

**Presidential Address**  
**LANGUAGE AND PRAXIS:**  
**RECENT THEOLOGICAL TRENDS**

By definition as a presidential address is a "period piece." In 1953 the Board of Directors of the Society determined that the presidential address should be "a summary of the theological progress of the year, or a period of time, or recent theological developments and trends, a kind of general conspectus of the field."<sup>1</sup> This address will attempt to focus recent theological developments and trends which might provide a kind of general conspectus of the field.

The phrase, "recent theological trends," is evocative. Is there something going forward in present theology that might be named without "nailing it down?" Is there something happening *a tergo* in contemporary theology, something behind all the recent "turns," those horizon shifts initially so enthusiastically embraced but whose regulative authority waned so swiftly as theologians discovered the limitations of their paradigmatic sweep? The "turn to the subject" was exhilarating. It retrieved the ideal language of the person, history as human time, consciousness and freedom in celebration of the "infinite outreach" of the human spirit. With the first phase of the modern Enlightenment this turn was optimistic, and the Vatican II spirit of *Gaudium et spes* caught the contagion of its enthusiasm. But how soon it ended! People took a second look at its assertions and realized that they were formulated in an "optative mood." Let us take just one example—the Rahnerian interpretation of history as the field of freedom, the self-enactment of the human person, with eternity as its future fruit. This notion of history cannot be dismissed as an illustration of Rahnerian "optimism." It is but the theological interpretation of history which flows from an historically conscious retrieval of the reality of grace in accord with the Catholic tradition. When one moves from this vision of divine grace as efficacious in human history to the concrete realities of current history, however, one finds the latter in obvious conflict with the former vision of how things should be. A complementary development is necessary whereby this theological interpretation of history must be made real in the actual reality of history.

In response to this recognition that "things are not the way they should be," there emerged the "socio-political turn" to the primacy of *praxis* over theory with a new sense of urgency that theology must now be "realized." With the spread of this sense of urgency there developed in rapid succession Continental political theology, Latin American liberation theology, and North American liberation theologies. In general, this new political theology defined itself as complementary

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<sup>1</sup>CTSA Proceedings 8 (1953) 174.

to, as a necessary corrective of, former personalist and existential theologies. The forces inimical to authentic history, religious privatism, massive poverty, sexism, racism, etc. were named, and the *praxis* of emancipation was enjoined on all Christians in the name of the liberating God of the Exodus and Jesus.

In this turn from the personal subject to the political situation theology retained its general "method of correlation," but the range of its employment was expanded from the focus of the cognitive or conative subject in quest of authenticity to the structures of the social world of the late twentieth century as overpowering obstacles to authentic human existence for the majority of the human race. Toward overcoming the global forces of alienation the meaning and truth of the gospel had to be correlated with the praxiological necessity of "changing the world." While existential or transcendental theology placed the emphasis on personal faith, the *fides qua creditur*, as explicit or implicit, political and liberation theologies have reclaimed the traditional primacy of doctrinal faith, the *fides quae creditur*, as the source of the Christian vision of emancipation. Thus, the Exodus portrayal of the liberating God and the memory of Jesus, the Liberator, become the energizing biblical symbols for Christian *praxis* in and for the world. If the former theology sought to interpret the person in light of the gospel, the new theology would serve the practical transformation of human society. In its exuberance this new political theology seemed to forget the human subject in its attempt to overcome privatism and individualism, but it did bring a pervasive awareness that *praxis* sublates theory, while theory arises from and seeks to serve *praxis*.

It is interesting to note how theologians have refused to translate the Greek word, *praxis*, into English. The problem here is the current ambiguity of the word, practice. It could mean something like "applied theory," or it could be understood in our technological age as a synonym for production. To retrieve its authentic meaning philosophers and theologians leave the word untranslated. To clarify its meaning the philosophers and theologians have to return to Aristotle's clarification of the three realms of human being-in-the-world; 1) the realm of *theoria* in search of *epistēmē*; 2) the realm of *praxis* in quest of *phronēsis*; and 3) the realm of *poiesis* in need of *technē*.

