic and thereby historical character. In the modern period, positivism has been the principal but not sole intellectual bearer of strictly ahistorical claims. But however powerful positivism still is as a cultural force, it is intellectually a spent force.⁹ Neither the natural sciences nor the social sciences nor the humanities any longer linger over the false promises of this last

⁵For a brief statement of this position, see David Tracy, "Tillich and Contemporary Theology," in *The Thought of Paul Tillich*, ed. J. Adams, W. Pauck, and R. Shinn (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985).

⁶The category "situation" is used here in Paul Tillich's sense in his *Systematic Theology* 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1951): "Theology, as a function of the Christian church, must serve the needs of the church. A theological system is supposed to satisfy two basic needs: the statement of the truth of the Christian message and the interpretation of this truth for every new generation. Theology moves back and forth between two poles, the eternal truth of its foundation and the temporal situation in which the eternal truth must be received" (3).

⁷For two representative studies, see: on rationality, Bryan R. Wilson, ed., *Rationality* (Oxford: Basil Blackwood, 1970); on modernity and postmodernity, Alan Wilde, *Horizons of Assent; Modernism, Postmodernism and the Ironic Imagination* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1987).

⁸I have argued for this in *Plurality and Ambiguity* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), esp. see 47-66 (on plurality) and 66-82 (on ambiguity).

⁹The cultural power of positivism is especially evident in the debates over technology and its extraordinary force on all our culture and thought.

modern Western outpost of the quest for ahistorical certainty.

The Western temptation to believe in its own intellectual superiority and thereby certainty is dying as slowly, and admittedly as dangerously, as the Western colonial period itself.¹⁰ Hence the interest across the disciplines in the exact nature of Western "rationality." Hence the insistence in theology to cease our Eurocentric ways and learn to interpret the polycentric¹¹ theologies of a global church. Western thinkers, including theologians and philosophers, now feel obliged not merely to study but to learn from non-Western traditions of reason. Western thinkers are also deeply involved in recovering the more modestly conceived premodern resources of Western reason in such classics of reason as the nature of rational dialogue in Plato, the nature of rational argument in Aristotle, and the development of scholastic method among the medievals.¹² At the same time as these retrievals of the classic Western resources on reason are occurring, new and strong hermeneutics of suspicion on modern Enlightenment notions of rationality continue: those proposed by the "others" in the other great civilizations; those proposed by the marginalized and oppressed "others" in the Western tradition itself; those occasioned by the acknowledgment of the omnipresent relationships of power in all claims to knowledge; and those occasioned by the hermeneutical and pragmatic turn in Western thought—all focused, in sum, on the postmodern concern with "otherness" and "difference."¹³ As a single example of these developments, this congeries of issues on our notions of rationality can be seen clearly in contemporary Western feminist theory, which at its best is the most ethically challenging and intellectually sophisticated exposure of the full dilemmas of our pluralistic and ambiguous postmodern moment.¹⁴

Whether it wills to or not, Catholic theology is a part of all this. To think otherwise is to deny the often ironic and occasionally tragic

¹⁰See Langdon Gilkey, "Der Paradigmenwechsel in der Theologie," in *Das neue Paradigma von Theologie*, ed. Hans Küng and David Tracy (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1986).

¹¹The expression "polycentric" as distinct from "pluralistic" is that of Johann Baptist Metz.

¹²Bernard Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970).

¹³For contrasting approaches see Michael Theunissen, *The Other* (Cambridge: MIT, 1984); Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et répétition* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1981); Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1988).

¹⁴For three examples see Jeffrey Allen and Iris Marion Young, eds., *The Thinking Muse: Feminism and Modern French Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1989); Toril Moi, ed., *French Feminist Thought* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1987); and Janet Todd, *Feminist Literary History* (London: Routledge, Chapman and Hull, 1988).

Catholic history in modernity.¹⁵ The neo-scholastic thinkers of the late 19th and early 20th century, for example, used all their considerable intellectual gifts to try to refute modernity in its Cartesian form. Ironically, in this very attempt at refutation they imposed Cartesian forms and an ahistorical quest for certainty on the quest for understanding of classical Catholic theology, like that of their own presumed hero, Thomas Aquinas. But this irony only provoked a greater intellectual tragedy for Catholic theology in the early 20th century. Just when an alliance, however uneasy, was being forged between Catholic thought and modernity, the institutional Church intervened. The silencing of the Catholic Modernists was not merely intellectually self-defeating and ethically and religiously unsettling; it was also unnecessary, as the parallel history of liberal Protestant thought in the same modern period shows. Critical inquiry, left to the self-correcting power of the entire community of inquiry, can and should be trusted to provide whatever corrections it may eventually need. As Wilhelm Pauck observed, Protestant neo-orthodox thought, despite its strong criticism of Protestant liberal theology, was not a return to a premodern, orthodox model for theology. Protestant neo-orthodoxy was, rather, a self-corrective moment within the same postorthodox theological paradigm first developed by the great liberal theologians from Schleiermacher forward.¹⁶

Pauck seems to me exactly right about the history of Protestant theology in the modern period. His insight renders all the more poignant the fate of Catholic Modernism. For what that event meant, for Catholic thought, was that many of the best theologians and philosophers of that period retired to purely historical work. This historical vocation was and is a noble calling, surely, and one which in the long run proved eminently enriching to understanding the fuller tradition of Catholic thought and practice. Indeed, the great generation after the Modernist debacle—the generation, after all, which produced the self-reforming movements that issued in the Second Vatican Council—spent most of their early years as scholars retrieving the classic resources of the Catholic tradition in institutionally bleak times; the great *ressourcement* or “return to the sources” of French Catholic thought of Chenu, Congar, de Lubac, Bouyer, and the Swiss Hans Urs von Balthasar and others concentrated on the patristic, liturgical, and scriptural resources of the tradition. Others, like Gilson, Grabmann, and Lottin, focused on the historical recovery of the

¹⁵See James Hennessey, “Leo XIII’s Thomistic Revival: A Political and Philosophical Event,” in David Tracy, ed., *Celebrating the Medieval Heritage*, *Journal of Religion* 58 (Supplement 1978) 185–97; Bernard M. Reardon, *Roman Catholic Modernism* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1970).

