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ARTICLES

The Dialogical Imagination: Tracy's Analogical Method and Luther's Hidden God in Adversarial Conversation

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In a recently published collection of essays, David Tracy has commended Martin Luther's notion of the Hidden God as a helpful theological tool which has the potential to translate the experience of nihilistic despair into an experience of "postmodern anfechtung." However, Tracy also notes that Luther's hidden God seems to thwart any clear synthesis with his own analogical method and its quest for conceptual unity. In response, I argue that by drawing on Agnes Callard's novel reading of Socratic philosophical method as an adversarial division of philosophical labor, Tracy's generous analogical method and Luther's unrelenting dialectical theology of divine hiddenness can nevertheless be united through an adversarial division of theological labor.

In his magisterial treatment of systematic theology as a fundamentally hermeneutical enterprise entitled *The Analogical Imagination*, David Tracy outlines his understanding of "classics" as texts from history that continue to demand our attention in the present moment due to their "excess of meaning."[1] Such classics, one might say, are timeless texts in time. They are timeless in that they disclose something normative about human existence which ever reaches out to the protean-today. Yet they are thoroughly embedded in their own day and age, demanding that all interpreters of classical texts enter into the tension of a hermeneutical encounter between their interpretation of any particular classical text and their interpretation of their own time.

According to his characteristic methodological thoroughness, Tracy first establishes a general understanding of "classics" in chapter 3 of *The Analogical Imagination*, before proceeding to chapter 4 where he invites systematic theologians to understand their own discipline as a hermeneutical encounter with a particular kind of classic text: the religious classic. Whereas classics in general embody "a normative element in cultural experience,"[2] religious classics specifically embody "a normative element in cultural experience" that "involve[s] a claim to truth as the event of a disclosure-concealment of the whole of reality *by the power of the whole*."[3]

1 David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 102.

2 Ibid., 108.

3 Ibid., 163.

Tracy's account of classics in general and religious classics in particular is tremendously helpful when it comes to considering the proper way in which systematic theology can be considered public—that is, without dissolving it into fundamental theology. However, for the purposes of this paper, I want to highlight an aspect of his account which might seem so innocuous as to escape comment, namely, the very fact that he makes a distinction between classics in general and religious classics in particular in the first place. That is, Tracy recognizes that systematic theologians focus on interpreting *a particular kind* of classic. Why is such an obvious point worthy of note? For Tracy, "authentic conversation" is the paradigm for successful hermeneutical encounters.[4] But unlike his nuanced treatment of the classic, Tracy never distinguishes between different kinds of hermeneutical "conversations." Here, I engage this observation not as a critique, but as an opportunity for a particular form of ecumenical dialogue with his work.[5]

The focus of Tracy's hermeneutical encounter is the encounter between a present-day systematic theologian and a religious classic from her/his tradition. However, Tracy also spends a significant portion of *The Analogical Imagination* discussing different kinds of religious classics, namely, classics of manifestation, proclamation, and action as well as bringing different kinds of systematic theologians (*viz.* analogical and dialectical systematic theologians) into conversation.[6] And while he certainly celebrates the multiplicity of theological voices, he never seems to reflect critically upon the kind of conversation into which he brings such voices, nor does he entertain alternative modes of conversation for bringing divergent theological voices together.

Throughout *The Analogical Imagination*, Tracy maintains an implicit mode of theological conversation which I shall call a "unitive" mode of conversation. However, in a recent essay that Tracy wrote concerning the contemporary relevance of Luther's *Deus theologicus*, this "unitive" mode of conversation is pushed to its breaking point. Tracy confesses at its conclusion that "we are left—or, at least, I am left—with affirming each of [the three major aspects of Luther's theology of God] as genuine dimensions of Luther's *Deus theologicus* without being able to correlate them into a single, clear unity."[7] Tracy's failure to enfold all three of these aspects—namely, God's hiddenness in revelation, God's hiddenness behind revelation, and the "blessed exchange"—ostensibly pits two of Tracy's virtues against each other. On the one hand, Tracy hopes

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4 Ibid., 101.

5 Indeed, Tracy recognizes the Platonic dialogs as the "classical model for conversation in the Western Tradition" and is keenly aware of how it exemplifies the dynamics of Gadamerian hermeneutics. Ibid., 101. I simply wish to show that further reflection on the conversations of Socrates yields an additional insight in the nature of the quest for truth, namely the importance of an adversarial division of epistemic labor.