For a time the new insistence on the primacy of *praxis* took the form of programmatic essays, strongly exhortative in style but rather vague as to details. Both the Aristotelian and the Hegelian-Marxist traditions on *praxis* were retrieved to formulate what is distinctive about human ethical and political action. Eventually the question of what constituted specifically Christian *praxis* had to be faced. Thus did the rediscovery of the primacy of *praxis* in political theology lead to a new "turn" in contemporary theology—the "linguistic turn." For the answer to the question of what Christian faith brings to emancipatory *praxis* demanded a new look at the Christian tradition, a tradition (like all human traditions) which is linguistically constituted.

At this point some theologians were brought to a new awareness of what their traditional dialogue partners, the philosophers, were doing. These theologians discovered that "language has emerged as a prominent, perhaps the predominant, philosophical and intellectual concern in our century."<sup>2</sup> This philosophy of lan-

<sup>2</sup>Fred R. Dallmayr, *Polis and Praxis* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1984) 192.

guage has developed in two distinct forms, the Anglo-American linguistic analysis and the Continental hermeneutical phenomenology. Linguistic analysis was for a time a form of positivism, and there was little contact between this approach to language and that of the European hermeneutical tradition. This situation has begun to change, and significant communication between the two "schools" is in motion. In the meantime, contemporary theology has been deeply affected by the hermeneutical tradition.

There is no need for us to rehearse again the modern history of hermeneutics from Schleiermacher to Dilthey to Heidegger to Gadamer.<sup>3</sup> In terms of the new "practical interests" of theologians the thought of Gadamer is of considerable import. For Gadamer's central concern is the retrieval of tradition as the historical mediation of meaning and value for the *praxis* of human life. Under the influence of Gadamer theology becomes the hermeneutics of the Christian tradition. Critiqued by the Enlightenment as the carrier of heteronomous constraint, tradition has been "vindicated" in our day by the work of Gadamer, Ricoeur, *et al.*<sup>4</sup> Instructed by Heidegger's notion of the initial importance of our "pre-understanding," Gadamer has rehabilitated the word, "prejudice." Against the Enlightenment's "prejudice against prejudices" Gadamer shows that we are constituted as historical beings far more by our "prejudices" (pre-judgments appropriated spontaneously from our living traditions) than by our judgments.<sup>5</sup> Tradition has an "effective history" as it continues to constitute human consciousness, and this power of tradition testifies to the power of language since tradition is itself primarily linguistic.

In his concern to understand understanding Gadamer distinguishes three "moments" in the process: 1) the enabling elements in our prejudices; 2) interpretation as a "fusion of horizons;" and 3) "application." Of the three the last is the most important for the practical interest of hermeneutical phenomenology, for it is the "moment" of application that brings Gadamer into conversation with the practical philosophy of Aristotle. While Aristotelian metaphysics as the clearest illustration of Greek cosmocentrism had long ago given way to the modern philosophies of the subject, the practical legacy of the Philosopher now instructs those who would overcome modern "subjectivism" through the investigation of the most "inter-subjective" phenomenon of all, language.

The Latin translation of Aristotle's anthropology, the *animal rationale*, clearly illustrates the traditional Western emphasis on the cognitive capacity as the characteristically human trait. The famous *cogito* of Descartes is a perfect symbol of the Western perception of the human being as defined by the power of reason, thought, knowledge. As this Western ideal of the solitary thinker who uses language to share with others the fruits of private thought begins to wane in our day, it is refreshing to take a new look at Aristotle's famous definition of the human

<sup>3</sup>See Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969).

<sup>4</sup>On this retrieval of tradition see Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

<sup>5</sup>Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroad, 1982) 239-40.