¹⁶See the individual studies of Wilhelm Pauck on Harnack, Troeltsch, Barth, and Tillich.

history of the methodologically sophisticated scholastic thought of the high medieval period. Yet others, like Maréchal, Rahner, Lonergan, Schillebeeckx, and Chenu, led in forging new, post-Modernist alliances with modern thought by rethinking the theological program of Thomas Aquinas in modern terms. Joseph Komonchak has observed—justly, I believe—that if you follow the intellectual journeys of the generation that produced Vatican II after Vatican II, you will understand much of the development of Catholic thought in the last 25 years. For most of the theologians who spent their early years trying to rethink Aquinas' thought in modern terms—Chenu, Congar, Rahner, Lonergan, Schillebeeckx—remained, after Vatican II, open to the continuing self-reform of Catholic thought, Catholic institutional life, and Catholic religious life. Many of these same generations that had spent their early years retrieving either patristic thought (especially Origen) or, among the medieval classics, Bonaventure rather than Aquinas, began after Vatican II to pull back from continuing intellectual and institutional self-reform. The alliance, even the *entente cordiale*, established at Vatican II between modernity and Catholicism, in their judgment, had failed.

It was Rahner, Lonergan, Schillebeeckx, and others, after all, who helped encourage the further reforming and correlational theological proposals of correlational theologies of all kinds: Anglo-American empirical theologies, European political theologies, Latin American liberation theologies, and North American feminist theologies.¹⁷ All these different theologies, in their Catholic forms, remain committed, despite their otherwise strong differences, even conflicts with one another, to what can only be named some version of a method of correlation for theology.¹⁸ This method the Catholic generations after Vatican II learned initially from Rahner and Lonergan, who argued that they had learned its basic form from Aquinas. This method of correlation they were happy to learn anew and in importantly new ways from the Protestant tradition from Schleiermacher through Tillich and their successors.

In the meantime alternative scenarios were proposed for the post-Vatican II period. For example, Catholic theologians like Metz in Germany or Segundo in Uruguay now call Vatican II the “bourgeois revolution” in modern Catholicism.¹⁹ They do not mean a desire to return to a

¹⁷That several of these theologies do not call themselves “correlational” is less important than the methodological-as-correlational character of the theologies themselves. For representative examples of these theologies, see Hans Küng/David Tracy, eds., *Theologie—Wohin?* (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1984).

¹⁸Representative examples of those differences and conflicts within a basically correlational model may be found in Küng–Tracy, eds., *Das neue Paradigma* (n. 10 above).

¹⁹See Johann Baptist Metz, *The Emergent Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1986); Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1976).

pre-Vatican II period, any more than secular postmodernists long for a return to romanticism, much less medievalism. Radical political and liberationist theologians mean, rather, that the kind of correlation between Catholicism and modernity needs to be far more radical, on both sides of the correlation, than Vatican II envisaged.²⁰ Hence the emergence of political and liberation and other postmodern theologies as major new forms of contemporary post-Vatican II Catholic correlational theology. Catholic feminist theologians continue to radicalize that same post-Vatican II scenario and correlational model—now, of course, with strongly feminist concerns directed to rethinking both the Catholic tradition and modernity.²¹

A second reading of the uneasy alliance also began to unfold after Vatican II. This interpretation of Catholic theology, especially since the pontificate of John Paul II, takes a quite different form. Led by some of the theologians who also helped bring Vatican II about (de Lubac, Balthasar, Bouyer, and Ratzinger), this reading, in effect, claims that the alliance between modernity and Catholicism forged by theologians like Rahner, Lonergan, Schillebeeckx, Küng, and others had not yielded a new Catholic unity-in-diversity; rather, these kinds of correlational theologies threaten to destroy even the earlier uneasy alliance between Catholicism and modernity of Vatican II itself. For Balthasar and Ratzinger, Bonaventure rather than Aquinas provides the best classical model for Catholic theology.²² For Bonaventure is interpreted by Balthasar and Ratzinger (but not by others, including myself) as envisioning that Catholic theology, above all, needs to clarify and affirm its own unique identity *as such* and not in correlation with the ever-shifting and dangerous contours of the contemporary situation. Such theology can make great use of any extraecclesial thought: as Bonaventure clearly did

²⁰The dialectical character of political and liberation theologies assures that the “correlation” will not prove a merely harmonious, “liberal” one.

²¹See Anne Carr, *Transforming Grace: Christian Tradition and Women's Experience* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988); Rosemary Radford Reuther, *Sexism and Godtalk* (Boston: Beacon, 1983); Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her* (New York: Crossroad, 1985).

²²The readings of Bonaventure as, in effect, noncorrelational are nicely challenged by the work of Ewert Cousins, *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1978). Ratzinger's own earlier reading of Bonaventure (on history and revelation) lends itself to a more “correlational” reading of Bonaventure than Ratzinger's more recent readings suggest: see Joseph Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in Bonaventura* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1971). Perhaps in following the suggestion of Gerrish on Schleiermacher as providing (in the *Glaubenslehre*) “Theology within the Limits of Piety Alone,” we can call major aspects of Bonaventure's position “Theology within the Limits of Spirituality Alone.” As with Schleiermacher, however, and unlike Barth and Balthasar, Bonaventure clearly also possessed what can only be named “correlational” interests.

with Neoplatonism; as Balthasar and Ratzinger clearly do with German idealism.²³ But such correlations should be present only in an *ad hoc*, not systematically correlational manner.²⁴ The effect should not be any attempt to correlate systematically a Catholic self-understanding with that of modernity. Bonaventure's famous colleague at the University of Paris, Thomas Aquinas, did attempt such a correlation with his interest in the new Aristotelianism (the modernity) of that period.²⁵ Historically, Bonaventure may have been as fearful of what was happening among the radical Aristotelians of the liberal-arts faculty at the University of Paris as Ratzinger was at what happened at the University of Tübingen in the late 1960s.²⁶ But Aquinas, who did not hesitate to argue against the radical Aristotelians when it seemed appropriate, remained committed to what can be justly described as the attempt to correlate the best of Aristotle and Plato with the best of the Catholic tradition.

