THE THEORY-PRAXIS RELATIONSHIP
IN CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIES

The relationship of theory and praxis goes right to the core of the entire philosophical enterprise; it involves the relations of consciousness to being, of subject to object, of idea to reality, of word to deed, of meaning to history.[1] Similarly in theology, this relationship goes beyond a discussion of contemplative or active ways of life to raise such fundamental issues as the relations of faith to love, of church to world, of orthodoxy to orthopraxy, of salvation to liberation, of religion to political concerns, of historical and systematic to moral and pastoral theology. Even an adequate bibliography of the theory-praxis relationship in contemporary Christian theologies would extend far beyond the limits of the present study.

I shall attempt, therefore, to provide a framework of models or types within which to situate the main differences in the relationships of theory and praxis operative in contemporary Christian theologies.[2] Such an approach is open to the danger of taxonomic superficiality, especially when it is constrained by the demands of brevity in areas so extensive in scope and rich in nuance. Nonetheless, as H. Richard Niebuhr reminds us, it is possible to begin the task of bringing some order into this multiplicity if we can discern types dependent upon "the nature of the problem itself and the meanings of its terms."[3] The first section will sketch certain main issues in the nature of the problem and how the typology elaborates various contexts of usage defining the meanings of the terms "theory and praxis" in theologies. Each of the subsequent sec-

[1] Among the best treatments of theory-praxis in English are: R. Bernstein, *Praxis and Action: Contemporary Philosophies of Human Activity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971); J. Habermas, *Theory and Practice* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973); N. Lobkowicz, *Theory and Practice: History of a Concept from Aristotle to Marx* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967); for a short presentation, cf. N. Lobkowicz, "Theory and Practice," in *Marxism, Communism and Western Civilization*, vol. 3 (New York: Herder & Herder, 1973), pp. 160-79, and W. Post, "Theory and Practice," in *Sacramentum Mundi*, vol. 6 (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970), pp. 246-9.

[2] On the use of models or types, cf. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper, 1951) and A. Dulles, *Models of the Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1974). Here I am using the approach of D. Tracy's *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1975), pp. 22-42 where types or models attempt to articulate some aspects of B. Lonergan's dialectical horizon analysis, cf. his *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), pp. 235ff.

[3] Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, p. 40.

tions will outline chief characteristics of the types and constitutive elements of the theologies exemplifying those types. Hopefully it will be a helpful beginning.

THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

Philosophical and theological reflections on the relations between theory and praxis have, from their origins down to the present, involved at least three recurrent issues.

First, there is what might be termed the reflex character of the relationship. Generically, there is no cognition which is not an action, nor any human action which is not in some manner cognitive. Although the sources of theory and praxis are within human subjects, they have different orientations. Theory regards objective knowledge as the formulation and ascertation of intelligibilities; it primarily regards possible, probable, or certain constructs of reality. Through theory we seek the objective; theorizing aims at by-passing subjectivity by opening up objective spheres of reality, of what is possibly, probably, or certainly so. Theory represents the orientation of the subject-towards-objectivity. Praxis regards human action as what we actually do, and probably or possibly can do. Minimally, it could be a mere technical or mechanical repetition of movements, assembly-line routines with slight subjective engagement. More adequately, praxis is involvement and commitment; by our actions we become who we are. It is intersubjective, through praxis we live in a world with others as authentic or inauthentic subjects. Praxis represents the orientation of the subject-towards-subjectivity.[4] The diversity of orientation between theory and praxis raises the issue of how they are reflexly interrelated.

A second recurrent issue transposes the reflex character of the relation into a quest for norms of truth and of genuine human living. Despite the welter of often conflicting positions and

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[4] The reflex character of theory-praxis is that both are of concrete, human subjects; hence, even in theorizing there is, as T. Adorno puts it, within its inmost cell that which is unlike thought. Praxis as human activity objectifies itself towards interpersonal or intersubjective life-worlds; when that orientation is denied or truncated, the objectifications of the activity are alienated and alienating, while the activity itself approximates mechanical technique, cf. Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, pp. 253-82; and his *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), pp. 301-17 on the relation of modern technocracy to "pure theory." Since both theory and praxis are of the subject, one can see why theory cannot sublate praxis although praxis can sublate theory inasmuch as "objectivity is self-transcending subjectivity" cf. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp. 265, 292.

counterpositions I would argue that there are three dominant tendencies in approaching the issue of norms. A *classical* tendency relates the norms to absolute, necessary reality or ideality; here the reflex character gives primacy to theory, as in Aristotle's notion of theoretic science governed by the metaphysical ideal of necessary first principles, or in Hegel's sublation of praxis by theory as the absolute idea.[5] An *empirical* tendency measures the norms according to verifiability or falsifiability within material reality as somehow publically observable; here the reflex character acknowledges theory as intrinsically hypothetical, but tends to identify praxis with the manipulative techniques of modern natural scientific methods.[6] A *critical* tendency relates the norms to structural dynamics of individual and/or collective human performance; here the reflex character accords a primacy to praxis, while there are disputes about how praxis (including the praxis of theorizing) is to be critically understood, or which dynamics of human performance are foundationally normative.[7]

A third recurrent issue is a continued implication of religious categories. The theory-praxis discussion takes a positive or negative stance vis-a-vis religion whenever it turns to its own presuppositions.[8] Here too, one might delineate three tendencies.

[5] On Aristotle, cf. Lobkowicz, *Theory and Practice*, pp. 3-33; on Hegel, cf. M. Riedel, *Theorie und Praxis im Denken Hegels* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1965), pp. 136-63; on both thinkers, cf. J. Ritter, *Metaphysik und Politik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1969).

[6] For an overview of this tendency, cf. G. Radnitzky, *Contemporary Schools of Metascience*, 2nd rev. ed. (Göteborg: Akademiförlaget, 1970). The Frankfurt School sees this tendency as present in the positions of Karl Popper's "critical rationalism" and in N. Luhmann's system-theory, cf. T. Adorno *et al.*, *Der Positivismusstreit in der deutschen Soziologie* (Berlin: Luchterhand, 1969), and J. Habermas with N. Luhmann, *Theorie der Gesellschaft oder Sozialtechnologie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971). On the relations of this tendency to theology, cf. W. Pannenberg, *Wissenschaftstheorie und Theologie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973), pp. 31-52; the translation of this book will appear towards the end of November as *Theology and the Philosophy of Science* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press).

[7] In my opinion this tendency embraces those efforts aimed at disclosing the basis of all human activity in human intersubjective performance; it would include the trends discussed by R. Bernstein, *Praxis and Action*, as well as the hermeneutical, dialectical, and transcendental trends; cf. Radnitzky, *Contemporary Schools of Metascience*; K.-O. Apel, *Transformation der Philosophie*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973); *Continuum* 8, 1 & 2 (Spring-Summer, 1970), 3-133; I. Lakatos and A. Musgrave, eds., *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge: University Press, 1970).

[8] This is clear from Lobkowicz's history, cf. *Theory and Practice*. For more contemporary discussions, cf. M. Horkheimer, *Die Sehnsucht nach dem ganz Anderen* (Hamburg: Furche, 1970); W. Oelmüller, "The Limitations of Social

One tendency would so stress the religious dimension of theory-praxis, as in the theocratic orientation of classical cultures, that an undifferentiated *sacralized* context would prevail—a tendency illustrated in the cultural sacralizations of the Greco-Roman and medieval civilizations.[9] In reaction to the heteronomy resulting from the undifferentiation of secular and sacral, the emergence of empirical and critical normativity can so stress the autonomy of theory-praxis that any relation to theonomy is rejected as alienating—as illustrated in the undifferentiated *secularism* of much modern thought and practice.[10] Philosophers and theologians struggling with the theory-praxis relations today are, in differing ways, articulating alternatives to sacralism and secularism. The main thrust is, as B. Lonergan and E. Voegelin remind us, a critical differentiation of consciousness and social life proportionate to the exigencies of truly critical theory and genuinely liberating praxis, of knowing the truth through doing the truth, which would tend toward a differentiated *sacred-secular* context.[11]

These three recurrent issues coalesce today in a quest for the foundations of theory and praxis grounding a proper complementarity between the gospel imperatives of enlightening and converting, between incarnation and eschatology, between Christian universalism and the particularity of church traditions, between the tasks of interpreting and changing the world, between judgments of fact and judgments of value, between empirical methods of research and critical methods of dialectics. If Hegel's "consciousness determines social life" is not to end in the escapism of romantic utopianism, and if Marx's "social life determines consciousness" is not to end in the triumph of biased facticity, then differen-

Theories," in J. Moltmann, J. B. Metz, *et al., Religion and Political Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), pp. 127-69; and M. Theunissen, *Gesellschaft und Geschichte* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter & Co., 1969).