6 Ibid., 202–18, 376–98.

7 David Tracy, "Martin Luther's *Deus Theologicus,*" in *Filaments: Theological Profiles* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2020), 161.

to correlate theological voices into "a single, clear unity" (though it must be recognized that he admirably resists any and all attempts at obtaining an absolute or forced unity).[8] On the other hand, Tracy desires an irenic *rapprochement* between the diverse classics of the Christian tradition. Yet Luther's *Deus theologicus*, which Tracy readily admits is a Christian religious classic, resists Tracy's desired unity.

This paper argues that the unity Tracy desires is not out of reach, but that it requires the adaptation of a new model of conversation, namely the newly-formulated Socratic model of dialogue known as "adversarial" conversation. Fittingly, this model of dialogue has been proposed by Agnes Callard, a professor of philosophy at the University of Chicago. Callard, who is most well-known for her philosophy of "aspiration" has recently turned her attention to an analysis of the method undergirding the Socratic dialogues.[9] According to Callard, even Plato seems to have missed something of the genius of Socrates even while he managed to transmit it. Beyond uncovering the necessity of epistemic humility for the acquisition of wisdom and offering a noble portrait of the willingness to seek truth unto death, Callard argues that the genius behind Socrates' philosophical method comes in its realization that the quest for truth requires that two mutually-exclusive dispositions be allowed sufficient relative autonomy to pursue their own ends while never being separated from one another in conversation. The first disposition derives from the desire to believe as much truth as possible, opening up a problematic willingness to entertain falsehood. The second disposition derives from the desire to avoid falsehood, opening up the problematic willingness to reject even probable truths. Callard contends that Socrates' biggest contribution to philosophy is the realization that both dispositions are essential to the quest for truth and that philosophers must resist the desire to dissolve one disposition into the other.

My thesis is that retrieving such an "adversarial" mode of Socratic conversation will allow Tracy's analogical imagination to be united with Luther's dialectical imagination in a way that avoids dissolving one into the other. I will unpack this thesis over four sections. First, I will exposit Tracy's analogical imagination as relying upon a "unitive" mode of conversation. Second, I will outline the reasons why Tracy finds himself drawn to, yet unable to completely assimilate, the various themes of Martin Luther's *Deus theologicus*. Third, Callard's notion of a Socratic account of an "adversarial" mode of dialogue will be teased out in more detail. And finally, this mode of dialogue will be used to situate Tracy's analogical imagination in "adversarial" dialogue with Luther's dialectical imagination. Paradoxically, I shall conclude that by setting aside his irenic desire

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8 Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, 421.

9 See Agnes Callard, *Aspiration: The Agency of Becoming* (New York: Oxford University Press. 2018).

for "unitive" modes of conversation Tracy might uncover a deeper unity through "adversarial" conversation between theologians on opposing sides of the analogical/dialectical divide.

David Tracy's Analogical Imagination in Pursuit of Unitive Conversation

David Tracy recognizes that there are different forms of classical religious expression vying for the attention and allegiance of systematic theologians.[10] Each expression, argues Tracy, is produced in roughly the same way. First there is a moment of "intensification" in which an individual is driven deep into the particularity of one's own situation and finds insight and understanding.[11] Then there is a moment of "distanciation" in which that same individual is drawn out of the experience of particularity in order to articulate this experience to other people.[12] Beyond the similarity of the structure of such experiences, the moment of "intensification" ultimately resolves in dramatically different ways, leading to different religious expressions following on the heels of the respective moments of "distanciation:" "When the dialectic of intensification of particularity releasing itself to a radical sense of participation predominates, the religious expression will be named 'manifestation;' when the dialectic of intensification of particularity releasing itself to a sense of radical nonparticipation dominates, the religious expression will be named 'proclamation.'"[13]

Religious expressions of "manifestation" are often closely related to visual imagery while "proclamation" is bound up with the notion of hearing.[14] Vision, here, is closely tied to intuition—that is, the direct "participation" and communion of the mind in the reality that surrounds it.[15] Hearing is associated with an experience of "confrontation by" or the "communication of" something not directly available nor similar to the mind.[16] As such, it is not

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10 Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, 202.