Indeed, this new kind of post-Vatican II Catholic theology of Balthasar and Ratzinger is remarkably similar in method to the claim in American Protestant theology proposed by the neo-Barthian anticorrelational theologians.²⁷ As Lindbeck makes clear, theology should be intratextual and not correlational.²⁸ At its best, as in Karl Barth, theology, for Lindbeck, does not engage in a deliberately apologetic task at all. Therefore theology should not use revisionary methods of correlation like Tillich's, but intratextual methods like Barth's. The questions recur: Who are the true heirs of Calvin? Schleiermacher and Troeltsch or Barth? Who are the true heirs of Luther? Tillich or Lindbeck? Who are the true heirs of Aquinas? Rahner or Balthasar? Who is the true heir of Bonaventure?

²³The influence of Hegel on Balthasar merits further study—as does, indeed, the influence of Neoplatonism on Hegel.

²⁴For a fine study of the various meanings of *ad hoc* apologetics, see William Placher, *Unapologetic Theology* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989) 166–70. A clear and systematic statement of the alternative *ad hoc* apologetics may be found in William Werpehowski, “*Ad hoc* Apologetics,” *Journal of Religion* 66 (1986) 282–301. Placher's book is notable for showing the nuances in both the intratextual and the correlational positions on the issue of apologetics. It is also notable for its noble attempt to find a *via media*.

²⁵See Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Introduction à l'étude de saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Montreal: Institut d'Études Médiévales, 1974); James A. Weisheipl, *Friar Tommaso d'Aquino* (New York: Doubleday, 1974).

²⁶The influence of particular historical events on the thought of theologians is rarely as clearly illustrated as in the differing responses of Bonaventure and Aquinas to the crisis of radical Aristotelianism and the responses of Ratzinger and Küng to the crisis of the German universities.

²⁷The differences are also, of course, notable: the Protestant theologians, in fidelity to the theology of the Word, emphasize the intertextual developments; the Catholics, in fidelity to the sacramental vision of Catholicism, emphasize the “ecclesial sense” (Ratzinger) or the importance of the incarnational-sacramental “visible form” (Balthasar).

²⁸George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984).

The early Ratzinger or the later? And perhaps, lurking beneath all these questions, who are the true heirs of that most puzzling, pluralistic, and important theologian of them all, Augustine?²⁹

In my judgment, some revisionary method of correlation for theology, as Aquinas and Schleiermacher, Rahner and Tillich, Lonergan and Gilkey insist, is the only hope for a way forward for theological method. But if such revisionary methods are not to become trapped in an unwelcome complacency in their own revisionary and correlational methods, they too must be continually open to critique and revision. Hence my need to insist upon the full force of the “reconceived” in the title of this essay. For I share the sense expressed by Schillebeeckx when he observed: “After two centuries of resistance, Catholics embraced the modern world just at the moment when the modern world began to distrust itself.” There are, in fact, some good reasons, as I suggested above and have argued elsewhere, for modernity to distrust itself.³⁰ There are also good reasons for Catholic thought to be open to constant revision as the acknowledgment of the fuller plurality and often radical ambiguity of all three of Hügel’s elements comes more clearly into view.

CATHOLIC METHODS OF CORRELATION IN FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY

In theology at the moment there is occurring, across the traditions, a great divide. Many theologians insist that the modern paradigm of some form of a revised correlational model for theology has reached the end of its usefulness. One basic reason for that claim is, paradoxically enough, a typically correlational move: the claim that in our situation we should now acknowledge—as modernity itself lingers over its own self-distrust—that modern theology by the very attempt to correlate an interpretation of the tradition (usually by some candidate for the heart of the tradition) with an interpretation of the ever-changing modern situation (usually by some candidate for the principal religious questions posed by modernity or postmodernity) has lost its distinctively theological center by attempting to be correlational at all.³¹ This methodological loss has also occasioned a substantive loss; for every tradition is in danger of losing its distinctiveness through the subtle erosions of all particularities by the illusory claims to universality of Western Enlightenment modernity. On this scenario it is time to call theology back to its own task—something like a “thick description” of the tradition for the tradition’s own sake.

²⁹The contrast of all Western Christian (Augustinian) theology with Eastern Orthodox theology remains largely a matter of how to interpret Augustine.

³⁰In *Plurality and Ambiguity* (n. 8 above).

³¹See Lindbeck’s penetrating observations on the dangers, in a consumerist culture, of an emphasis on “experience” in *The Nature of Doctrine* (n. 28 above).

Hence anticorrelational theologians appeal to Geertz-like understandings of theology as, in effect, a kind of descriptive religious anthropology, or they appeal to intratextual enterprises like literary criticism's ability to provide close readings of the details (character, plot, point of view, metaphor, narrative) of the Christian founding biblical narratives.³² Hence the anticorrelational theologians employ the later Wittgenstein and the word "foundationalism" sometimes to cover ground all the way from any Cartesian or neo-scholastic quest for certainty to any claim for the self-transcending character of reason at all.³³ Hence the return, in Protestant theologies, to Barth's theological method and his reading of Protestant theological history. Hence the equally strong interest, in several Catholic theologies, in the theological method of Balthasar as an alternative to Rahner, Lonergan, and their successors.³⁴

It is a puzzling scene. On the one hand, correlational theologians are informed that their concern with analyses of modernity and postmodernity (under the rubric of the "situation") has caused the problem. On the other hand, they are given a typically situational analysis: that the loss of identity by all traditions in modernity is the central *situational* question facing all theologians who can see our present situation clearly.

On the Hügel model proposed above, there is no good reason to reject the genuine gains which such new anticorrelational theologies promise. Those gains include disciplinary ones like the greater use in theology of anthropology and literary criticism. They include substantive gains like the insistence on the need to pay closer intratextual attention to the biblical narratives for Christian self-identity and to defend the centrality of a concern with Catholic ecclesial identity and the centrality of "visible form" for Catholic theology.³⁵ Correlational models of theology, after all, also insist on the need for criteria of appropriateness to the tradition.³⁶ They should, therefore, be fully open to all proposals for assuring an appropriately Christian identity, including the fruitful intratextual studies of the anticorrelational theologians. There is also much gain in the philosophical antifoundationalist enterprise insofar as it may help not

³²See Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven: Yale University, 1974), and *The Identity of Jesus Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975).