[9]Sacralism or sacralization does not imply an interpersonal appropriation of religious meanings and values, but that religious symbol-systems were used, irrespective of differentiating religious experience, to legitimate imperial or local social orders, cf. E. Voegelin, *The Ecumenic Age* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), pp. 36-58, 114-7.

[10]Cf. E. Voegelin, *The Ecumenic Age*, pp. 260-6; also his *From Enlightenment to Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1975); O. Marquard, *Schwierigkeiten mit der Geschichtsphilosophie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973) deals with the problems of secularist undifferentiation in philosophy; regarding the problems in theology, cf. M. Xhaufflaire and K. Kerksen, eds., *Les deux visages de la théologie de la sécularisation* (Tournai: Casterman, 1970).

[11]Cf. E. Voegelin, *The Ecumenic Age*, pp. 300-35; Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp. 85-99, 302-20.

tiation of consciousness mediated in social life is a present impera-
tive for theology, as well as the other human sciences and scholarly
disciplines.

Insofar as the three recurrent issues explicate what Niebuhr
calls "the nature of the problem," then a survey attentive to those
issues can begin to thematize various models or types. How do
they handle the reflex character of theory-praxis? Where do they
situate the norms? How do theory and praxis relate to the Christian
religion? Such models or types are disclosive of what Niebuhr calls
"the meaning of the terms," not by offering generic definitions and
then applying in the models specific differences, but by disclosing
various *context of usage* which define the meaning of the terms
relative to how they are used and the contexts within which their
users operate. Such a procedure is intrinsically open and ongoing
as a method of *dialectical* analysis, the goal of which is to spell out
all the relevant concrete, dynamic and contradictory elements in
the affinities and oppositions of the usage.[12] The present typology
is concerned with how theologians relate the categories of theory
and praxis to the Christian religion, and how that relating affects
(and is affected by) their understanding of the reflex character and
the normativity of theory-praxis. Such an approach is open to,
indeed demands, further inquiry into the usage and users in terms
of their ongoing psychological, social, political, and cultural
contexts.[13] In the measure that I succeed, however sketchily, to
explicate the dialectical relations among the three recurrent issues,
the present study will provide a framework for surveying those
further inquiries.[14]

The following types are structured according to how their
usage of theory-praxis, with the three recurrent issues mentioned,
exhibits what I shall term relations of primacy or correlations. The
relations of primacy involve an either/or approach to whether or

[12]Cf. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp. 128ff., 235-66; also M. Markovic,
*From Affluence to Praxis: Philosophy and Social Criticism (Ann Arbor: University
of Michigan Press*, 1974), pp. 1-44; as this relates to a transcendental, praxis-
grounded linguistic usage, cf. Apel, *Transformation der Philosophie*, vol. 2, pp.
311-435.

[13]Cf. Gregory Baum, "The Impact of Sociology on Catholic Theology,"
CTSA Proceedings 13 (1975), p. 1-29; also C. Davis, *Body as Spirit: The Nature of
Religious Feeling* (New York: Seabury, 1976), pp. 159ff.

[14]Insofar as dialectical analysis overcomes the false dichotomies of an empiri-
cist reduction of ideas to "nothing but" materially observable phenomena (whether
natural or social) and of an idealist reification of ideas into a realm of their own, such
a dialectical analysis is open to ongoing further determinations, cf. Lonergan,
Method in Theology, pp. 129f.

not Christianity is intrinsically or extrinsically determined by theory or praxis.[15] The primacy of theory type maintains that religion and theory are intrinsically related, while both have only an extrinsic relation to praxis. The primacy of praxis type envisions religion and praxis as intrinsically related, while theory remains more or less extrinsic. The primacy of faith-love type insists that genuine Christianity is only extrinsically related to theory-praxis, is always non-identical with them. The final two types seek to sublate the relational primacy models by developing what I term a both/and stance of critical correlation.[16] Thus the critical theoretic correlation type emphasizes a theoretic mediation between Christianity and the categories of theory-praxis. The critical praxis correlation type seeks to articulate a praxis-grounded mediation.

THE PRIMACY OF THEORY

This type corresponds to Tracy's orthodox model where the self-referent "is to a believer in a specific church tradition and the object-referent is to a (usually systematic) understanding of those beliefs."[17] In terms of the theory-praxis relation, this type has influenced contemporary theologies especially by its heavy dependence upon Aristotelian and scholastic thought-forms. The object-referent is an understanding of the faith within what Lonergan calls a classical cultural matrix, or Karl Rahner a traditional homogenous culture.[18] The designation "orthodox" is misleading. Theological "orthodoxy" was appropriated by Catholic and Protestant scholasticism at a time when the authority of classical culture and society was challenged by the beginnings of modern science and historical scholarship, by a radical humanism and an incipient industrialization. The reaction of Catholic scholastic theology was to refuse to differentiate the gospel message from its cultural systematic understanding and to retreat into a theoretical orthodoxy; solidifying the replacement of the questioning attitude

[15] A relation is internal when a change in the relation changes the base, it is external when a change in the relation does not change the base. Cf. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, rev. ed. (New York: Philosophical Library, 1958), pp. 343, 493.

[16] Critical correlation types acknowledge, in different manners, that a relation of non-identity need not be an external or extrinsic relation, cf. Lonergan, *Insight*, pp. 728f.

[17] Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, p. 24.

[18] Cf. K. Rahner, "Theology," in *Sacramentum Mundi* 6, pp. 233-46; Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp. xi, 124, 301f., 315, 326, 363.

of the medieval *Summae* with a dogmatic thesis theology dedicated to certainty and various forms of logical deductivism.[19]

The internal relation between Christianity and theory was assured by the medieval shift towards theory through the assimilation of an Aristotelian *Begrifflichkeit*. Theology, the object of which was God in himself and all things related to him was both speculative and practical science. Although, as Aquinas noted, it was more speculative than practical since it dealt more with God than with human acts, and only with the latter as oriented to the *perfect knowledge* of God in eternal beatitude. *Theoria* is supreme as the knowledge of necessary and eternal truths or first principles.[20] This transposition of Aristotle did not include his distinctions between *praxis*, as the acts of citizens and statesmen who identified the good with honor, and *poesis* concerned with the production of material objects. Thus praxis was variously rendered by *actio* and *factio*; and the doctrine of creation represented God, as Infinite Intelligence, being the *Artifex Mundi*. In the fourteenth century, Duns Scotus pushed this even further by acknowledging God as the "doable knowable," i.e., "the object of knowledge which may be reached by a doing which is true *praxis*."[21] This gave a more prominent place in theology to religious charity as the way to salvation through authentic practice. A decadent scholasticism, however, buried those insights in a rigorous logicism.

There are two contemporary variants which draw upon this primacy of theory type. The first simply transposes classicist categories, usually deformed beyond recognition, into theology. T. Howland Sanks has studied the doctrine of the magisterium taught by the Gregorian University theologians between Vatican I and Vatican II.[22] His study, and Roman Catholic manuals of theology in general, indicate how the reflex character of theory-praxis is minimalized by the conceptualistic logicism of theory. Man's innate ability to know eternal and necessary truths was translated by neo-scholasticism into a primacy of logic. Faith is the

[19] Cf. Lonergan, *Collection* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1967), pp. 252-67; also his *A Second Collection* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), pp. 55-67; D. Tracy, *The Achievement of B. Lonergan* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970), p. 88.

[20] Lobkowicz, *Theory and Practice*, pp. 5-9, 26-57, 70-8.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 74.

[22] *Authority in the Church: A Study in Changing Paradigms* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974).

response to supernaturally revealed truths which are "deposited" in the Church, whose task it is to guard, defend, and propagate them. The normativity of theology is found in the teaching authority of the Church as a hierarchically structured magisterium. Development of doctrine is accounted for by the application of logic (virtual predication, etc.) to the deposit. Moral and pastoral theology are basically prudential applications of dogmatic theory and hierarchical authority, which latter remain essentially the same despite variations in prudential applications. Ecclesial institutional structure is hierarchical on the model of a pure, rather than constitutional, monarchy. The untimely message of the gospel seems identified with being-out-of-date.[23]

The second variant of the primacy of theory can be found in the more sophisticated Thomism of theologians such as Charles Journet and Garrigou-Lagrange, and as pre-eminently articulated by Jacques Maritain. Although not a "professional" theologian but a Christian philosopher, Maritain is by far the best representative of this primacy of theory type. His *Degrees of Knowledge* is its finest expression, and the manifold applications range throughout his voluminous other writings. He accepts the Aristotelian norm for scientific knowledge as necessary "irrefragable" intelligibility; he contrasts the intelligible universes (the objects of scientific and sapiential knowledge) and the "contingent," irreversible flux of the universe of existence. "Science," he writes, as "knowledge in the strict sense of the word, considers only the intelligible necessities immersed in the reality of this world of existence."[24] He adopts Aquinas' three degrees of abstraction to move from infrascientific experience, through physics and the natural sciences and mathematics, to natural philosophy and metaphysical science or wisdom.