11 Ibid., 126.

12 Ibid., 127.

13 Ibid., 203.

14 Ibid., 205–9.

15 Richard Rorty argues that the association of "vision" with direct comprehension can be traced back to a simple choice made by early Greek philosophers to speak of mental processes of understanding in metaphorical terms revolving around the notion of the "mind's eye." See Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 38–44.

16 Luther's grabbed hold the auditory metaphor for dialectical, faith-centered approach to theology early on in his career as a theologian. In his *Lectures on Hebrews*, he says: "For if you ask a Christian what the work is by which he becomes worthy of the name 'Christian,' he will be able to give absolutely no other answer than that it is the hearing of the Word of God, that is, faith. Therefore, the ears alone are the organs of a Christian man, for he is justified and declared to be a Christian, not because of the works of any member but because of faith." Quoted from Mark Mattes, "A Contemporary View of Faith and Reason in Luther" in *Propter Christum: Christ at the Center* (Ft. Wayne: Luther Academy, 2013), 157.

difficult to see why Tracy connects religious expressions of manifestation with an analogical approach to theology and religious expressions of proclamation with a dialectical approach.

While Tracy's book on systematic theology is entitled *The Analogical Imagination*, this is not a sign that he dismisses dialectical theology. To the contrary, he sees both analogy and dialectic as integral parts of any faithful Christian systematic theology. He doggedly derides any neo-Scholastic misappropriations of St. Thomas' analogy of being that drifts into anti-dialectical territory.[17] However, Tracy ultimately sees Christian systematic theology as being necessarily analogical in the final estimation. Indeed, Tracy understands dialectic as an ingredient of analogical theology, not as its antithesis. Dialectical religious classics which focus on confrontation and proclamation simply do not have their own substance apart from analogy. They require an already-existing analogical framework for their negations to do any work. Even the modern dialectical theologian, Karl Barth, eventually "released himself from a purely negative dialectics and articulated, in his *Church Dogmatics*, ever-new reformulations of a new theological language of analogy—his 'analogy of grace' language."[18] It is certainly the case that "without the ever-renewed power of the negative, all analogical concepts eventually collapse into a false harmony, the brittle sterility, the cheap grace of an all-too-canny univocity or an unreal compromise pleasing no one who understands the real issues."[19] Nonetheless, the aim of all dialectical negations is ultimately to "release yet new analogical languages."[20]

The prophetic relies upon the priestly. The protestant principle needs Catholic substance. Dialectic is irrelevant without analogy. Proclamation has no target or telos sans manifestation. What is needed is the both/and of an analogical imagination which is able to contain both sides of the theological spectrum within a single vision.

The model of conversation is paradigmatic for Tracy in this regard—and this goes beyond just the hermeneutical conversation of a systematic theologian with a classical religious text. Conversation is also needed *within* the discipline of systematic theology so that the analogical and dialectical voices of the Christian tradition do not drift too far apart. And, in Tracy's view, the best way of steering clear of both Scylla and Charybdis is to follow the trajectory of an analogical imagination which—oversimplifying for the sake of

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17 Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, 413.

18 Ibid., 417.

19 Ibid., 421.

20 Ibid., 420.

brevity—majors in analogy and minors in dialectic via "hermeneutical fidelity to the Christ event itself" and attention to the particularity of a theologian's own historical context.[21]

In other words, analogy and dialectic are brought together in a unified hermeneutical method. Certainly, Tracy does not envision this unity as a forced or tidy agreement. Rather, it is a dynamic and ongoing unity. Dialectic continues to challenge analogy whenever and wherever it oversteps its bounds and tries to reduce "similarity-in-difference" to a straight forward "similarity."[22] Nevertheless, David Tracy's analogical imagination accords dialectical theology a secondary (though indispensable) role in service of a broader analogical approach to theology.

Martin Luther's Unyielding *Deus Theologicus*

In a recent essay entitled "Martin Luther's *Deus Theologicus*," David Tracy harvests the theological bounty which contemporary Luther scholarship has yielded over the last several decades.[23] Publication of the critical Weimar edition of *Luther's Werke* beginning in the late 19th century sparked a renaissance within the Lutheran world that produced several ground breaking studies on a number of aspects of Martin Luther's theology. Luther's debt to mystical theology has been expounded,[24] the centrality of his theology of the cross recovered,[25] and his participatory ontology has been wrested back from the post-Kantian bias of late 19th and early 20th century scholarship,[26] among other outcomes.