³³On the ambiguities of the word "foundationalism," see Placher, *Unapologetic Theology* (n. 24 above).

³⁴See the helpful study on Balthasar by Robert Louis, *The Theological Aesthetics of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1987).

³⁵Here the magisterial works of Hans Frei and Hans Urs von Balthasar merit the primary attention. Both have much to teach all correlational theologians on new and fruitful ways to provide "close" theological readings of the classics.

³⁶For a clear presentation of these criteria, see Schubert Ogden, *The Point of Christology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982) 4.

only to expose the quest for certainty but to recover the classical notions of reason as dialogue and argument.³⁷ For once any thinker admits the linguistic and historical character of all models of rationality, the aims of reason must be more modest than many formulations of transcendental thought suggest.

Indeed, on the basis of the revised Hügel model proposed earlier, the gains provided by these new interdisciplinary moves within theology remain considerable. The use of anthropology and especially history-of-religions methods (the latter curiously lacking in most of the new intra-textual proposals) could greatly challenge, enrich, and render "thicker" the construals of both the religious life of a people (Hügel's mystical element) and thereby the theological interpretations of the tradition (the intellectual element). There is much to be gained and little to be lost in following Kenneth Burke's sage advice: Use all there is to be used. In reconceiving Catholic studies in this pluralistic manner, the gain could be great. For then one would find, in the modern academy and in fidelity to the academy's highest standards,³⁸ a multidisciplinary study of Catholicism within which the element of thought would be related, in interdisciplinary fashion, to the wider field of descriptive Catholic studies. The central methodological question posed by these new challenges to correlational models of theology is clear: What is the role of fundamental theology in the wider task of theology? Alternatively, should apologetics play an intrinsic and systemic role in theology or merely an *ad hoc* one?³⁹

It is this role of fundamental theology which all the now familiar attacks on any revised correlational method for theology must oppose, by denying any systemic (as distinct from *ad hoc*) role to apologetics. Fundamental theology (the modern correlational form of apologetics) has been a familiar focus for modern Catholic theology, both as a distinct subdiscipline within theology and as a necessary element in both systematic theology and practical theology.⁴⁰ To reject fundamental theology as

³⁷ See John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University, 1988); Stephen Toulmin, *Beyond Modernity* (forthcoming, 1989).

³⁸ The emphasis here on the academy is not intended to disallow the necessary theological attention to the other publics of theology: church and society; see my *The Analogical Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1981) 1-46.

³⁹ The use of philosophy in traditional natural theologies and apologetic theologies as well as in contemporary fundamental theologies lends itself to a systemic rather than *ad hoc* reading. For a recent and good example of this tradition, see John Macquarrie, *In Search of Deity: An Essay in Dialectical Theism* (New York: Crossroad, 1987). For this *ad hoc* option, see n. 24 above.

⁴⁰ For one clarification of these terms, see my *Blessed Rage for Order* (New York: Seabury, 1975), on fundamental theology, and *The Analogical Imagination* (n. 38 above), on systematic theology; and my essay "The Foundations of Practical Theology" in Don Browning, ed., *Practical Theology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983). Although I continue

a basic theological discipline is the logical implication of all anticorrelational moves. For to the anticorrelationalist any announcement of a critically reflective role for theology sounds suspiciously like foundationalism. In one sense such suspicions are inevitable and in some cases justified. Theologians may sometimes function as if they were unaware of the historicity of all modes of critical reflection, including transcendental ones. They may also be too quick to provide too general, abstract, "thin" descriptions of both the tradition and the situation in their rush to move on to the task of critical philosophical reflection.⁴¹

A correlational method open to these kinds of anticorrelationalist suspicions is always in need of re-examining its mode of inquiry. Such re-examination is exactly what has been occurring for the last 20 years across all the major forms of revised correlational method. That some form of transcendental reflection is needed by theology seems as clear now as it was 20 years ago, and that for the same reason: if one understands the logic of the claim Jews, Christians, and Muslims make when they affirm their belief in a radically monotheistic God, transcendental reflection is that mode of rational inquiry appropriate to considering that claim.⁴² And yet, to have this insight is not necessarily to be able to redeem it. Here the full force of modernity's self-doubt hits home. Insofar as all modes of reasoning are linguistically rendered (as they are), they are historically embedded. Any transcendental method needs to pay greater attention to that fact than many forms of theology, both classical and modern, characteristically do. If such attention is not forthcoming, theology will quietly but inevitably drift away from the apologetic and situational elements of the correlation in fundamental theology.⁴³

If theology can reconceive its mode of inquiry in a manner that does not violate its acknowledgment of its own linguisticity and thereby historicity, the method of correlation, once again revised, will continue

to believe in the aim of transcendental reflection proposed in *Blessed Rage for Order*, the need for more careful attention to the linguistic-historical character of all such claims seems far more urgent to me now than it did then (1975)—as the remainder of this essay may serve to testify.

⁴¹ See Gary Comstock, "Two Types of Narrative Theology," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 55 (1987) 687-717.

⁴² It is to be noted that this demand is formulated by the intratextual needs of the logic of the Christian understanding of God, and not only from modern situational needs. On the latter, the approach of limit questions to inquiry itself remains a fruitful one. On the former, I can see no way, on purely inner-Christian grounds, to deny the universality and necessity of the Christian understanding of God. A lesser "god," for the Jew, Christian, and Muslim, is not God.