We are reminded that "it would be foolish to imagine that this universe (of contingent existence) could be completely reclaimed by human science" since its contingencies are "not as such the objects of science in the strict sense."[25] Maritain then distinguishes three wisdoms: metaphysical wisdom (knowledge of first principles), theological wisdom (knowledge of revealed truths), and infused mystical knowledge (contemplative connatural

[23]*Ibid.*, pp. 108-28; also Metz in *Religion and Political Society*, pp. 197-9.
[24]*Distinguish to Unite or the Degrees of Knowledge* (New York: Scribner's, 1959), p. 136.
[25]*Ibid.*

knowledge).[26] The ascent to Being is complemented by a descent to action as one moves from pure speculation (knowledge for its own sake) to speculatively practical knowledge (moral theology and moral philosophy) which directs action from afar, through practically practical knowledge (practical moral sciences) which directs action from nearby, to prudence which directs action immediately.[27] The practice of fraternal charity is cathartic, purifying the human person for the higher, agapic wisdom of union with God.

Similar to Aristotle, Maritain relates this framework to the life of *praxis* or the temporal order of political and social institutions. In his *Integral Humanism* he readily admits that the sacralization of the temporal order in the Holy Roman Empire is definitively past. Yet there is a present imperative to work for "the historical ideal of a new Christendom," to "build up an Empire for Christ" wherein the Church would continue to be the "crucified kingdom of God."[28] This new Christendom would, through the principles of analogy and a prudential application of Thomistic "common good" doctrine, foster an organic democracy and pluralism. The new Christendom would be the work of the Catholic laity, and Catholic action directed by a *théologie politique* (*not* a German *politische Theologie*) maintaining the distinction between the sacral and the secular, while advocating the directive influence of the sacral on the secular. Amid the vicissitudes of history, the Church maintains her holy, spiritual and doctrinal identity.[29]

The reflex character of this type, then, does not see the ontological structure of reality or being intrinsically changed by praxis. The latter is a propaedeutic for us to ascend to supra-contingent wisdom. Normativity is in the eternal and necessary, not in the flux of the universe of existence. Christian faith and love are intrinsically related to theory as the highest form of wisdom. The sacred and the secular are "distinguished to be united" in a new Christendom.

THE PRIMACY OF PRAXIS

This type articulates an internal relation between Christianity and praxis, whereas theory is understood primarily as a more or

[26]*Ibid.*, pp. 247ff.

[27]*Ibid.*, p. 459.

[28]*Integral Humanism: Temporal and Spiritual Problems of a New Christendom* (Notre Dame: University Press, 1973), pp. 127-255.

[29]*Ibid.*, pp. 99-111.

less extrinsic reflection on that praxis. Three main variants of this
type might be distinguished according to whether praxis is under-
stood as cultural-historical activity, liberal socio-political reform
activity, or radical Marxist revolutionary praxis respectively.
These variants have in common a more or less thorough rejection
of classical-traditionalist metaphysics. Theory is not given a
necessary domain of eternal truths but is seen as no more than ever
revisable approximations to the flux of contingent events in his-
tory. Theological theory as doctrines or dogmas do not provide the
normativity, but is accorded a secondary, external relation to
praxis. Theology as theory may be more or less helpful but not
intrinsically determinative of the latter. The reflex character con-
sists in ''the explicit commitment of the Christian theologian to the
basic cognitive claims and ethical values'' of either modern secular
or the contemporary secular periods.[30]

This type of theory-praxis relationship, then, includes both
the liberal and radical models expounded by David Tracy. The
first two variants are constituted by the liberal horizon, the self-
referent of which is the theologian's own ''consciousness commit-
ted to the basic values of modernity,'' and the object-referent is
principally ''the Christian tradition (usually the tradition of one's
own church) as reformulated in accordance with such modern
commitments and critiques.''[31] The third variant is even more
radical than Tracy's radical model insofar as it criticizes the
post-modern secular affirmation and theistic negation in the
''death-of-God'' theologians for being a form of crypto-religious
ideology in a one-dimensional society.[32]

The cultural-historical primacy of praxis has its roots both in
Luther's repudiation of speculative theology and in the
Enlightenment's rejection of metaphysics in favor of empirical-
critical studies of nature and history. Schleiermacher laid the
groundwork for this type by distinguishing religious experience
from metaphysics and morals; by making historical theology
ground philosophical theology and verify practical theology as
dedicated to the needs of the Christian Church in its pastoral
practice. The eternal and infinite is not found in theoretical con-
structs but in the emotive-intuitive experience of believers. The
Church is a locus of freedom in contrast to the state as representing

[30] Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, p. 25.
[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 25-6.
[32] *Ibid.*, pp. 31f. Also, Xhaufflaire and Derksen, eds, *Les deux visages*, pp.
157-72.

heteronomous authority.[33] Troeltsch corrected the confessionalism of Schleiermacher and carried the historicity of theology further by revealing the conflicting institutional contexts of religious practice (ideal types of Church and Sect). His *theological* dependence on the psychological need for religious faith, along with his radical acceptance of historical-critical methods and his identification of the goal of the Kingdom of God with human purposefulness—all these indicate a fundamental acceptance of modern historical secularity.[34]

Contemporary forms of this primacy of cultural-historical experience in the theological articulation of faith embrace such diverse works as Leslie Dewart's *The Future of Belief* and *The Foundations of Belief,* Gabriel Moran's *The Present Revelation,* Paul Van Buren's *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel*, and Eugene Fontinell's "Religious Truth in a Relational and Processive World."[35] The de-hellenization of doctrine, its de-ontologizing, opens theology to reflect upon revelation as a present ongoing event. Knowledge is elusive. The general tenor of these writings in regard to religious truth is that it

> ... consists not in correspondence with an outside reality but in enabling one to participate more fully in the ongoing processive reality with which man is continuous. Creeds and dogmas, therefore, are not to be assessed in terms of the knowledge about God they are thought to convey, but in terms of their ability to help man move beyond the relatively inadequate situation in which he finds himself and to expand his life within the human community.[36]

Perhaps the most cogent expression of this form of theology is the position of Van A. Harvey. The "soft perspectivism," which allows theology to overcome the antinomy between the morality of a scientific culture and the morality of a Christian believer, is contrasted with the tendency to exclusivity or "hard perspectivism" on the part of H. Richard Niebuhr. The moral-practical and historical dimensions of every perspective means that they cannot be abstractly described; they are rather "field-encompassing affairs" involving symbol, myth, image. Revelation

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[33]Cf. Pannenberg, *Wissenschaftstheorie und Theologie*, pp. 249-55.
[34]*Ibid.*, pp. 111-7.
[35]*Cross Currents* 17 (1967), 283-315.
[36]Cf. A. Dulles, *Revelation Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), p. 169, where Dulles is describing Fontinell's position; cf. also to the articles by J. Connelly and A. Dulles, along with the responses in *CTSA Proceedings* 29 (1974), 1-123.

this type most receptive to pluralism (handwritten margin note)

is not the imparting of truths but the event of reconciliation. There is, strictly speaking, no exclusive Christian perspective but an inclusive one. It has a disclosive capacity theologians must carefully articulate, not by proof, but by remaining faithful to the inclusive significance of its symbols and historical destiny; they must creatively relate those symbols to the differing social, historical and cultural communities of believers.[37]

A second variant of the primacy of praxis type articulates the reflex character of the theory-praxis relation and the normativity in terms of liberal socio-political action. Its roots are in the Kantian relation of religion to morality, and the Ritschlian distinction between the speculative judgments of science and the value judgment of religion. Eschewing any form of dogmatism and Hellenic speculation in theology, they sought to uncover the central significance of Christian faith in God-as-love; revelation did not communicate truths to be believed so much as an ideal for men to live by.[38] This found a popular presentation and concrete application in the Social Gospel movement in America, with its demands for a new theology capable of expressing the supposedly pristine message of Jesus and the reformers.[39]

A prominent and recent example of this form of theologizing can be found in the secular city debates prompted by Harvey Cox. The repudiation of metaphysical categories is to reveal the true import of the Good News: "Theology is a living enterprise. The Gospel does not call man to return to a previous stage of his development. It does not summon man back to dependency, awe and religionism. Rather it is a call to imaginative urbanity and mature secularity."[40] In criticizing the existentialist variants of non-metaphysical theology, orthodox models and the linguistic approach of Van Buren, Cox called for a recognition of an urbane political normativity for theology:

> We have already suggested that God comes to us today in events of social change, in what theologians have often called *history*, what we call *politics*. But events of social change need not mean upheavals and revolutions. The events of everyday life are also events of social

[37]Van A. Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), esp. pp. 204-91.