being in the original Greek, *to zoon ton logon echōn*, "the speaking animal."<sup>6</sup> Perhaps, then, Aristotle cannot be blamed for the tradition (mis)understanding of language in the West as "instrumental" or "expressive" of pre-linguistic thoughts. Thinking follows language. Language enables thinking. One may speak of "pre-conceptual" experience, as long as "pre-conceptual" does not mean "pre-linguistic." Human experience is always already "interpreted" experience, and the interpretation witnesses to the linguistic potential of the tradition that has always already formed a human consciousness. Pre-linguistic experience is pre-human experience. The spontaneously engendered symbolic structuring of consciousness describes every human being as a finite, historical, and social reality. For anyone linguistic competence is primarily a practical competence enabling participation in the various "forms of life" which describe an historical people. Theologians today seem to concur in asserting the primacy of *praxis* over theory, but this recognition requires further elaboration in terms of elucidating just what constitutes *praxis* as human action, ethical or political. The reflective turn from the "theorizing subject" to the praxiologically engaged community of subjects is incomplete without the "linguistic turn" which discovers that what renders *praxis praxis* (human) is that intersubjective web which binds a people together in an ongoing "conversation." In replacing the category, substance, with the Subject Hegel discerned "the cunning of Reason" active "behind our backs" in the drama of history. Today we might replace this "cunning of Reason" with "the cunning of the Word," for "in the beginning was the Word."

Reflection on language is reflection on reality as rendered perceptible, intelligible, and "unfinished." Language liberates us from the limitations of an environment for that intersubjective reality was call "the world." The world is effected by the word as human beings reveal their humanity in naming things. This naming is the primordial human *praxis* of "the image and likeness" of God who created the world through the divine Word. Just as God's eternal expressibility is the origin of everything that exists, so human expressibility is the origin of history. We are like God because we can speak. Indeed, we are so like God that when God spoke God to us "speaking animals," our humanity supplied the grammar for the divine self-utterance.<sup>7</sup>

#### LEXIS AND PRAXIS

Language as the symbolic structuring of the imagination produces the human being as a thinking and acting being in the world. Just as language "gives rise to thought," so also language empowers *praxis*. This empowerment cannot be reduced to the simplistic imperative, "think and act." The knowing that guides *praxis* is a special kind of knowing commonly referred to as *phronēsis*. *Phronēsis* is the spontaneously employed but habitually present practical "know how" of the morally responsible person. The recent retrieval of the Aristotelian virtue of *phro-*

<sup>6</sup>See Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Man and Language" in *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Berkeley: University of California Press) 59.

<sup>7</sup>See Karl Rahner, "On the Theology of the Incarnation," *Theological Investigations* 4 (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966) 105-20.

*nēsis* signals a salutary departure from a notion of reason which stresses its "theoretical" or "abstract" nature whereby it is literally "drawn away from" the concrete circumstances of life. The object of *phronēsis* is always concrete. It cannot be anticipated in abstraction from the concrete circumstances of its enactment.<sup>8</sup> This "cardinal virtue" on which hinges the entire reality of *praxis* is the fruit of sustained self-determination through critically reflective appropriation of values mediated by the living tradition of one's community. Tradition is linguistically effective in the formation of the imagination of people within its pale, and this formation nourishes the development of *phronēsis*—to the extent that the tradition itself is a carrier of authentic values.

One of the clearest illustrations of the linguistic formation of the virtue of *phronēsis* is the practical role of narrative in human societies. The intrinsically temporal character of human existence finds its most appropriate symbolization in the mimetic character of narrative. Indeed, as Paul Ricoeur insists, "time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence."<sup>9</sup> The classic narratives of a people give them their identity and specify their tasks by telling stories of persons and events that reveal the meaning and value of human life. Through hearing these narratives people are gradually brought to active participation in their communities by a kind of "osmosis." The linguistic tradition of the community works ideally to the extent that it continues to effect the virtue of *phronēsis*.

But tradition, like everything human, is ambiguous. The heteronomous power of tradition was uncovered by the Enlightenment's call to autonomy by way of courageous rejection of the trammels of the past. Tradition was identified with bondage. Today, however, as was said above, we witness a certain "vindication" of tradition, a renewal of a guarded trust in its power to mediate authentic values. While the thought of Gadamer testifies to the positive value of tradition, Ricoeur has shown that any retrieval of the authentic human possibilities mediated by tradition must be forged by way of a detour through a "hermeneutics of suspicion." Accordingly, any renewal of the virtue of *phronēsis* demands a critical attitude toward the tradition which transmits the shared values of the community wherein alone is *phronēsis* a real possibility. This crisis of tradition affects all traditions as formative of all communities, and thus the Christian tradition as formative of the Christian community.