In particular, Tracy sees Luther's sharp sense of God's twofold hiddenness as a powerful theological articulation of an experience similar to modern man's sense of being adrift in a fragmented world, hanging onto nothing but the thread (or *filament*) of one's own will to believe over the abyss of nihilism. And, even more important, Tracy thinks that the classical expression of Luther's doctrine of the hidden God has the potential to tie such experiences into the broader Christian tradition of God's incomprehensibility while never letting go of an ultimate vision of God as the "God of infinite, Trinitarian love."[27]

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21 Ibid., 421.

22 Ibid., 408–15.

23 Tracy has recently published two books of collected essays. See David Tracy, *Fragments: The Existential Situation of Our Time: Selected Essays, Volume 1* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020) and David Tracy, *Filaments: Theological Profiles: Selected Essays, Volume 2* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020).

24 See Volker Leppin. "Luther: A Mystic," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 56, no. 2 (June 2017): 140–144.

25 See Walther von Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*. Trans. by Herbert J. A. Bouman (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976).

26 See Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, eds., *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

27 Tracy, "Martin Luther's *Deus Theologicus,*" 155.

Tracy rightly notes that "the fundamental insight into *Deus theologicus*, for Luther, was a glimpse of the reality of God as both revealed and hidden: revealed *sub contrario*, that is, in negativity, suffering, abjection, and abandonment, in the cross of Jesus Christ that paradoxically manifests God's loving promise of forgiveness."[28] Such a "transvaluation of all values," to steal a phrase from Nietzsche, contains the central thrust of Luther's theological method.[29] God is *hidden in* the cross of Christ, revealing the divine *modus operandi* which Luther most clearly described in his *Lectures on Romans* from 1515:

> For what is good for us is hidden, and that so deeply that it is hidden under its opposite. Thus our life is hidden under death, love for ourselves under hate for ourselves, glory under ignominy, salvation under damnation, our kingship under exile, heaven under hell, wisdom under foolishness, righteousness under sin, power under weakness. And universally our every assertion of anything good is hidden under the denial of it, so that faith may have its place in God, who is a negative essence and goodness and wisdom and righteousness, who cannot be possessed or touched except by the negation of all our affirmatives.[30]

Three years later, at the *Heidelberg Disputation* of 1518, Luther would start referring to theology guided by this ironic theo-*logic* as a "theology of the cross" and to any theology which sought to short circuit its negations as a "theology of glory."[31]

However, as Tracy notes, while it is true that "more than any theologian before or since, Martin Luther is *the* theologian of the cross," Luther's most original contribution to the doctrine of God's hiddenness came when he "moved into yet deeper theological waters with strange, disturbing insights into another dimension of the *Deus theologicus*."[32] This new dimension of the hidden God that Luther experienced was labeled "Hiddenness II" by Brian Gerrish in order

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28 Ibid., 136.

29 Rosalene Bradbury offers strong evidence that the "classical *theologia crucis*" represents a theological method as opposed to a theological locus in chapter 1 of Rosalene Bradbury, *Cross Theology: The Classical Theologia Crucis and Karl Barth's Modern Theology of the cross* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2011), 13–32.

30 Martin Luther, "Lectures on Romans: Scholia," in *Luther's Works Volume 25: Lectures on Romans, Glosses and Scholia,* trans. by Jacob A. O. Preus and ed. by Hilton C. Oswald (St. Louis: Concordia, 1972), 383.

31 See Martin Luther, "Heidelberg Disputation, 1518," in Luther's Works Volume 31: Career of the Reformer I, trans. and ed. by Harold J. Grimm (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1957), 52–3: "19. That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened [Rom. 1:20]. 20. He [sic] deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross. 21. A theology of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theology of the cross calls the thing what it actually is."