[38]Cf. D. L. Mueller, *An Introduction to the Theology of A. Ritschl* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969).

[39]Cf. W. Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1945 renewed copyright ed.).

[40]*The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 83.

> change. The smallest unit of society is two, and the relationship between two people never remains just the same. God meets us there, too. He meets us not just in the freedom revolution in America, but also in a client, a customer, a patient, a co-worker.[41]

In later writings Cox corrected his too enthusiastic approval of technical man and urbane polity.

The final variant of the primacy of praxis rejects not only the primacy of theory type, but also both previous forms of this type. As represented in the Critical Catholicism movement, theologians such as Frans v.d. Oudenrijn, Marcel Xhaufflaire and Karl Derksen criticize both the secularization and "death-of-God" theologies for not understanding praxis radically enough. They draw upon Marx's critique of Hegel and Feuerbach in order to elucidate what they consider to be the "ideology" underpinning these attempts at relating the gospel to modern or contemporary society.[42] In their view only a theology which submits to the normativity of Marx's notion of praxis has any chance of authentically articulating a criticism both of contemporary society as well as all past and present theologies. They would see Thomas Altizer's questioning acceptance of Eric Voegelin's *The Ecumenic Age* as a demonstration of the ideological ambiguity of the "death-of-God" theologies as mere extensions of a cultural-historical notion of praxis.[43] With Marx, Oudenrijn tends to see past and present theology as "bad theory." Unlike philosophical theory, which could be sublated by revolutionary praxis, theology can only be negated as the quintessential alienation of man in capitalist society.[44] Critical theology can only be a critique of theology—not from the perspective of some overarching theoretical or practical system, nor in the name of the abstract species-being of humankind, but through a careful analysis of the concrete structures of domination in church and society. As Charles Davis commented on this position:

[41]*Ibid.*, p. 261.

[42]Cf. M. Xhaufflaire, *Feuerbach et la théologie de la sécularisation* (Paris: Cerf, 1970); F. v.d. Oudenrijn, *Kritische Theologie als Kritik der Theologie: Theorie und Praxis bei Marx—Herausforderung der Theologie* (Munich: Kaiser, 1972); for a summary presentation of these theologians, cf. C. Davis, "Theology and Praxis," *Cross Currents* 23 (1973), 154-68.

[43]Cf. Xhaufflaire and Derksen, eds., *Les deux visages*, pp. 75-9, 157ff. For the exchanges of T. Altizer and E. Voegelin cf. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 43 (1975), 757-72.

[44]Oudenrijn, *Kritische Theologie*, pp. 158-65, 177-9. Oudenrijn criticizes Marx's critique of religion insofar as Marx considered the critique completed when he exposed the "bad theory" or theology of Hegel's thought.

> History is basically the history of men's productive activities and the social relationships resulting from them. It is an error to think that religion was the dominant factor determining society in the past, and it is equally erroneous to suppose that the replacement of religion by some other form of theoretical thought is going to transform society in the future.... The *praxis* of Christians, like all *praxis*, demands a critical analysis of present society, intended to uncover the contradictions latent within it. These contradictions, if Christianity is more than ideology, will occur where Christians with their faith and hope are situated in an objective conflict with the social order. Conscious Christian *praxis* is the actualization of the conflict thus uncovered.[45]

These theologians, therefore, offer no assurance that Marx was not right when he claimed that Christianity offers only alienating theoretical salvation. That issue will only be resolved through the dialectical participation of Christians in changing their Church and the world.[46]

These primacy of praxis types agree in rejecting classical metaphysics. If Christianity is to be faithful to its task, it must be intrinsically involved in historical, cultural, political, social and/or revolutionary praxis. Doctrinal theory is at best extrinsic and secondary. The reflex character of theory-praxis tends toward a reduction of theory to reflection on praxis as variously understood. The normativity tends toward an *identification* of Christianity with modern, secular (liberal or Marxist) processes. What promotes the identification is good; what hinders it is wrong, such as the identification of Christianity with classical cultural practices in the primacy of theory types.

THE PRIMACY OF FAITH-LOVE

This type emphasizes the non-identity of Christian faith-love vis-a-vis theory-praxis. It corresponds to Tracy's neo-orthodox model where the self-referent of the theologian is a dialectical appropriation of the basic attitudes of Christian faith, trust and agapic love, while the object-referent is "the wholly other God of Jesus Christ."[47] In the light of theory-praxis, however, I would

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[45] Davis, "Theology and Praxis," pp. 164 and 167.

[46] The merit of these theologians, in my opinion, is that they warn us against a too facile neglect of the real import of Marxist critique. Taking Marx with radical seriousness, however, involves not only interpreting him but changing him; and in this task they have not, I believe, explored sufficiently the inner contradictions of Marx's mediation of theory and praxis, cf. the penetrating study of D. Böhler, *Metakritik der Marxschen Ideologiekritik: Prolegomenon zu einer reflektierten Ideologiekritik und Theorie-Praxis Vermittlung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1971).

[47] Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, pp. 27-31. In designating this type as the primacy of faith-love I not only intend to designate the respective emphases of

argue that theologians who exemplify more the mediational aspects of transcendence (such as Brunner, Bultmann, Tillich, the Niebuhrs, and Rahner) cannot be adequately treated under the primacy of faith-love type.

The prototype of faith's non-identity relation to human theory-praxis is Karl Barth, especially in his early period. God is not the object of theology but its subject; he encounters humankind in Jesus Christ, the Word of God, as the concrete center and ground of all reality. Theology is possible only as obedience to that Word. As the debate between Barth and H. Scholz concerning the scientific character of theology indicated, Barth would not concede any theoretical norms for theology that were not intrinsic to faith.[48]

Theology, if it is to remain faithful to God's Word in faith must manifest the crisis of judgment and grace, of condemnation and justification. The only criterion for the scientific character of theology is its "Sachgemässheit" relative to the Word.[49] A charge of theological fideism would be a compliment to Barth.

In Catholic theology the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar stresses a similar non-identity between Christianity and theory-praxis. He criticizes the cosmological categories of scholasticism and Enlilghtenment natural religion, as well as the anthropological methods of transcendental Thomism and existentialist theologies.

> The criterion of genuine Christianity can be neither religious philosophy nor human existence. In philosophy man discovers what he can know of the depths of being, while in existence he brings what he can of these to life in himself. Christianity is destroyed if it lets itself be reduced to transcendental presuppositions of a man's self-understanding whether in thought or in life, in knowledge or in action.[50]

He seeks to avoid the extremes of extrinsicism and immanentism by advertising to what he calls "the third way of love." The gift character and "miracle" of an Other encountered in love, along with the aesthetic experience of unpredictable beauty, converge in von Balthasar's massive *Herrlichkeit* to explore the historical

Barth and von Balthasar, but also to indicate how the non-identity they insist upon vis-a-vis theory and praxis is capable of being integrated within the critical correlations of the next two types.

[48] Cf. Pannenberg, *Wissenschaftstheorie und Theologie*, pp. 266-77.

[49] *Ibid.*, pp. 270ff.

[50] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Love Alone* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969), p. 43.

configurations of the Christian conversion encounter with the revealing Lord. The reality of God overpowers the shadows of this world, with all its efforts at theory or praxis.[51] If some indicate that von Balthasar has not yet adequately accounted for the paradox of his concern for aesthetic style in the very articulation of the shock-quality of God's revelation, he would see that as the *coincidentia oppositorum* constitutive of the Christ-event, and of any truly Christian theology.[52] The "opposites" are not as radical as Barth's inasmuch as von Balthasar adopts a more patristic and monastic perspective on mysticism and spirituality. The central imperative of a genuine theology today must be a recovery of sanctity.[53]

As Barth's monumental *Church Dogmatics,* and von Balthasar's *Herrlichkeit*—along with their extensive other writings—indicate, the non-identity of Christian faith-love with human theory is still very much a relational non-identity. Here the reflex character of the theory-praxis relation is, perhaps, best understood as a sophisticated theological parallel to Kierkegaard's paradoxical mode of communicating the contradictions and resolutions of human interiority.[54] The normativity is not "empirically" available (in the sense of critically provable by appeal to external data) but is rooted in the decision of Christian faith-love responding to the Word of God. The normativity, then, is radically gift and grace in a non-identical relation to human experience.[55]

[51] Cf. Hans Urs Von Balthasar's *Word and Revelation* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1964), pp. 57-163, and his *Word and Redemption* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1965), pp. 7-22, 109-26.