The Christian community has its own understanding of *phronēsis*. Paul exhorted the community at Phillipi with the words, "*Touto phroneite*. . . . Have this (Christ's) attitude in you" (Phil 2:5).<sup>10</sup> The community must appropriate the *phronēsis* of Christ. Now this Christian *phronēsis* is identical with discipleship,

<sup>8</sup>See Paul Giurlanda, *Faith and Knowledge: A Critical Inquiry* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987) 76-97.

<sup>9</sup>Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 3 vols. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984) 1:52.

<sup>10</sup>This Epistle employs the verb, *phronein*, and its derivatives ten times; see *Nouveau Testament, Traduction Oecuménique de la Bible* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1975) 588, fn. k.

literally learning one's "know how" from personal apprenticeship to Jesus in that "school of apprentices" formed by its memory of Jesus, the community called church. For Paul *phronēsis* is the practical wisdom that flows from *charis*, the grace of Christ which is the presence of the Spirit in the church (Eph 1:8). This practical wisdom is learned by living in the symbolically structured (predominantly narrative symbols!) society wherein Jesus, God's Speech, is heard in the power of the Spirit. As a religious tradition, faithfully transmitted from generation to generation over almost two millennia, the Christian tradition is identical with the lived sense of faith of the People of God. With focus on the *praxis* of discipleship this lived sense of faith is identical with the virtue of *phronēsis*, translated by St. Thomas as *prudentia*, the *recta ratio agibilium*, but untranslated by us (for reasons similar to our refusal to translated *praxis*)—the English word, prudence, is often reduced to something like "cautious calculation."

Perhaps the most prominent illustration of the "linguistic turn" in contemporary theology is narrative theology. Here we will reflect on narrative theologies as "exercises in understanding, assessing, and proclaiming a religious tradition which take stories as conceptually prior to doctrinal formulations of theological systematization, for these could not make sense without a narrative context."<sup>11</sup> In a recent article on the *status quo* of narrative theology Gary Comstock distinguishes between two kinds of contemporary narrative theologians, the "purists" and the "impurists."<sup>12</sup> For the "purists" the entire theological task is covered by the employment of the literary form of narrative theology as over against any use of the conceptual abstractions traditionally characteristic of systematic theology. Pure narrative theology, as such, without any "ancillary discipline," can accomplish the three specific theological tasks Comstock specifies: description, explanation, and justification. Narrative offers the best description; good narrative provides the only appropriate explanations; and justification is identical with the authentic *praxis* of faith formed by narrative. The "impurists," on the other hand show their "impurity" by insisting that the power of the Biblical narratives is complemented by the procedures of foundational theology which seeks a more general ground for describing the Christian faith. Again, in explaining Christianity the "impurists" do not hesitate to use the abstract language of metaphysics (for most of them today, a "metaphysics of the subject") despite the "reductionistic" tendencies of all attempts to cast the particular within a universal framework. Finally, for the "impurists" the rational justification of Christian claims demands a theoretical attempt to check the correspondence between these claims and "common human experience." Comstock's evaluation of this serious disharmony among narrative theologians is interesting: the "purists" are right about description; explanation is a "toss up;" and the "impurists" are right about justification.<sup>13</sup> Comstock's report on the present state of narrative theology is clear and helpful. But perhaps another report from a different perspective might further

<sup>11</sup>T. W. Tilley, "Narrative Theology" in J. Komonchak, M. Collins, and D. Lane, eds., *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1987) 702.

<sup>12</sup>Gary Comstock, "Two Types of Narrative Theology," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* LV (1987) 687-717.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 698, 703, 710.

clarify the actualities and the possibilities of contemporary, linguistically self-aware theology.