32 Tracy, "Martin Luther's *Deus Theologicus,*" 143.

to distinguish it from the "Hiddenness I" of the theology of the cross proper.[33] Whereas "Hiddenness I" refers to God *hidden in* revelation under the form of the opposite, "Hiddenness II" refers to God *hidden behind* revelation.[34] This second form of divine hiddenness—which Tracy calls "strange" and "uncanny"[35]—finds its classic articulation in Luther's *De servo arbitrio*. Luther explains that "We must discuss God, or the will of God, preached, revealed, offered to us, and worshiped by us, in one way, and God not preached, nor revealed, nor offered to us, nor worshiped by us, in another way. Wherever God hides Himself, and wills to be unknown to us, there we have no concern."[36] Luther formulated this distinction between the preached God and the hidden God at the climax of his argument with Erasmus where he attacks Erasmus for using a quote from the book of Ezekiel which says that "God does not desire the death of the wicked" in order to argue that it is "too ridiculous" to assert that "the righteous Lord deplores the death of His people which He Himself works in them."[37] In response, Luther offers a terrifying rebuttal:

> The Diatribe is deceived by its own ignorance in that it makes no distinction between God preached and God hidden, that is, between the Word of God and God Himself. God does many things which He does not show us in His Word, and He wills many things which He does not in His Word show us that He wills. Thus, He does not will the death of a sinner—that is, in His Word; but He wills it by His inscrutable will. At present, however, we must keep in view His Word and leave alone His inscrutable will; for it is by His Word, and not by His inscrutable will, that we must be guided.[38]

Not a few theologians (including many Lutherans) have argued that in passages such as these, Luther went too far.[39] David Tracy, however, finds value in Luther's notion of Hiddenness II.

Tracy has little investment in Luther's view of predestination, but he points out that Hiddenness II is not limited, for Luther, to the question of predestination. There are, in fact, two warrants for Luther's notion of divine hiddenness

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33 Brian A. Gerrish, "'To the Unknown God': Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God." *The Journal of Religion* 53, no. 3 (July 1973): 263–292.

34 Ibid., 266–8.

35 Tracy, "Martin Luther's *Deus Theologicus,*" 143.

36 Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will,* trans. by J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1957), 170.

37 Ibid., 169.

38 Ibid., 170–1.

39 The reformed theologian Alister E. McGrath offers a typical rendition of this critique of Luther in Alister E. McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther's Theological Breakthrough* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 219–223. At the end of his critique, he goes so far as to claim that with Hiddenness II, "Luther has abandoned his earlier principle of deriving theology solely on the basis of the cross." McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 223.

behind revelation that can be discerned in his writings. First, it is certainly true that his Augustinian formation predisposed him to take a thick view of divine predestination for granted.[40] However, as Tracy puts it, "Luther's other warrant for the second form of God's terrifying Hiddenness is the Void that at times imprisons us and wears us down to despair."[41] And while the first warrant is not likely to resonate with our modern situation, the second warrant has the potential to do just that:

> A sense of meaninglessness is existentially the phenomenon Luther appealed to so often—*Anfechtung*, both subjectively and objectively affirmed by Luther as bearing major theological import. This second sense of God's radical, frightening Hiddenness has, in the contemporary period paradoxically proved one of Luther's most compelling insights, not only for Christians but for all those many persons who experience the Void—that is, those on the edge of an abyss of the seeming meaninglessness of life.[42]

It is precisely to this experience (provocatively referred to as "postmodern *anfechtung*")[43] that Tracy thinks Luther's classic expression of the Hidden God is uniquely poised to speak.

By extending the notion of God's hiddenness to the realm beyond God's revelation in Christ, Luther offers a classical Christian voice that can help postmodern Christians interpret their contemporary experience of meaninglessness according to a Christian vocabulary. That is, the power of Luther's account of the hidden God for today is its ability to transform the experience of meaninglessness into the experience of *anfechtung*, to transpose a phenomenon commented upon primarily by non-Christian intellectuals into a Christian key.

Moreover, Luther is able to articulate his acute psychological experience of *anfechtung* in a way that yet allows room for an assertion of God's infinite love. As Tracy points out, along with a recovery of Hiddenness I and Hiddenness II, contemporary Luther scholarship has also rediscovered ontological and participatory elements of Luther's thought which had been obscured by neo-Kantian presuppositions among 19th century Luther scholars. The retrieval of a doctrine of *theosis* in Luther's thought has been argued most vociferously by the new Finnish school of Luther research.[44] However, even more conservative

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40 Tracy, "Martin Luther's *Deus Theologicus,*" 144.

41 Ibid., 150.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid., 150–1.

44 See Tuomo Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith: Luther's View of Justification*, ed and with introduction by Kirsi Stjerna (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005).