[52] Cf. *Herrlichkeit: Eine theologische Ästhetik* III, 1 (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1966), pp. 276ff., 706ff.; III, 2, 1 (1967), pp. 11-28.

[53] Cf. von Balthasar's *Love Alone*, pp. 51-125; and *Word and Redemption*, pp. 49-86.

[54] Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Prometheus: Studien zur Geschichte des deutschen Idealismus* (Heidelberg, Kerle, 1947), pp. 695-734, esp. p. 716 where von Balthasar articulates Kierkegaard's notion of paradox as an inescapable non-identity in Christianity. Compare this with *Herrlichkeit* III, 2, 1, pp. 12f., for the strong similarity. Insofar as God is "undialectical" Metz is right in saying that Barth's theology (and I would add von Balthasar's) is paradoxical rather than dialectical, cf. Metz, "Politische Theologie," in *Sacramentum Mundi* III (Freiburg: Herder, 1969), col. 1239.

[55] Tracy's observation that political theologians seem to have transformed the neo-orthodox model (*Blessed Rage for Order*, p. 242) needs clarification. Insofar as they insist upon a non-identity, the political theologians are no different than Tracy and the others I shall discuss in my fourth type. The key question is how they mediate that non-identity in terms of theory and praxis, and since they do not do so through supernaturalist paradox they are not in the primacy of faith-love or neo-orthodox type.

This non-identity is also relational to praxis, as Barth's confrontation with "German Christians" indicates. Indeed, in Kierkegaard's usage, it is foundational for praxis, as Richard J. Bernstein has shown.[56] Another example of this could be found in the life and writings of Thomas Merton, who paradoxically as a contemplative monk confronted contemporary society with social and political judgment.[57] The recent *Hartford Appeal* presents, in my opinion, another variant of this non-identity relation of Christian faith-love to theory and praxis. *Against the World for the World* is an apt paradoxical description of its call to halt any radical immanentizing of the Christian faith.[58]

In summary, the primacy of faith-love type locates the reflex character of theory-praxis in a supernaturalist paradoxical relation with the non-identity of Christian revelation. Likewise, the question of normativity is approached within this non-identical, paradoxical perspective: only God is normative in his revelation. The penecostalist experience of the Spirit, or the mystic's dark night, or unconditional obedience to the Word—these are the touch-stones of truth and life. The tendencies of the first two types are criticized for identifying Christianity with either classical or modern cultural matrices.

CRITICAL THEORETIC CORRELATIONS

This type of dealing with the theory-praxis relationship seeks to establish a critical theoretic correlation between Christian tradition and the exigencies of theory and praxis. It basically accepts the affirmation of non-identity elaborated in the previous type, but it criticizes the supernaturalist paradoxical mediation of that type. Indeed, theologians operating within this type or model maintain

[56] Bernstein, *Praxis and Action*, pp. 96-122: "We may have thought that 'to be a Christian' along with other existential possibilities that Kierkegaard has poetically presented, demands inward action on *our* part. But in the end, the faith demanded to be a Christian is not what it appears to be, it is not something of our own doing. Only those 'kept alive in a state of death' are 'ripe for Eternity,' only they—and this is the most incomprehensible of all human paradoxes—are prepared to be saved by God's grace" (p. 122).

[57] Cf. P. Hart, ed., *Thomas Merton, Monk* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1974); F. Kelly, *Man before God: T. Merton on Social Responsibility* (New York: Doubleday, 1974); Elena Malits, "Journey into the Unknown" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Fordham University, 1974), provides an excellent perspective on the relation of Merton's social concerns to his spiritual development.

[58] P. Berger and R. Neuhaus, eds., *Against the World for the World: The Hartford Appeal and the Future of American Religion* (New York: Seabury, 1976).

that the non-identity or extrinsic relationship of Christian revelation vis-a-vis theory and praxis is not incompatible with the identity or intrinsic relations articulated in the first two types. They insist, however, that this correlation critically alters any exclusivity claims, which would absolutize the contingent, in any of the three previous types (whether that occurs regarding church, literal meaning of scripture, historical Jesus, metaphysics of classicism, modern secularity or Marxist revolution). Perhaps, if a teutonicism is permitted, the theologians of the present type seek through their correlations to articulate a union of identity and non-identity between Christianity and the categories of theory-praxis. That union is constituted, however, by critical theoretic correlations rather than the critical praxis correlations of the fifth type.

I would suggest that this type of theologically mediating the theory-praxis relation includes the mediational theologians sometimes designated as neo-orthodox (especially Bultmann, Tillich, the Niebuhrs, Rahner), the universal-historical approach of W. Pannenberg, and the revisionist program of D. Tracy. A common characteristic of these theologians is an uncommon concern to articulate the theoretical issues confronting theology in a post-modern world. In terms of Tracy's models, this type corresponds both with his description of the revisionist theologian's horizon, and with those aspects of the neo-orthodox horizon which indicate "the more radical model of the human being of authentic Christian faith."[59]

The mediational theologians tend to envisage the union-in-difference between theory and praxis within Christian theology as primarily established through the elaboration of an ontology which would do justice to both immanence and transcendence, to both the socio-historical and the existential demands of Christian faith and practice.

Thus Bultmann correlated the historical-critical methods with the existential demands of decision-in-faith by several creative adaptations from Hermann, the Law-Gospel distinction and Heideggerian categories. The level of *Historie* was completely open to the exigencies of empirical and critical analysis—the advances of liberal theology in appropriating modern methods of science and scholarship would not be abandoned. Faith, however, belonged to the ontic level of decision as *Geschichte*, and the critical task of theology was to check the tendency of everyone,

[59] Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, pp. 29-34.

believers and non-believers alike, to collapse one level into the other. Mediating the two levels was the pastoral practice of a kerygma informed by the critical advances of theology.[60]

The earlier Tillich's concern with Christianity and socialism was transposed (many would say abandoned) in his later work. He sought to critically correlate Christianity and contemporary culture through an ontology of human finitude open to the question of God, capable of overcoming the dichotomies between heteronomous and autonomous reason through an appropriation of the theonomous dimensions of reason-as-question answered through Christian revelation. *Praxis*, as social and cultural acts directed toward the just and the good, and *theoria*, as the cognitive and aesthetic acts directed at the true and the beautiful, are both open to the ambiguities of self-creation (the subject-object split) which constitute scientific and ethical methods as questions for revelation:

> Practice resists theory, which it considers inferior to itself; it demands an activism which cuts off every theoretical investigation before it has come to its end. In practice one cannot do otherwise, for one must act before one has finished thinking. On the other hand, the infinite horizons of thinking cannot supply the basis for any concrete decision with certainty. Except in the technical realm where an existential decision is not involved, one must make decisions on the basis of limited or distorted or incomplete insights. Neither theory nor practice in isolation can solve the problem of their conflict with each other. Only a truth which is present in spite of the infinity of theoretical possibilities and only a good which is present in spite of the infinite risk implied in every action can overcome the disruption between the grasping and the shaping functions of reason. The quest for such a truth and such a good is the quest for revelation.[61]

This correlation structure should not be interpreted as just another variant of Barth's supernatural paradox. Tillich's criticisms of Barth and his own efforts at explicating the reasonable basis for paradoxical language, as well as his notion of autonomy in theonomy, preclude this.[62]

[60]Cf. A. Malet, *Mythos et Logos: La Pensée de R. Bultmann* (Geneva: Fides, 1962); G. Greshake, *Historie wird Geschichte* (Essen: Ludgerus Verlag, 1963), pp. 60-84; D. Sölle, *Politische Theologie: Auseinandersetzung mit R. Bultmann* (Stuttgart: Kreuz, 1971).

[61]P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, three volumes in one edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), vol. 1, p. 93. Also his *Political Expectation* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), edited from his early writings by James L. Adams.