⁴³ More exactly, insofar as the situational analysis is an *intrinsic* part of the theological task, apologetics will remain intrinsic and thereby systemic rather than an *ad hoc* part of that same task.

to hold the field as an ever revisionary and ever self-critical mode of inquiry. Like Husserl in his constant rethinking of phenomenology, fundamental theologians aware of these difficulties must always be beginners; for each step forward seems to expose new difficulties that force one back again to rethink the beginnings of that peculiar mode of inquiry that is fundamental theology. Like Husserl's own enterprise, correlational fundamental theology could end in a failure that has all the marks of classic tragedy: witness that great tragic text of and on modernity, Husserl's *Crisis of the European Sciences*.⁴⁴ Any transcendental mode of inquiry like Husserl's will function well if, and only if, it can account for its own linguistic and historical essence. This was the principal reason for the turn to hermeneutics among Husserl's successors (Scheler, Heidegger, Gadamer, Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur, and even, in his odd way, Derrida). This, too, is the reason for the retrieval of pragmatism and the new alliance of pragmatism with hermeneutics among so many contemporary Anglo-American philosophers (Putnam, Bernstein, Toulmin, Charles Taylor, and even, in his odd way, Rorty).⁴⁵

CRITERIA FOR FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY IN THE NEW POSTMODERN SITUATION

If theology is to continue to have a systematically apologetic task, and if that task is to prove adequate to the contemporary postmodern situation, then new criteria for the task are needed. Traditional modern fundamental theologies relied too exclusively on transcendental inquiry—and, too often, models of that inquiry not explicitly related to the questions of language (and thereby plurality and historicity) and questions of history (and thereby ambiguity and postmodern suspicion, not merely modern critique).⁴⁶ One way to try to clarify the present state of fundamental theology (short of abandoning it with the anticorrelationists) is to clarify anew the tripartite set of criteria needed in order to allow fundamental theology to fulfil its correlational task.⁴⁷ In properly

⁴⁴ Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences* (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1970).

⁴⁵ Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1981); Richard Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1981); Stephen Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1958); Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Papers* (2 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1985); Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1982).

⁴⁶ See Paul Ricoeur, "Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology," in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1981).

⁴⁷ I here revise William James's criteria for assessing religion in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: New American Library, 1958) 32–34, for a more properly theological task.

general terms, the question of meaning and truth is a question of clarifying: first, the hermeneutical notion of truth as manifestation; second, how a given claim to manifestation coheres or does not cohere with what we otherwise consider reasonable; third, the ethical-political implications of these claims.⁴⁸ All three sets of criteria revise, even as they allow for, the kind of transcendental reflection proper to theological inquiry. All three criteria, moreover, clarify how these hermeneutic-pragmatic-transcendental concerns of the apologetic (or correlational) element in fundamental theology have distinct affinities to the various proposals for a mystical-prophetic model for systematic and practical theologies.⁴⁹ Such, at least, is one way to read the present conflict of interpretations on theological method in contemporary Catholic theologies: fundamental, systematic, and practical. By concentrating on the need for new criteria for fundamental theology, one may hope to illuminate the fundamental element in systematic and practical theology as well.⁵⁰ This kind of reflection has impelled me in recent years to try to rethink the character of the criteria needed for correlational theology in the new situation. Those methodological criteria, I further believe, can not merely account for but, if properly open to learning anew, can also appropriate the genuine gains of the new anticorrelationalists in Catholic and Protestant theology alike.⁵¹

First, the hermeneutical criteria of truth as manifestation.⁵² The central hermeneutical category is "possibility." Insofar as hermeneutics is grounded in the reality of conversation with the claim to attention of the other, and insofar as hermeneutics is fashioned to relate experience directly to language and history, hermeneutics proves one fruitful philosophical tradition for the present dilemma. Moreover, as post-Gadamerian hermeneutics has yielded its own history-of-effects, there is now available, *pace* Gadamer, a greater role both for explanatory methods (Ricoeur), ideology-critique (Habermas), and even plurality than an

⁴⁸ The criteria are not intended to be cumulative but demand a coherence of all three in order to function properly.

⁴⁹ This would need to be shown in each case—not only, as in the present essay, in the case of the second set of criteria. On the hermeneutical-transcendental issues, see Rudiger Bubner, *Essays in Hermeneutical and Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University, 1987). On the ethical-transcendental issue, see Karl-Otto Apel, *Understanding and Explanation: A Transcendental Pragmatic Perspective* (Cambridge: MIT, 1984), and the critique of Apel by Franklin I. Gamwell, in *The Divine Good* (forthcoming, 1990).

⁵⁰ This remains the case even if one chooses to have the criteria of praxis dominant, as in the effort by J. B. Metz to develop a practical fundamental theology in *Faith in History and Society* (New York: Seabury, 1980).

⁵¹ Those gains are real, especially in the exceptional work of Hans Frei and Balthasar.

⁵² For a fuller discussion, see *Plurality and Ambiguity*, chap. 2.

earlier hermeneutics envisaged.⁵³ A notion of dialogue that has no place for these central intellectual, moral, and even religious demands is one tempted by too easy notions of similarity or even sameness, and too sanguine a notion of the complementarity of all differences.

Granted these important caveats, hermeneutics shows that the model of conversation remains the central hope for recognizing the possibilities which any serious conversation with the claim to attention of the other and the different yields.⁵⁴ It matters relatively little whether the hermeneutical dialogue is through person-to-person dialogue or through that peculiar form of dialogue we call close reading of texts, rituals, symbols, myths, or events. To acknowledge the claim to attention of the other as other, the different *as* different, is also to acknowledge that other world of meaning as in some manner a genuine possibility for myself. The traditional Catholic language of analogy may still prove, in admittedly new forms, one way to formulate how, after any genuine dialogue, what once seemed merely other now seems a real possibility. Thereby that otherness, now rendered hermeneutically as possibility, is in some manner analogous to what I have already experienced. I acknowledge that I and others who are trying to formulate an analogical imagination as one strategy for understanding the pluralism within Catholicism, the greater pluralism of the interreligious dialogue, and the kinds of correlations likely between an interpretation of the situation and an interpretation of the tradition, must be not only wary but downright suspicious of how easily claims to analogy or similarity can become subtle evasions of the other and the different.⁵⁵ Similarity cannot be a cover word for the return of the same. Hence we need to remind ourselves linguistically of this danger by speaking not of analogies simply as similarities, but as always already similarities-in-difference.

The concept "correlation" in correlational theology does not entail a belief in harmony, convergence, or sameness.⁵⁶ Correlation logically

⁵³ Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University, 1976); Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Boston: Beacon, 1971).

⁵⁴ For a defense of the model of conversation, see *Plurality and Ambiguity*, chap. 1.

⁵⁵ See *The Analogical Imagination*.