Luther scholars such as Mark Mattes have slowly recognized the preponderance of evidence for participation language in Luther's corpus while not necessarily embracing all of the proposals of the Finnish school.[45] The significance of this development is of great importance to Tracy, because it offers a hope for enfolding the experience of postmodern *anfechtung* into his analogical vision of theology via Luther's classical expression of Hiddenness II.[46]

However, despite all of the promise, Tracy ends his essay on Luther's theology of God on a frustrated note. He recognizes the powerful, orthodox message of Hiddenness I found in Luther's theology of the cross. He appreciates the potential contemporary relevance of Luther's somewhat less orthodox notion of Hiddenness II which comes to the fore in *De servo arbitrio*. And he is intrigued by Luther's ability to maintain a view of both Hiddenness I and II while still clinging to a doctrine of participation which reconstructs reason within the paradoxical bounds of redemption. Yet, Tracy remains unconvinced that Luther ever manages to bring these different aspects of his *Deus theologicus* together in a coherent way. Hiddenness II just doesn't seem to square with any analogical reconstruction internal to a view of Hiddenness I. On the one hand, Tracy is ebullient in saying that "those Christians who, at one time or another, have experienced themselves at the edge of a Void of seeming meaninglessness, cannot but be deeply thankful to Martin Luther."[47] Yet, on the other hand, he concludes:

> If these many faces of Luther's *Deus theologicus* could one day be correlated into some more encompassing theological unity without the loss of any of these vital components, it would be a major theological contribution for all Christian theology, not only for Lutheran theology. Otherwise, we are left—or, at least, I am left—with affirming each of these components as genuine dimensions of Luther's *Deus theologicus* without being able to correlate them into a single, clear unity.[48]

In the end, Tracy is unable to assimilate the various aspects of Luther's *Deus theologicus* (especially Hiddenness II) into his analogical imagination. While Luther seemed to come so close to a resolution, he was never quite able to

45 Mark C. Mattes, *Martin Luther's Theology of Beauty: A Reappraisal* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 180.

46 Moreover, Tracy argues, "One can claim [on the basis of recent work by Christine Helmer] that Luther's late disputations illustrate how his theological analysis of *Deus theologicus* was enriched by observing how faith does not merely, as in his earlier disputations (e.g. the *disputation against Scholastic Theology*), shatter reason's vain and self-deluding attempts to move beyond its own limits. Faith also paradoxically redeems reason for newly illuminated theological use." Tracy, "Martin Luther's *Deus Theologicus,*" 157. In other words, Tracy sees a similar return to analogy in Luther's late trinitarian disputations as he sees in Karl Barth following his book on Anselm.

47 "Martin Luther's *Deus Theologicus,*" 154.

48 Ibid., 161.

get back on the analogical road after *De servo arbitrio*. Luther's logic of divine hiddenness drifted just out of reach of Tracy's conversational and analogical theological method. Or did it?

I don't think that it did, but in order to explain how Luther's dialectic of Hiddenness II can be brought within reach of Tracy's analogical method, it is first necessary to explore an alternative model of conversation. In the background of Tracy's theological method is a unitive mode of conversation that seeks "a single, clear unity"—though, not an overly simple unity that ignores a healthy dose of dialectic. I want to argue that there is another avenue of theological conversation that can bridge the gap between Tracy and Luther without dissolving the one into the other, and in order to outline the contours of this alternative mode of conversation, I turn to the work of Agnes Callard.

Socrates and Adversarial Conversation

According to Callard, Socrates' "great discovery"—and his biggest contribution to philosophy—was his philosophical method.[49] However, the true genius behind his method has been overlooked by philosophers throughout history, including Plato. As Callard explains, the reason that Socrates' discovery has been overlooked is because the problem that it addresses had not been adequately grasped until William James brought it to light in his well-known essay, "The Will to Believe."[50] The problem that James exposes is almost so obvious as to be undetectable: the acquisition of knowledge requires both the accumulation of truth and the avoidance of falsehood. Simple enough, Callard admits, but what philosophers until James missed is that these two goals are incompatible.[51] It has widely been assumed that the project of accumulating truths and the project of avoiding falsehoods are the very same project. But, upon further reflection, this idea falls apart.