#### THE NEW JESUS LANGUAGE.

An obvious characteristic of our present theological situation is the recent focus on Jesus as "the human face of God."<sup>14</sup> A new "theocentric Christology" is emerging in which the long tutelage of Athens over Jerusalem is yielding to a vision of God as disclosed in Jesus. A "Jesus-shaped" God is currently reshaping everything in the church, and this new theocentrism is central to all contemporary projects of liberation and emancipation.<sup>15</sup>

The new forms of narrative theology have themselves been deeply affected by the Gospel accounts of the words, deeds, and destiny of Jesus. Current sensitivity to the *kind of language* found in the Gospels is transforming theological language. Very common in contemporary theological publications is the distinction between the originary or primary religious language (the language of worship and proclamation, cognate to the language of the Gospels) and the second-level language of theological discourse. At times this distinction takes the form of the contrast between the primary language *of* faith as over against the secondary language *about* faith.<sup>16</sup> This contrast is initially helpful, but it needs significant nuancing. Theological language must never forget that it takes its *exitus* from the primary religious language only to make its *reditus* to that language after it has performed its ancillary service of critical clarification. Theology must never model itself on Hegel's "owl of Minerva" who flies at dusk into the stratosphere of abstract universals. Theological discourse must always purchase a "return ticket" so that it never wanders too far away from the concrete particularities of the language of faith. In his therapy for thinking Ludwig Wittgenstein averred that "the source of philosophical problems is the betwichtment of our minds by language."<sup>17</sup> In constructing their "systems" theologians have at times suffered a similar bewitchment. If, as Ricoeur tells us, "the symbol gives rise to thought," that thought should as far as possible resemble its origin—if it wants to avoid gnostic pretensions.

Jean Ladrière, our keynote speaker at last year's convention, offers a further suggestion on the close relationship between religious language and theological discourse. Ladrière holds that both forms of language, the symbolic and the conceptual, share the same "semantic aim."<sup>18</sup> Because these different languages share the same aim, "there is an original contribution of theological reflection which

<sup>14</sup>See J. A. T. Robinson, *The Human Face of God* (London: SCM Press, 1973).

<sup>15</sup>See Paul Lakeland, *Freedom in Christ* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986) 8.

<sup>16</sup>For an illustration of this distinction see Clodovis Boff, *Theology and Praxis* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987) 109-31.

<sup>17</sup>John K. Downey, *Beginning at the Beginning: Wittgenstein and Theological Conversation* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986) 87.

<sup>18</sup>Jean Ladrière, "Le discours théologique et le symbol," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 49 (19) 1-2: 116-41.

adds a particular dimension to the religious language as such and thus in a certain sense makes this very language more revealing for the human mind."<sup>19</sup> Thus does Ladrière help us address a common and quite serious critique of theological discourse, i.e., that it is always reductionistic. When theologians give in to that craving for generality that produces metaphysics, they cannot help but reduce the concrete particularities of the Christian story to illustrations of some universal essence. Some critics, not necessarily opposed to the second level language of theology, feel that "reduction" may not be all that bad, "because 'reduction' is precisely what explanations are supposed to do."<sup>20</sup> It is at this point that Ladrière's approach is most significant. To the extent that theology, the hermeneutics of the primary symbols of the faith, is able to secure its identity as serving the same semantic aim as those symbols, it will not succumb to the temptation to reduce the religious symbol system to a grand speculative scheme. Such schemes are "bewitching" in their effect and seductive in their siren call.

In 1926 Alfred North Whitehead claimed that "Christianity . . . has always been a religion seeking a metaphysic. . . ." <sup>21</sup> Some theologians today are happy to hear of "the end of metaphysics" or "the end of ontotheology." They insist that, given the enormous influence of the metaphysical tradition on Christian theology, we must now await "a new language of faith."<sup>22</sup> Narrative theology is a good illustration of the emergence of this new language. Recalling the traits of expressive language elaborated by Philip Wheelwright, one might suggest that theological language, faithful to its source in Biblical symbolism, should seek relative adequacy by undergoing a transformation, a detachment from the traditional horizon of the primacy of theory through a "reinscription" in the horizon of the religious experience it seeks to understand—thereby contributing to the semantic aim of the primary language of faith fully aware of its own secondary but quite significant role.<sup>23</sup> Whitehead in the same paragraph cited above lamented that "Christianity has, in its historical development, struggled with another difficulty, namely, the fact that it has no clear-cut separation from the crude fancies of the older tribal religions."<sup>24</sup> We may wish this "difficulty" long life!