⁵⁶ This seems to be a common misconception of the logic of the term "correlation": see, e.g., the criticisms of the term by Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, *Foundational Theology: Jesus and the Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1984) esp. 276–84, and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon, 1985). On my present reading, both these books are examples of the broad model of correlational theologies, even if Francis Schüssler Fiorenza's "reflective equilibrium" model leads more to the pole of similarity, and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's model heads more to the pole of dialectical difference. In their substantive proposals, both these exemplary theologians always allow the particular question and not any general method (correlational or anticorrelational) to determine the results of their inquiries.

entails only the notion that *some* relationship is involved. That relationship may (rarely) be one of identity—as in some of the proposals of liberal Protestant “culture Christianity” and some of the Catholic Modernists. That relationship may also be one of nonidentity (existentially, confrontation)—as in the challenge of correlational theology to much of secular modernity’s interpretation of secularity as secularistic and thereby nonreligious or antireligious.⁵⁷ The relationship may also be one of similarity-in-difference—as in analogical theologies; or identity-in-difference—as in dialectical theologies.⁵⁸ The point of correlation is the need to relate critically interpretations of both tradition and situation. The method of correlation, like all good method, provides only a heuristic guide to the inquiry. The inquiry is always hermeneutically determined by the question, the subject matter. No theologian can decide before the actual inquiry whether identity or nonidentity or identity-in-difference or similarity-in-difference should obtain. Method is always and only a heuristic guide: a useful, critical guide which, if allied to flexible criteria, can aid but never replace the actual theological inquiry.

But whatever the fate of the strategy of an analogical imagination for rendering possibilities into similarities-in-difference, the larger issue is elsewhere: in the category of possibility itself. All possibilities can be understood more accurately as suggestive possibilities. The adjective “suggestive” serves as a reminder that “possibility” need not be a “live, momentous, and forced” option in order to prove a genuine possibility.⁵⁹ As reception theory in hermeneutics reminds us, a whole spectrum of responses to any classic is available.⁶⁰ That spectrum can range all the way from a shock of recognition (in aesthetic terms) or faith (in religious terms) to a sense of tentative response to a genuine, i.e. live and suggestive, possibility on the other end of the spectrum. The spectrum remains a real spectrum (and not a mere chaos of responses) insofar as any genuine *possibility* evoked by the hermeneutical conversation is produced. What little I understand of Buddhist “compassion” I do not understand on inner-Buddhist grounds of enlightenment. Yet I can respond to that classic Buddhist notion with a resonance to the challenge it poses to my own Catholic understanding of love as *caritas*.

A further advantage of the hermeneutical category of suggestive pos-

⁵⁷ See the exchange of Peter Berger, Langdon Gilkey, Schubert Ogden, and David Tracy in *TS* 37 (1977) 39–56, and 39 (1978) 486–507.

⁵⁸ See *The Analogical Imagination* 405–46.

⁵⁹ The expression “live, momentous, and forced” is William James’s in “The Will to Believe,” in *Essays on Faith and Morals* (New York: New American Library, 1974).

⁶⁰ For one example see Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetics of Reception* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1982).

sibility is its rethinking of the primordial character of truth as manifestation. The hermeneutical tradition from Heidegger through Gadamer and Ricoeur defends the primordial notion of truth as event of manifestation. This notion of truth as manifestation has some singular advantages for this first general set of criteria for correlational theology. The primary advantage is that the notion of truth as manifestation (and recognition on the side of the subject) more closely fits both notions of revelation as event of God's self-manifestation and the response of faith as gifted recognition.⁶¹ The truth of religion, like the truth of its nearest analogue, art, is primordially a truth of manifestation (more exactly, disclosure-concealment and human recognition).⁶² Hermeneutical thought, with its philosophical and nonromantic defense of truth as manifestation, is well suited to defending anew this primal insight of both art and religion. In that sense hermeneutical thought is useful for reopening the highly complex philosophical and theological questions of the nature of revelation and the graced response of recognition named faith.

The mystical strands of Catholic Christianity are the best, but not sole, candidates for this mode of hermeneutical reflection in any mystico-prophetic Catholic theology. The wisdom traditions of the Hebrew Scriptures and, in the New Testament, the Gospel and Letters of John evoke this kind of mystical meditative reflection. The marginalization in Catholic theology of the great mystical traditions—the image mysticism of Gregory and Origen, the Trinitarian mysticism of Augustine and Ruysbroeck, the love mysticism of Bernard or the Victorines and Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, and even the radically apophatic mysticism of Pseudo-Dionysius, Scotus Eriugena, and Meister Eckhart—must surely end. Thanks to the labors of many scholars,⁶³ the import—esthetic, religious, and theological—of these too often theologically marginalized mystical traditions are now available for serious theological attention. Indeed, here too lies the import of the great work of Balthasar for Catholic theological attention. The classics of Bonaventure and Dante and all the other classic and too often ignored mystical Catholic theologies of the visible form manifesting the Beauty and Glory of God, so well rendered in Balthasar's *Herrlichkeit*, can be appropriated anew by cor-

⁶¹ The analogy is an analogy of proportionality: revelation : faith :: manifestation : recognition.

⁶² Manifestation is the general term; as all manifestation-oriented thinkers (e.g., Heidegger, Ricoeur, Eliade) observe, the disclosure is also a concealment. The response evoked by the disclosure is recognition and always involves a call to transformation.

⁶³ See especially the excellent Paulist series on Western spirituality and the Crossroad volumes on spirituality. I am especially indebted to the work of Louis Dupré and Bernard McGinn here.

relational theology by being rendered as hermeneutical possibilities and thereby as new theological resources.⁶⁴ Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan knew instinctively this singular truth of the need for hermeneutical reflection. For, however great the turn to the mystical was in both the later Rahner and Lonergan (and it was),⁶⁵ they never abandoned the theological need to render these classic possibilities available to those nonmystics (including theologians) whose sense of religious possibility can be heightened by hermeneutical dialogue with the mystics.

The future of serious Catholic theology lies with its ability to recover these classic resources of the mystical tradition without forfeiting the need to retrieve them critically. Hermeneutical thought, with its grounding in the notion of truth as manifestation, provides one promising way to achieve this necessary substantive rethinking of Catholic theology. Moreover, as Gershom Scholem has observed in the case of kabbalism, the re-emergence of mystical readings in all prophetic traditions is also the re-emergence of the repressed archaic traditions.⁶⁶ Such seems to be the case with many forms of Catholic mysticism as well. As Eliade's work makes clear (with its grounding in a hermeneutics of manifestation), the so-called "pagan" roots of Christianity need constant retrieval.⁶⁷ Such retrieval is available for all those willing to take the mystics' readings of our prophetic heritage seriously again.