Callard uses the example of considering a proposition such as "the external world exists."[52] If one's goal is to accumulate truths, even if there is a small chance that the external world does not exist, it would be better to believe that the external world exists.[53] Without such a belief, it would be nigh impossible to know any truths at all. Hence, believing is worth the risk. In direct contrast,

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49 Agnes Callard, "Into the Coast: An Interview with Agnes Callard," interview by Gareth Evans, *Into the Coast* (website), April 15, 2018, https://www.intothecoast.com/agnes-callard#:~:text=At the close of the interview%2C Callard discusses,Professor of Philosophy at the University of Chicago, 40:22. In this interview, Callard unpacks her basic research into Socrates. The book is forthcoming. In the end, the merits of Callard's account are not actually all that important for the argument of this paper. Whether or not her claim that Socrates employed such an adversarial account bears out to scrutiny is not what is important. It is the framework of the idea and its ability to be transported into theology. Admittedly, Callard's theory about Socrates' method is cutting edge and prone to disconfirmation in the near future, but it is the very notion of adversarial conversation which she lays out that is important for my thesis.

50 Agnes Callard, "Interview with Agnes Callard," 40:30.

51 Agnes Callard, "Interview with Agnes Callard," 40:50.

52 Agnes Callard, "Interview with Agnes Callard," 41:40.

53 Agnes Callard, "Interview with Agnes Callard," 41:55.

if one's goal is to avoid falsehoods above all else, then it would be better to suspend judgement about the status of the external world.[54] While this example is extreme, it illustrates something important, namely, that in any given situation, one has to make a decision whether to prioritize the goal to accumulate truths or to avoid falsehoods.

In everyday life, most people naturally switch between prioritizing the accumulation of truth and prioritizing avoiding falsehood depending upon context and what sort of beliefs are necessary for action. However, Callard points out, while such contextual judgement is adequate for day-to-day living, it is ultimately inadequate for the pursuit of knowledge. Since the acquisition of knowledge requires *both* the accumulation of knowledge *and* the avoidance of falsehood *at all times*, pivoting priorities depending on context is insufficient for the task.[55]

It is with regard to this problem that Socrates's method shows its true genius. Individuals are forced to pragmatically choose between prioritizing the accumulation of truth and the avoidance of falsehood. And since they cannot prioritize both at once, they can never adequately pursue knowledge on their own. However, Socrates realized that you can prioritize both goals at once if you have two people working together cooperatively, one prioritizing the accumulation of truth at all costs and the other avoiding falsehood at all costs.[56]

It is similar, Callard points out, to the modern criminal justice system. In order to pursue justice, both the guilty must be convicted and the innocent must be acquitted. Both goals cannot be pursued at once. If one's ultimate goal is to convict all the guilty people, then everyone ought to be convicted. If one's ultimate goal is to acquit every innocent person, then even the merest shred of doubt ought to be enough to exonerate any given defendant. The desires to convict the guilty and acquit the innocent are at cross purposes, and so modern justice systems divide the labor. The prosecution pursues a guilty verdict while the defense pursues an innocent verdict. And as the cooperative juridical conversation takes place, both rules (convicting the guilty and acquitting the innocent) are able to be followed in such a way that justice can be pursued.[57] What Socrates is doing with his philosophical method, Callard contends, is to apply a similar process to philosophy, namely an "adversarial division of epistemic labor."[58]

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54 Agnes Callard, "Interview with Agnes Callard," 42:10.

55 Agnes Callard, "Interview with Agnes Callard," 43:40.

56 Agnes Callard, "Interview with Agnes Callard," 44:40.

57 Agnes Callard, "Interview with Agnes Callard," 45:30.

58 "It's an adversarial division of epistemic labor. That's what I think the Socratic method is." Agnes Callard, "Interview with Agnes Callard," 46:00.

Toward an Adversarial Division of Theological Labor

Theology as a discipline aims at knowing God, but this requires both the prioritization of the acquisition of analogies as well as the avoidance of idolatry. I propose that Tracy's analogical imagination and Luther's dialectical imagination can be united, but not within an over-arching analogical imagination working itself out in unitive conversation. Rather, they can be united within an "adversarial" mode of conversation as two necessary interlocutors aiming at two incompatible goals, the simultaneous pursuit of which are necessary for acquiring genuine knowledge of God. Like prosecutors and the defense in a courtroom, analogical and dialectical theology can be united precisely by being put at cross purposes.