[62]Cf. C. Kegley and R. Bretall, eds., *The Theology of P. Tillich* (New York: Macmillan, 1964), pp. 27-31, 100-5, 336ff. Also Tillich, *Systematic Theology* vol. 2, pp. 90-4, esp. p. 91: "The tools of theology are rational, dialectical, and paradoxi-

Karl Rahner's transcendental anthropology not only sought to ground a critical correlation between the ontological structures of human existence and the interpretation of ecclesial doctrines. He employed that philosophical-theological correlation to disclose the many possibilities of concrete change needed within both the Church's teaching and its practice. Rahner effectively criticized the ideal of a "new christendom" or any form of church practice or teaching which would collapse the transcendental into the categorial, that would abolish the non-identity (and the freedom and pluralism it preserves) in the name of a monolithic identity. His transcendental anthropology enabled Rahner to correlate the mysterious transcendence of God with the immanence of historical man as intrinsically a hearer of the Word. Within this perspective, he sketches the outlines of a formal existential ethic and elaborates the social-critical function of the Church.[63]

These mediational theologies exhibit the reflex character of theory-praxis as a reflection on the ontological structures common to human existence and Christian revelation. The normativity question, therefore, is more open to a mutual interaction between reason and faith.

The universal-historical perspective of W. Pannenberg criticizes these characteristics of the mediational positions insofar as he questions whether the transcendental-existential correlations in theology "do not sufficiently secure the objective foundation of faith."[64] He proposes, instead, to articulate the objective facticity of revelation within history understood as the whole of history anticipated eschatologically in Christian faith. Thus, there is no question of attempting to create some transcendental-ontological realm or level of reality impervious to historical-critical methods. The horizon of the whole of history, the meaning of which will only be revealed at its end, both promotes the intrinsic access of theology to the sciences and historical-critical methods, while also emphasizing their hypothetical-tentative results. The debates his

cal; they are not mysterious in speaking of the divine mystery. The theological paradox is not 'irrational.' "

[63]Cf. K. Fischer, *Der Mensch als Geheimnis: Die Anthropologie K. Rahners* (Freiburg: Herder, 1974), pp. 389-99; K. Rahner, *Schriften zur Theologie* (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1970), pp. 519-90, and his *The Shape of the Church to Come* (New York: Seabury, 1974).

[64]Cf. F. Fiorenza, "Critical Social Theory and Christology: Toward an Understanding of Atonement and Redemption as Emancipatory Solidarity," *CTSA Proceedings* 30 (1975), 80; on Pannenberg's similarities and differences from Moltmann, cf. M. Meeks, *Origins of the Theology of Hope* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), pp. 64ff.

Revelation as History provoked have led Pannenberg to a more differentiated stance regarding subjectivity and objectivity. In his *Wissenschaftstheorie und Theologie* he admits that:

> The reality of God is co-given only in subjective anticipations of the totality of reality, in pro-jects toward the totality of meaning which are co-posited in every individual experience. These pro-jects are for their part historical, i.e., they remain exposed to the process of experience for their confirmation or rejection.[65]

Thus theology as the science of God is only possible as the science of religion; God is only indirectly revealed in history. Its difference from other religious studies consists in theology's questioning of religious traditions "as to how extensively their tradition documents a self-manifestation of divine reality."[66] Pannenberg goes on to show how this understanding of theology allows it to assimilate the many advances in the philosophy of science, how like philosophy and modern science it is faced with the correlation of normativity and the hypothetical, and also how the relation to life-praxis is intrinsic to theology.[67] He sees the special task of "practical theology" to articulate the theory-praxis relation in the light of ecclesial praxis.[68]

David Tracy's revisionist project has many close parallels —and in many decisive ways advances—the position of Pannenberg. That the sources of theology are Christian texts and common human experience, that the method of investigating the former is a phenomenology, and of the latter historical and hermeneutical— —these aspects of the revisionist model parallel Pannenberg's closely. Pannenberg's realization (that a subject-oriented anticipation of totality is constitutive of theology) is advanced, in my opinion, by Tracy's use of a transcendental-metaphysical mode of reflection in determining the truth-status for theology.[69] Although Pannenberg might wince at the assertion that "there must be a necessary and a sufficient ground in our common experience" for the truth-claims of religion, his own articulation of the criteria for assessing the truth-claims would be decisively complemented by Tracy's explication of how the religious horizon grounds, and is

[65] Pannenberg, *Wissenschaftstheorie und Theologie.*, pp. 312f. Compare this with Pannenberg's statements in *Offenbarung als Geschichte*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), pp. 136-48.
[66] *Wissenschaftstheorie und Theologie*, p. 317.
[67] *Ibid.*, pp. 303-48.
[68] *Ibid.*, pp. 426-42, esp. pp. 437ff.
[69] Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, pp. 52-6.

implicit in, all dimensions of known historical experience, how that is expressed in limit-language and the criteria of adequacy, appropriateness and coherence.[70] Tracy is incisive in his criticisms of the eschatological-political theologians of praxis (Moltmann, Metz, Braaten, Alves, Schaull, Segundo, Sölle, *et al.*) who seem "in most cases, to have transformed a neo-orthodox model for theology."[71] Praxis involves a dialectical interaction between critical theory and the economic, social, political and cultural infra- and supra-structures. But the theologians of praxis seem unwilling to apply critical theory to the religious symbols informing their traditions.[72] Tracy's own revisionist program carries out such a critical revision regarding theistic and christological symbols. This is not just for the sake of coherent theory; through the criteria of adequacy it also aims at praxis. He sees the theory-praxis relation in such a program as a practical theology:

> A practical theology in interdisciplinary conversation with empirical sociologists and economists, and informed by critical social theory, would find its *praxis* grounded in, yet authentically be a major and new stage of development upon, the *theoria* of a newly constructed revisionist fundamental and systematic theology and an ever-freshly retrieved historical theology.[73]

Acknowledging the many differences between the mediational theologians, Pannenberg, and Tracy, I believe they do exhibit a similar critical theoretic correlation between Christianity and theory-praxis. Although Tracy's criticisms of neo-orthodoxy might suggest that he rejects a transcendent non-identity, that would, in my opinion, prove an invalid interpretation in the light of his own distinction between limits-to and limits-of, his acceptance

[70]*Ibid.*, pp. 64-87.

[71]*Ibid.*, pp. 242f. As mentioned in note 55 above, this needs to be seriously qualified.

[72]*Ibid.*, pp. 245f. In the present context one can see how it is a relatively easier task for theologians operating with critical theoretic correlations to propose a critique of traditional religious symbols—relative, i.e., to theologians concerned with a critical praxis correlation. Where the former can draw their criteria for such a critique from various more or less plausible theories, the latter must set up processes of widespread collaboration capable of reflecting and directing critical praxis. Religious symbols as lived are embedded in ongoing life-worlds, and before critical reflection can critique those symbols it must be adequately cognizant of the psychic, social, political, cultural, and spiritual dynamics concretely affecting, and affected by, the religious symbols. Thus, for example, F. Fiorenza's "Critical Social Theory and Christology," pp. 63-110, finds that an emancipatory life-praxis understanding of redemption bears striking parallels with the classic doctrine of atonement (pp. 106ff.).

[73]Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, p. 248.

of Niebuhr's position on evil, and his concurrence with the process theologians' affirmation of the reality of God as the one necessary existent.[74] The critical correlation is, then, a theoretic union of identity and non-identity inasmuch as the reflex relationship of theory-praxis is *intrinsically open to* and therefore *in part constituted by* a non-identity they variously term faith-decision, ultimate concern, openness to mystery, subjective anticipation of totality, or primordial faith in the ultimate worthwhileness of our existence. Normativity is determined by this theoretic (mostly metaphysical) union of identity and non-identity insofar as it enables them to avoid the tendencies toward reductionist identity in the first two types, or toward a revelationary positivism in the third type.

CRITICAL PRAXIS CORRELATIONS

This type of theological reflection on the relationship of theory and praxis, as the previous type, seeks a critical union of identity and non-identity between the categories of theory and praxis and Christianity. It differs from the previous type, however, inasmuch as the critical correlation is placed in praxis rather than in theory. The theoretical correlation of the previous type was primarily metaphysical in character, open to, yet not identical with, the empirical sciences and critical historical disciplines. Unlike classicist metaphysical theories, the theologians of the previous type, in different manners, insist that the aim or goal of theory is praxis (understood as action, whether as a personal, social, cultural, political, or religious phenomenon). The present theologians differ from them since, in one way or another, they claim that the union-in-difference between theory and praxis, i.e., its reflex character, means that praxis itself as action or performance grounds the activity itself of theorizing. *Praxis is not only the goal but also the foundation of theory*. This applies to any theorizing, including theology. Unlike the primacy of praxis type, these theologians reject any attempt to restrict praxis to one kind of historical action, or to claim that Christian praxis can be sublated by human praxis of any kind, or to minimize in any way that freedom is constitutive of praxis.[75]

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[74]*Ibid.*, p. 186.