And yet, even these hermeneutical criteria need further testing. They provide us with an ability to understand truth as primordially an event of manifestation and thereby to understand anew the kind of truth claim in the event of revelation and the gifted response—recognition of faith. At the same time, they provoke further questions on how these manifestations cohere with what we otherwise know or, more likely, believe to be the case. The second set of criteria may be described, generically, as a rough coherence with what we otherwise know or, more likely, believe to be the case.⁶⁸ The danger is that this set of criteria (under rubrics,

⁶⁴ Balthasar's highlighting of a theology of beauty has clear analogues to the manifestation orientation in hermeneutics. His great contribution, in my judgment, is his Christian incarnational and sacramental insistence on the centrality of the "visible form" for Christian revelation and salvation.

⁶⁵ Recall Rahner's "mystagogical turn" in his later work, e.g. his essay on "The Incomprehensibility of God according to St. Thomas Aquinas," in *Celebrating the Medieval Heritage, Journal of Religion* 58 (Supplement, 1978) 107-25.

⁶⁶ See Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Macmillan, 1961).

⁶⁷ E.g., Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959).

⁶⁸ I.e., we may reasonably believe (e.g., Einstein's relativity theory) even when we do not fully understand (i.e., mathematically) and thereby do not strictly know it. Most of our "knowledge," in fact, is of the "reasonable belief" type.

e.g., like strict verification and strict falsification) will so quickly take over that the notion of truth as event of manifestation will quickly become a distant memory.

However, several recent Western philosophical discussions of reason are helpful for fighting that rationalistic and scientistic (not scientific) temptation. In an intellectual situation where philosophers of natural science like Toulmin have challenged earlier reigning paradigms of scientism and rationality, many in the philosophical community have far more flexible notions of truth and reason than was once the case in the days of positivism. Science itself is now also acknowledged as a hermeneutic enterprise.⁶⁹ What one now finds is a historically and hermeneutically informed philosophy of science (often named, interestingly enough, post-modern science⁷⁰) as well as a philosophically informed history of science. It is not merely the case, as Hegel insisted, that the fact that reason has a history is a problem for reason. It is also the case that the history of reason includes the history of relatively adequate (e.g., Aristotle and postmodern science) and inadequate (e.g., positivism) accounts of reason. I do not pretend by these brief references to imply that the problem of an adequate notion of reason is readily available for use in fundamental theology. Of course, there is no *de facto* consensus among contemporary philosophers on what rational consensus is. But this, for present purposes, is not necessarily unfortunate. If, in fact, philosophers can continue to show a genuinely rational way to recover the classical resources of reason (e.g., Platonic dialogue, Aristotelian *phronēsis*, and Peirce's "community of inquiry"), then, minimally, the discussion of reason and faith should be freed from what Richard Bernstein nicely labels both "objectivism" and "relativism."⁷¹ The two options, so familiar in the recent past and so fatal for critical reflection on religious manifestations, have proved inadequate on strictly philosophical grounds. Rather, we are left with more flexible but no less rational criteria for the rough coherence of what truths-as-manifestations we may hermeneutically learn from revelation with what we otherwise know reasonably from science and all other uses of reason.⁷²

The most persuasive attempt in modern Catholic thought to defend the reality of reason without capitulating to foundationalist notions of

⁶⁹ Note Gadamer's change here in *Reason in the Age of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1981).

⁷⁰ See David Roy Griffin, ed., *The Reenchantment of Science: Postmodern Proposals* (Albany: State University of New York, 1988).

⁷¹ Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism* (n. 45 above).

⁷² This, in sum, is one of the major concerns of an appropriately reformulated fundamental theology.

rationality remains that of Bernard Lonergan. If reformulated in linguistically informed terms, Lonergan's masterwork, *Insight*, retains its power to persuade.⁷³ It is, above all, the self-correcting character of reason that needs careful defense. This Lonergan provides in recognizably empirical, Anglo-American terms: we reach, in every act of judgment, whether that of common sense, historical scholarship, or scientific theory, the point where, for the present inquirer faithful to the demands of the inquiry itself, no further relevant questions emerge. This is why Lonergan named every judgment not an absolutely unconditioned but a virtually unconditioned. The judgment is unconditioned, since it answers the questions relevant to the subject, the criteria, and the evidence now available to competent inquirers. Such judgment, as dependent upon the present community's available evidence and modes of inquiry, is also only virtually unconditioned, since every judgment is by definition open to further revision as further questions emerge.⁷⁴ And further questions will always eventually emerge. I have elsewhere reformulated Lonergan's defense of the self-correcting and thereby partly history-transcending character of reason under the rubric of judgments of relative adequacy: adequate to the question at hand and relative to the evidence presently available.

This is the same kind of modest but real defense of reason which Hilary Putnam⁷⁵ means when he insists that on any given question, if you demand everything, you will not succeed; on most questions enough is enough, enough is not everything. More importantly, for Catholic thought at least, this is the same kind of defense of reason which Aquinas defended with his insistence, thanks to his study of Aristotle, that we can only have the kind of certitude that a given subject matter allows. The classic Western resources of reason, especially those first articulated by Plato and Aristotle, remain, with appropriate revisionary modifications, our central resources. Descartes, Hegel, or Husserl may have been guilty of foundationalism, as may indeed much modern Western thought that succeeded them. But neither Plato's notion of dialogue nor Aristotle's notion of argument is foundationalist.⁷⁶ The more careful proponents of communication theory in our day continue that Platonic-Aristotelian line.⁷⁷ As did Lonergan and, before him, Aquinas.

⁷³ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1957).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 279-326.

⁷⁵ Putnam, *Reason* (n. 45 above).

⁷⁶ On Plato see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato* (New Haven: Yale University, 1980). On Aristotle see Toulmin, *Beyond Modernity* (n. 37 above).

⁷⁷ This is especially true of the more recent work of Jürgen Habermas: see, e.g., *Theory of Communicative Action* (Boston: Beacon, 1984).