For the justification of the truth claims of Christianity Comstock gave the prize to the "impurists."<sup>25</sup> But even in so doing he observed that the impurist's critical correlations between religion and culture will be slight. "Logical argumentation rarely serves the church as well as self-sacrificial service of others."<sup>26</sup> The real

<sup>19</sup>Ladrière, "Meaning and Truth in Theology," *CTSA Proceedings* 42 (1987) 12.

<sup>20</sup>Comstock, "Two Types of Narrative Theology," 710.

<sup>21</sup>Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1960) 50.

<sup>22</sup>Joseph S. O'Leary, *Questioning Back: The Overcoming of Metaphysics in Christian Tradition* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985) 27.

<sup>23</sup>See Jean Ladrière, "Meaning and Truth in Theology," 14; for "the traits of expressive language" see P. Wheelwright, *The Burning Fountain* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968) 73-101.

<sup>24</sup>Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 50.

<sup>25</sup>Comstock, "Two Types of Narrative Theology," 710.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 710.

mediation or correlation occurs in *praxis*. That gift of grace which is Christian *phronēsis*, so essential for discipleship, becomes effective primarily through the linguistic power of the tradition actualized in worship. But this efficacy is also promoted in a secondary but significant way by that understanding of faith which only good theology can provide.

#### THE CUNNING OF LOGOS

It seems that what was happening behind our backs more or less throughout this century is that we have become more and more aware of the mystery of language as the manifestation of our common humanity. The "turn to the cognitive/conative subject" and the "political turn" have been sublated by the "linguistic turn" which has mediated our practical intersubjectivity as finite, historical beings responsible for our common world. The positive moments in these two sublations can be described as a contemporary "return to the subject" in grateful appreciation of the work of Karl Rahner: 1) the turn to the subject is taken up into the "communal subject" or "the community of *phronēsis*" of the socio-political turn; and 2) similarly, the linguistic turn empowers the socio-political turn by providing access to the *fides quae* ("orthodoxy") and accentuating communal *phronēsis* as the *fides qua* ("orthopraxy").<sup>27</sup>

We have come to see the interconnection of hermeneutics, *phronēsis*, and *praxis* in a community shaped by a tradition. In our contemporary Catholic community we have become critical of the presence of ideological elements which continue to legitimate the illegitimate embodiments of the memory of Christ. This critical recognition has issued in conflict within our community, and a community while in conflict over the interpretation of its tradition cannot easily promote Christian *phronēsis*. Perhaps what we need at this moment can be called a kind of *meta-phronēsis* to create the kind of environment wherein our conversation can continue.<sup>28</sup> The sign of this *meta-phronēsis* is civility or that respect which "stands as the cardinal virtue in both the political and the moral domains."<sup>29</sup>

Lest these final observations be interpreted as merely exhortations I am happy to report to the members of this Society that we are considered a model of civility and mutual respect by our Belgian keynoter of the 1987 convention. He told me how impressed he was by the congenial atmosphere of our convention sessions, an atmosphere that enhanced the rigor of our theological discussions. And from others I have learned that Professor Ladrière is spreading this good word abroad. Perhaps the right path from deconstruction to reconstruction, from the hermeneutics of suspicion to the hermeneutics of retrieval goes by way of what a recent book describes as a "hermeneutics of empathy."<sup>30</sup> As we continue to converse with

<sup>27</sup>For a current "retrieval of subjectivity" see Gregory Baum, *Theology and Society* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987) 261-84.

<sup>28</sup>See John Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987) 262.

<sup>29</sup>Bernard P. Dauenhauer, *The Politics of Hope* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986) 95.

<sup>30</sup>Karl F. Morrison, *"I Am You": The Hermeneutics of Empathy in Western Literature, Theology, and Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

one another empathetically, we may trust in the "cunning of the Word," that Speech which enfolds us and has much to unfold to us as we "exchange eyes for ears" in attentive listening.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>The phrase, "to exchange eyes for ears," is an inversion of Blumenberg's thesis that exchanging ears for eyes describes Hellenization as "the transposition of biblical expressions involving hearing into ones involving sight." See Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983) 286.