[75]These differences from the second type are rooted in the present theologians' efforts to articulate more adequately the non-identity constitutive of religious and Christian praxis. Cf. Matthew Lamb, *History, Method and Theology* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977), pp. 22-107. Praxis, in this type, refers to all fields of human activity (e.g., symbolic, psychic, cognitive, moral, economic, political, social, cultural, religious). Christian religious praxis involves relations to

Critical theory, in this view, is theory explicating and thematizing its own foundations in praxis. Metaphysics is dethroned as the foundational science of totality, for no theory (however metaphysical) can fully sublate praxis, although praxis is able to sublate theory. Thus, metaphysical theory—especially when it is critical—is recognized as not critically self-ground. No theory *qua* theory ever can be. Any theory making such a claim—and Hegel's was certainly the most genial and pretentious—is only setting itself up for an inevitable fall.[76] Adapting Tracy's disclosure model, I would say that the self-referent of these theologians is their awareness that only an authentic religious, moral, intellectual and social praxis can ground an authentic theology. The object-referent is their varying efforts at thematizing the role of theology in the interdisciplinary collaboration required to promote a critical praxis correlation which is ecumenical, metascientific, and political. These theologians experience the contradictions between past and present theories and authentic praxis; they seek to thematize those contradictions adequately, and thereby to liberate praxis from the oppressive social structures constituted by those theories.

As Lonergan recently remarked, it is only after the age of innocence has passed that praxis is accorded serious academic attention. He goes on to show that, whereas empirical methods move from data through interpretation and verification to deliberation, the critical methods of praxis move downward from the

all the other fields—when dealing with human activity one cannot isolate "fields of activity" not dynamically interrelated (for all their relative autonomy) with the others. Christian praxis is authentically incarnational *and* eschatological when its very commitment to a particular praxis critically opens it to all other authentic praxis. That is, Christian praxis immanentizes the transcendence of God's love analogous to the manner in which persons in love, by the very growth of their identification in love for one another, become more uniquely themselves and open to others. Cf. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp. 101-24; H. Assmann, *Theology for a Nomad Church* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1976), pp. 111-25; and P. Lehmann, *The Transfiguration of Politics* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975). Freedom is constitutive of praxis in the sense that all human activity is either attentive or inattentive, intelligent or stupid, reasonable or unreasonable, responsible or irresponsible, loving or hateful, cf. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp. 20-5. Praxis, then, has its own intrinsic norms capable of being critically contra-factual when the "facts" alienate freedom by not promoting a just social order conducive to liberating interpersonal values, cf. Lehmann, *Transfiguration of Politics*, pp. 238-59; Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, pp. 253-82.

[76] Cf. T. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (New York: Seabury, 1973), pp. 334-8; W. Becker, *Hegels Begriff der Dialektik und das Prinzip des Idealismus* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1969), pp. 44-85; H. Peukert, ed., *Diskussion zur politischen Theologie* (Mainz: Grünewald, 1969), pp. 82-95.

foundational praxis of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion, through appropriate policies and systematic planning, towards effective communication in action.[77] This understanding of praxis sublates theory insofar as the norms of theory are placed in the value itself of theorizing or objectifying the concrete intellectual, moral and religious praxis of human beings in order, through a critical feedback process, to affect those dimensions of praxis and, as theory, to be corrected in the light of that process. This is a generalized self-correcting process of reflection for action.[78]

In this context, the three levels of J. Habermas' reflections on his own mediation of theory and praxis can be related to the three functions he sees in the contemporary process of critical enlightenment. Such a correlation, transposed by Lonergan's functional specialization, would yield the three levels of: (1) *Foundational-Methodological*, which would explicate the truth-status in terms of the praxis of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion; (2) *Epistemological-Organizational*, which would link knowledge and interest (policy), and would organize the process of critical enlightenment (planning); and (3) *Empirical-Communicative*, which would disclose the concrete situtions of repression and would implement transformative strategies for the cultural and political struggle.[79]

Hopefully, it will do justice to the contributions of the theologians operating within a critical praxis correlation, if I briefly situate their main contributions according to these three levels.

First, the *foundational-methodological* work of B. Lonergan has provided, in my opinion, the most decisive elaboration of the foundations of a critical praxis correlation for the doing of theology.[80] He has effected a shift from theory to method which no

[77]B. Lonergan, "Religious Studies and/or Theology," The Donald Mathers Memorial Lectures, Queen's Theological College, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada, March, 1976. His discussion of praxis occurs in the third lecture, "The Ongoing Genesis of Methods."

[78]Cf. Lonergan, *Insight*, pp. 289-91, 622-3, 713-8; *Method in Theology*, pp. 47-55, 237-44, 358-67.

[79]Cf. Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, pp. 1-40; Lonergan, *ibid*, pp. 125-45, 365ff.

[80]The critical exigence confronts the disparities between the realm of common sense and the realm of theory, giving rise to a methodical exigence which explores the realm of interiority or the subject in order to initiate a control of meaning, value and action in accord with the praxis of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion. Cf. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp. 47-55, 81-99, 257ff. Note how this incorporates the need to preserve the distinction between theory and praxis while avoiding any tendency to reduce praxis to a mere application of theory. On the importance of

longer appeals to a scholastic or a Kantian notion of transcendental reflection. Instead, he outlines the methodological control of meaning and value in terms of the critical experiment of self-appropriation, which verifies the related and recurrent operations of conscious intentionality in the praxis of that experiment.[81] From the foundations of that generalized empirical method, he has initiated a series of further determinations which relate those self-disclosive and self-transformative structures of freedom to the praxis of the natural and human sciences, historical scholarship, and a generalized method for theology.[82] Since authentic praxis can never be taken for granted, and since the critical problem can never be solved by theories *qua* theories, Lonergan has thematized a radical cognitive therapy aimed at a basic liberation of the human subject through a heightening of awareness which appropriates the structures of experiencing, understanding, judging, deciding.

Such an emancipatory method as a cognitive therapy positively sublates the appeal which J. Habermas makes to psychoanalytic therapy as a model for an emancipatory science of communicative interaction.[83] It also transposes the ideal of an

this vis-a-vis the Frankfurt School, cf. Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1973), pp. 108, 279f.; and the American Catholic tradition, cf. John Coleman, "Vision and Praxis in American Theology," *Theological Studies* 37, 1 (March, 1976), 3-40.

[81] This experiment is both individual (cf. Lonergan, *Insight*, p. xviii), in terms of self-appropriation, and it is historical inasmuch as the process of emergent probability as historical progress and decline is capable of being articulated according to open, ongoing, critical norms (cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 115-28, 225-42, 387-90, 616-33, 718-29). Cf. William Loewe, "Toward the Critical Mediation of Theology: A Development of the Soteriological Theme in the Work of B. Lonergan" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Marquette University, 1974).

[82] The principal concerns of Lonergan are with cognitive praxis, i.e., how self-appropriation critically enlightens the realm of theory, and how that is related to moral and religious theory and praxis. For the mutual relevance of these concerns and those of political theology, cf. Lamb, *History, Method and Theology*.

[83] Habermas realizes the limitations of using psychoanalytic models, a chief one being how one promotes true collaborative interaction and participation in a situation of emancipatory enlightenment when the analyst enjoys a theoretic competency superior to that of the analysand. Cf. his *Knowledge and Human Interest*, pp. 214-300 and his postscript to that work in *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 2 (1972), 157-89. In Lonergan's cognitive therapy, however, the process of emancipatory self-appropriation occurs within both the realms of common sense and of theory so that an "elitist" notion of science is offset by the inherent demand for as extensive a mutual collaboration and enlightenment as possible. "Just as the psychiatrist in his didactic learns about neurosis in himself, so too the social historian and scientist will have sharper eyes for alienation and ideology in the processes of their study, if similar phenomena have been criticized in their own work" (*Method in Theology*, p. 365). More importantly, the process of cognitive

unlimited community of investigators, proposed by Habermas and K.-O. Apel, into the concrete context of a personal and communal self-correcting process of learning and action within the structures of the human good.[84] This involves, then, a fundamental commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration that is at once critical and creative. As a further determination of his generalized empirical method, Lonergan's functional specialties in theology are, like his cognitive therapy, to be tested by the praxis of a wide-ranging interdisciplinary collaboration. It is through method so understood that theology is related to all other fields of human knowledge and action—not through the mediation of philosophical theories. Moreover, it calls for the articulation of orthopraxy as the foundations of orthodoxy insofar as orthopraxy is the ongoing development of intellectual, moral, and religious conversions.[85]

The main contributions of political theologians to date have been on the levels of a theological *epistemological-organizational* elaboration of Christian symbols and doctrines as expressions of religious memory subversive of exclusively sacralist or secularist policies, as well as in the efforts (principally of Metz) to systematically organize this process of critical enlightenment through the institutional praxis of the Institute for Theological Research at the State University of Bielefeld.[86] The dialectic of emancipation is

therapy is continual and ongoing as self-appropriation, a fact which, as the self-correcting process of reflection and action, meets more adequately the problems Habermas is faced with, cf. his *Theory and Practice*, pp. 13ff.