In Chapter 10 of *The Analogical Imagination*, David Tracy betrays his deep longing for "some similarities-in-difference, some analogues, some principles of order, some ultimate harmony in the whole of reality."[59] The goal of his analogical theological method is clearly, in the end, the acquisition of analogies. That is not to say that Tracy will *never* prioritize the avoidance of idolatry. Indeed, on several occasions he does just that. However, the overall thrust of his method is to risk seeking out analogies.

In contrast, throughout *De servo arbitrio*, Luther's primary goal is to *avoid idolatry*. Now Luther certainly pursues analogies on occasion, but the overall bent of his theology is towards exposing idolatry *at all costs*. Indeed, even when Luther strays dangerously close to Marcionism by sharply distinguishing between "the Word of God" from "God Himself [sic],"[60] the purpose is, perhaps somewhat counterintuitively, to keep even the dogmatic structure of the incarnation from being twisted into a tool in the hands of sinners. In the *Heidelberg Disputation*, Luther poignantly argues that "without the theology of the cross man [sic] misuses the best in the worst manner."[61] Luther was suspicious that even the best gifts of God will be twisted towards improper use, and he was ready and willing to confound every analogy in the process of rooting out every ounce of idolatry.

The reason why Tracy cannot appropriate Luther's notion of Hiddenness II into his analogical imagination is simple: they are methodologically incompatible. But that does not necessarily mean they are incompatible in every sense. Luther's distinction between the preached God and the hidden God in *De servo arbitrio* is dialectical theology in its most intense state. It is willing to risk almost everything for the sake of rebuking idolatry. And that is precisely why Luther is such an important interlocutor for Tracy. They are both willing to take risks—Tracy in developing contextual analogies and

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59 Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, 409.

60 Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, 170.

61 Luther, "Heidelberg Disputation," 55.

Luther in examining even the church's most revered doctrines for residue of idolatry. However, what they both sometimes forget is how much they need each other. Analogy and dialectic need to be brought into adversarial conversation if the church wants to make an authentic claim to possessing knowledge of God. Hiddenness II cannot be a part of the analogical imagination, but it can be a part of a dialogical imagination that utilizes an "adversarial division of theological labor" in order to draw ever closer to truth.

Conclusion

What has Wittenberg to do with Chicago? I hope that the answer turns out to be "a lot." David Tracy's analogical imagination and Martin Luther's dialectical imagination are incompatible and at cross purposes. But that can be a very *good* thing if they are united through an adversarial division of theological labor.

Analogy can never be completely subordinated to dialectic. After all, skepticism in matters of epistemology is employed out of a fear of believing a falsehood and the fear of believing a falsehood derives from an even more primal desire for truth. Similarly, dialectic is employed, even beyond the bounds of an analogical imagination, out of fear of idolatry. And fear of idolatry ought to come from a desire for true knowledge of God. But if analogy is subsumed into dialectic then the desire for true knowledge of God seeps out through the floor boards. Yet neither can dialectic be subsumed into analogy. When this happens, the taken-for-granted features of any such analogical imagination inevitably open up blind spots for idolatry to take up residence. And in such cases, even the best gifts of God can end up being twisted to serve insidious, idolatrous purposes to which practitioners of analogy are prone to be blind. However, when brought together, theologians with an analogical method and theologians with a dialectical method can commonly pursue theological truth together, simultaneously seeking to acquire every available analogy while also aiming to avoid each idolatry.

Perhaps the most exciting, yet destabilizing, effect of adopting such an adversarial theological method would be its implications for ecumenical dialogue. It seems to me that such a view would shift the lines of small "o" orthodoxy along more conversational as opposed to methodological contours. That is, the mark of a good Christian theologian would have less to do with being sufficiently analogical or sufficiently dialectical and more to do with such a theologian's involvement in the collective, ecumenical quest for theological truth. Good dialectical theology would be measured at least as much by its involvement in adversarial conversation with the best of analogical theology as it does with its own inner dialectical efficiency.[62] However, such ecumenical

62 It is for precisely this reason that D. Stephen Long argues that Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar were such important theologians. Their theological friendship brought analogy and dialectic into close conversation which yielded substantive theological engagement on the part of both of these theological powerhouses. For more, see D. Stephen Long, *Saving Karl Barth: Hans Urs von Balthasar's Preoccupation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014).

considerations are ultimately beyond the purview of my argument. It would be up to someone else to tease such implications out in more detail. After all, as my mentor Dr. Kallenberg likes to say, theology is a team sport.

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