What the theologians add to such inquiry on reason—and it is, to be sure, no minor addition—is the further relevant question, the strictly transcendental question, of the nature of ultimate reality. Above all, it is the self-correcting and unrestricted character of inquiry itself which demands a posing of this question for rational inquirers unwilling to stop the inquiry arbitrarily.⁷⁸ What theologians need to be willing to continue to argue is the reasonableness of this question and what reasonable, relatively adequate answers we might have as inquirers on that question—a question provoked by inquiry itself for any thoughtful inquirer. If theologians expect certainty in their answers to these limit questions of reason, they are doomed to failure. But if theologians are faithful to the logic of the subject matter they presume to study (the nature of ultimate reality) and the coherence of the self-manifestations of God and the logic of inquiry itself with what we otherwise reasonably hold, they cannot avoid asking this question of ultimate coherence. Apologetics must always be an intrinsic aspect of all Christian theology.⁷⁹ Alternatively, both systematic theology and practical theology need fundamental theology. Even the explicit and implicit cognitive claims of the mystics should be inquired into in order to see how they cohere or do not cohere with what we otherwise know or believe to be the case.⁸⁰ To abandon that critical correlational task of theology is to abandon, within theology, its reflective task and to abandon as well the claims of all the prophets and mystics to speak directly and purposively to the human search for meaning and truth. It is indeed important in thought, as Wittgenstein insisted and the anticorrelationists love to repeat, to know when to stop. But the anticorrelationist theologians stop too soon, or more exactly, will not even begin the reflective questions on hermeneutical manifestation as possibility and the coherence of those possibilities to reason—questions which theologians like Aquinas and Lonergan show is also the nonfoundationalist question of inquiry itself, the question Christians and Jews name the question of God. A systematic or practical theology that refuses its own need for a fundamental theology is a truncated vision of the fuller task of theology. For theology at its best is not an exercise in the quest for certainty at all, but includes the difficult, necessary exercise in the quest for some understanding of how all claims to meaning and truth in the revelatory and salvific manifestations of faith cohere with the character of the self-correcting, unrestricted nature

⁷⁸ See Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1972).

⁷⁹ This is on intratextual (i.e., the logic of the claims of the reality of God) as well as situational grounds: see Tillich, *Systematic Theology* 1 (n. 6 above) 6–8.

⁸⁰ See Louis Dupré's *The Other Dimension* (New York: Seabury, 1979).

of inquiry itself.⁸¹

As any participant in contemporary theology soon discovers, moreover, a further set of criteria will and should emerge from the inquiry itself—generically ethical-political criteria.⁸² These criteria, so familiar to the prophetic core of Christianity and Judaism, will continue to enter the theological conversation in several routes. First, the religions themselves, especially but not solely in their prophetic strands, demand them. Secondly, our very nature as human beings demands ethical assessment.

There is no manifestation disclosure that is not also a call to transformation. There is no revelation without salvation. There is no theological theory without praxis. There need be no hermeneutic without pragmatics. There need be no divisions between the mystical and prophetic strands of the great tradition unless we arbitrarily impose them. The pragmatic turn of hermeneutics itself—as indeed of much contemporary discourse philosophy—fully shares in this insistence on the need for ethical-political criteria. In that sense we are all the heirs of William James's insistence on the criteria of ethical, humane fruits, or consequences for action, for praxis, both individually and societally. Even here, however, our situation is more difficult and more parlous than the situation faced by early modernity or even the classical pragmatists. On the individual side the rampant problems of possessive individualism have become a major ethical dilemma for modern Western societies.⁸³ More puzzling still, the very notion of the self, so cherished in almost all Western philosophies and theologies (even those, like process thought, highly critical of earlier substantialist notions of the self), has become a central problem in interreligious dialogue where several highly sophisticated Buddhist and Hindu notions of "no-self" enter, along with several post-modern critiques of the self (e.g., Kristeva and Lacan), to radicalize all more familiar Western revisionary notions of self.⁸⁴

The ethical-political criteria must meet further challenges: above all from the discovery of the inevitability of concrete social-political realities embedded in all discourse and the theological reformulations of the prophetic strands of these traditions into several distinct political and liberation theologies. In the meantime the recovery of pragmatic criteria

⁸¹ Lonergan's magisterial work here may be called representative of this paradigm shift from certainty to understanding: see, e.g., his essay "Aquinas Today: Tradition and Innovation," in *Celebrating the Medieval Heritage* (n. 15 above), 1–17.

⁸² In theology these are often promoted under the rubric of praxis: see Matthew Lamb, *Solidarity With Victims* (New York: Crossroad, 1982).

⁸³ Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart* (Berkeley: University of California, 1985).

⁸⁴ Most fruitful here is Julia Kristeva's postmodern notion of the subject-in-process-on-trial.

of personal ethical and political consequences for action remains a necessary set of general and flexible criteria for serious theology today—as the feminist, liberation, and political theologians, as well as the new pragmatists, argue; as the new insistence on the centrality of praxis justly insists.⁸⁵

That all these criteria themselves need further reflection and refinement beyond the brief analysis given above is obvious. For even if these criteria are, on the whole,⁸⁶ sound, they still cannot replace the actual task of theological inquiry on particular questions but only inform it with the kind of questions and some general heuristic criteria for asking those questions.

On this reading the pragmatic turn of European hermeneutics, like the hermeneutic turn of Anglo-American analytical pragmatics, is merely the expression of the drive of contemporary inquiry to demand a fuller set of criteria for all inquiries. The systematic and practical theological analogues of this hermeneutic-pragmatic turn in fundamental theology is the new search in many Christian theologies for both mystical and prophetic readings of the rich and pluralistic tradition.⁸⁷ The future, I believe, belongs to those mystico-prophetic systematic and practical theologies. But the future will belong best even to these great emerging and global options if the traditional theological concerns of apologetics, reformulated in the modern period as correlational theologies, continue to be reformulated when the need is clear. As Hügel knew as well as Husserl, in such reflectively methodological questions we must always be beginners. And that willingness to begin always anew is at least as important an injunction as the knowledge of when to stop.

⁸⁵ See, e.g., Metz, *Faith in History and Society* (n. 50 above).

⁸⁶ The reference is to William James's sane description of the need for "on the whole-ism."

⁸⁷ See Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus in Our Western Culture: Mysticism, Ethics, and Politics* (London: SCM, 1987).