[84] The major difficulty Habermas and Apel face in their present articulation of ideals of communicative competence and the unlimited community of investigators is that they are admittedly hypothetical ideals or quasi-transcendentals. Because of this Habermas especially is constrained to separate the processes of enlightenment from the organization for action (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 37-40) in a manner which jeopardizes his efforts at mediating theory and praxis, cf. B. Willms, "System und Subjekt oder die politische Antinomie," in F. Maciejewski, ed., *Theorie der Gesellschaft oder Sozialtechnologie: Beitrage zur Habermas-Luhmann-Diskussion* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973), pp. 43-77. Notice how the praxis notion of Lonergan in terms of his functional specializations from foundations through policy and planning to communications and, as self-correcting feedback, back to foundations overcomes any false dichotomies between the theorizing and acting on the various levels. This is possible since the transcendental imperatives are not hypothetical ideals but verifiable processes, so that he can speak of generalized empirical method—not equating method with logic as Habermas tends to.

[85] Cf. Lonergan's as yet unpublished lecture, "A New Pastoral Theology," (Boston College, June, 1974), where he mentioned how a methodically transformed pastoral theology "places orthopraxis above orthodoxy, but it has no doubt that 'doing the truth' involves 'saying the truth,'" p. 22. For the type of orthopraxis involved, besides F. Fiorenza's article referred to in note 72 above, cf. the forthcoming *Journey into a Crucifix* by Sebastian Moore (New York: Seabury, 1977).

[86] Cf. J. B. Metz and T. Rendtorff, eds., *Die Theologie in der interdisziplinären Forschung* (Düsseldorf: Bertelsmann, 1971). I am not trying to affirm that the

arbitrarily cut short by Habermas' restriction of the competence
for consensus when he claims that with suffering, guilt and death
we must on principle live on without hope.[87] There are very
relevant further questions about those negativities, and their ex-
clusion could lead (and *de facto* has) to the defense mechanisms of
liberalism and Marxism.[88] It is against the social and historical
consequences of these defense mechanisms that political theology
has begun the movement of a praxis-grounded critical reflection.

Francis Fiorenza has indicated the criticisms liberation
theologians have leveled against political theology, viz., the
latter's seemingly abstract concern with hermeneutics, with an
ethics of change, and with differentiations of the secular and
sacred.[89] If the present contextualizing of political theologians is
correct, then those concerns are not evasions but commitments to
a critical praxis correlation, at least as far as the theologies of
Metz, Moltmann, Sölle and Alves are concerned. The alienating
situations in advanced industrialized societies are not discrete but
interrelated with vast, complex institutions and processes of
domination and control. The task of emancipation demands the
elaboration of a critical hermeneutics, of a practical historical
retrieval, and of an ethics of change. Emancipatory praxis de-

extensive work of J. Moltmann or J. Metz and the other political theologians have
not provided significant contributions to both the foundational-methodological or
the empirical-communicative levels. Anymore than I would restrict Lonergan's
contributions to the former, or liberation theologies to the latter. Rather, I see the
particular importance of their various contributions to date to cluster around the
different tasks of those respective levels. Where Metz's main efforts have been
directed to the organizational praxis of the Bielefeld project, Moltmann's efforts
seem more directed at aspects of a theological epistemology or hermeneutics in his
Theology of Hope and The Crucified God.

[87] J. Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), p. 120.
Habermas is correct when he says they are not to be "explained away"—but they
must be resolutely faced, as the recent work of Ernest Becker clearly shows, cf. his
The Denial of Death (New York: The Free Press, 1973).

[88] Cf. Johann B. Metz, "Erlösung und Emanzipation," in L. Scheffczyk, ed.,
Erlösung und Emanzipation (Freiburg: Herder, 1973), pp. 122-40. Also
J. Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), pp. 317-40.

[89] Cf. F. Fiorenza, "Political Theology and Liberation Theology: An Inquiry
into their Fundamental Meaning," in T. McFadden, ed., *Liberation, Revolution
and Freedom* (New York: Seabury, 1975), pp. 3-29; for a general survey of "Latin
American Liberation Theology" by Fiorenza, cf. article of same name in
Interpretation 28 (1974), 441-57. As Fiorenza concludes, we need both political and
liberation theologies. The criticisms of each by the other would be valid only if they
were blind to the significance and need each had for the other. It is precisely to
overcome this that I see the complementarity in terms of an ongoing process with
the above-mentioned interlocking levels.

mands more, not less, critical theoretical analysis—as the studies on the multi-national corporations, and their effects on both highly industrialized and Third World countries, illustrates.[90]

Finally, the decisive contributions of liberation theologians to date might well be contextualized as *empirical-communicative*. The works of such theologians as Gutierrez, Segundo, Dussel, Bonino and Assmann are replete with situational analyses of the concrete conditions of alienation in their countries, and with the practical and theoretical strategies theologies must express if they are to communicate the gospel by a truly liberating word and deed. Hugo Assmann's *Theology for a Nomad Church* indicates how this critical-empirical task demands a collaborative effort on the three levels mentioned here.[91] The latter is not meant as a geographically imposed division of labor. All three levels should develop in each region. What my analysis does urge is that the contemporary imperatives of a truly critical unity of theory and praxis call for a complementary collaboration. The task of Christian communities, wherever they are, of bringing the saving message of Christ to bear upon the concrete histories of suffering—this task places an urgent responsibility upon theologians to dedicate themselves in a serious, practical way to creative emancipatory collaboration.

Common to all the theologians of this type is a realization that both the theoretical and practical issues facing contemporary churches and societies can only be met in an ongoing collaborative and praxis-grounded fashion. Both the reflex-character and the normativity question in the theory-praxis relationship involve a concomitant change (conversion) of social structures and consciousness. Common also is their conviction that such changes are not extrinsic to, but intrinsically demanded by, the manifold witness of Christian tradition as it lives on in the concrete and

[90] Cf. R. Barnet and R. Müller, *Global Reach: The Power of the Multinational Corporations* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974). There is a growing awareness of the need for a collaborative, praxis-grounded and oriented, critical economic theory. B. Lonergan is now working on such an approach to economics, placing it within the ongoing self-correcting processes of emergent probability. Cf. M. Lamb, "The Production Process and Exponential Growth: A Study in Socio-Economics and Theology" (Seminar in Interdisciplinary Philosophy, Mt. St. Vincent University, Halifax, N.S., Canada, March, 1976).

[91] Assmann, *Theology for a Nomad Church*, pp. 111-45, esp. p. 112, where his three levels correspond to the broad issues discussed on the three levels of the present study, and could be refined by the latter. An example of liberation theology moving from the empirical to hermeneutic and methodological questions is Juan L. Segundo's *Liberation of Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1976); S. Torres and J. Eagleson, eds., *Theology in the Americas* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1976).

dynamic praxis of our struggles for an effective freedom propor-
tionate to the gifted freedom promised, hoped for and proleptically
experienced in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In
varying and, I believe, complementary manners, they indicate
how Marx's trust in philosophy as the context for a sublation into
critical praxis was misplaced. In the struggles disclosive of the
transformative powers of Christianity, these theologians are
committed to a concrete "realization" of theology that promotes
an ongoing emancipatory solidarity and praxis far more extensive
and critical than philosophy alone could ever evoke.

CONCLUSION

This survey of the theory-praxis relationship in contemporary
Christian theologies indicates the diversity and dialecticity of
those theological positions. Where the first type tends to identify
theology with categories derived from classical theory, the second
type tends to identify the task of theology in various forms of
contemporary praxis, even to the point of sublating theology. The
third type insists upon the non-identity of theology regarding any
forms of theory-praxis, although they are hard-pressed to articu-
late how that non-identity is relational. The fourth type sees the
possibilities of a theoretic correlation between the identity con-
cerns of the first two types and the non-identity concerns of the
third, while the fifth type emphasizes such a correlation would be
critical only on the basis of authentic, emancipatory, and col-
laborative praxis. Some of the differences are complementary and
genetic, others are opposed. Many important aspects of theory-
praxis have only sketchily been touched upon or not mentioned at
all (e.g., how the types approach spirituality, moral theology,
etc.). This survey is only a beginning. If it establishes anything, I
would hope that it would indicate how theory-praxis goes right to
the core of the entire theological enterprise.

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