

D0100

David Tracy

Ch. 1.

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The context of  $\mathcal{D}$  today is pluralism, wh. Tracy finds enriching in the imaginative possibilities wh. various theologies offer the theologian -- various ways of envisioning the world.

But lazy intellectual tolerance is another matter. A merely pluralist attitude is not worthy of serious intellectual commitment or of the traditional Xian claim to illuminate the meaning & truth of our common humanity.

an important phrase for T.

2 assumptions:

a) the present pluralism of theologies allows each theologian to learn incomparably more about reality by disclosing really different ways of viewing both our common humanity & Xianity;

b) each One must attempt to articulate & defend an explicit method of inquiry, & use that method to interpret the symbols & texts of our common life & of Xianity. Each theologian must take a stand on both the basic formal methodological and material constructive issues which face us all: explicitly and systematically. This stand should be self-consciously revisionist vis-a-vis the major present alternative models for a contemporary Xian theology.

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T. conceives his work as a fund'l theology: the basic criteria & methods for  $\mathcal{D}$  argument.

Three crises wh. confront any theologian personally committed to the modern experiment & to the Xian vision of human possibilities: cognitive, ethical, & existential. There is a strange pathos in both the crisis of mg & the struggle for an authentic humanity operative in our <sup>contemp.</sup> modern period. Many feel Xianity has nothing offer for the resolution. Others say that, if critically reinterpreted, it still bears a real hope for a meaningful vision upon our common life. But its articulation demands of the One an exp & und'ing of the crisis of mg of trad'l Xianity in the modern post-Xian period; & of the crisis of trad'l modernity in the contemporary post-modern period. The dilemma, he says,

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haunts one's dreams like a guilty romance. How true! He cannot abandon his faith in the modern experiment nor his faith in the God of Jesus Christ ("faith" = a basic orientation & attitude, primal & non-conceptual). But neither traditional K'ian self-understanding nor recent modern self-understanding nor any comb'n of them is sufficient to resolve the dilemma. Only a basic revision of both.

But 1<sup>st</sup> the crises of the K'ian & the modern trad'n.:

1) The crisis of the K'ian theologian in the modern world is the disenchantment w. mystification. The demystifying forces re: the Western religious world-view were set loose by the Enlightenment's demand for freedom fr. oppressive authorities & for autonomous, critical, rational thought. K'ians experienced the demand for wholesale demystification of the K'ian religion. Must such methods of rational analysis simply lay waste the once rich & mythical imag'n & style of life of Western K'ians? Or could they occasion a process that wd eliminate the merely mystifying components of the vision & yet restore w. integrity K'ianity's central vision of God & humanity? "The struggle of modern theology has been largely the struggle to see how & in what fashion that latter claim can be upheld. The struggle eventually reached the stage of challenging every important cognitive claim of the K'ian tradition, every major ethical stance it traditionally proclaimed, and, at its limit, the most basic undering of exactly what the fund'l existential faith of K'ians really meant."

a. Cognitive claims. The list of cognitive claims includes even those made for K'ianity's central symbols of revelation, God, & Xt. But the basic clash betw. K'ianity & the sciences has been a clash of moralities: a morality of belief in & obedience to the trad'n vs. a fund'l loyalty solely to those method'l procedures wh. the particular scientific community has developed. And this morality, unlike the trad'l K'ian one, leaves room in principle for the overthrow of present scientific methods, paradigms, and conclusions. The only ethical demand is that every

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progress in kn. must be made by the advancement of critical evidence for or agst. the present reigning theories, methods, and paradigms.

The modern Day shares this morality of sci'c kn., demanding the proper kind of evidence for whatever claim he makes. And the announcement of his own tradition's beliefs does not & cannot ~~substitute~~ constitute such evidence for his fellow community of hist'l or ~~of~~ of inquirers, or even for himself as one committed to the morality of autonomous critical inquiry. He might, as did Tillich, challenge the adequacy of the modern ethical model of the autonomous inquirer, but still will not plead for a return to a heteronomous model. His challenge will be made on the same sci'c grounds. He will propose a new model, wh. accounts more adequately for our moral exp. as authentic inquirers: e.g., Tillich's theonomous model.

ST, I, 147-  
50; Theol. of  
Culture,  
133-46.

The modern x'tian Day ethically must challenge the trad'l self-understanding of the theologian. His task is not a simple defense or orthodox reinterpret'n of trad'l belief. He must assume a critical posture towards his own & his tradition's beliefs. His fund'l ethical commitment is to that community of scientific inquiry whose province logically includes whatever issue is under investigation.

His basic loyalty to his church's trad'n is his honest resolve to study that tradition critically & thereby aid its self-understanding. His fund'l loyalty qua theologian is to that morality of sci'c kn. wh. he shares w. his colleagues. "In all properly of inquiry, the analysis should be characterized by those same ethical stances of autonomous judgment, critical reflection, & properly skeptical hard-mindedness that characterize analysis in other fields." (7)

The fuller dimensions of the situation can be found in a study of the self-understanding of the basic "faith" wh. is operative for the modern x'tian theologian. There is a "post-modern"

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spirit wh. challenges Enlightenment models for humanity's critical kn. & ethical actions in favor of a model of authenticity. Freud, Marx, & Nietzsche have forever cast doubt on the belief that the solitary autonomous rational thinker could achieve "enlightenment."

But the contemp. critiques of modernity deepened the fund'l commitment to those purely secular standards for kn. & actions initiated by the Enlightenment. The "authentic" person is committed above all else to the full affirmations of the ultimate significance of our lives in the world. Such a commitment is a faith, a basic orientation or attitude determining one's cognitive beliefs & ethical actions.

An explicit & full recog. of this faith as the common faith shared by secularist & modern thinkers is the most important insight needed to understand the contemporary  $\text{O}^2$  sit'n in its full dimensions & its real possibilities.

No more than his secular contemporaries can the modern  $\text{O}^2$  allow belief in a "supernatural" realm of ultimate significance or in a supernatural God indifferent to the ultimate signif. of our actions.

Then why be a theologian? Because he maintains that a proper understanding of the explicitly known faiths can render intellectually coherent & symbolically powerful the common secular faith in the ultimate significance of our lives here and now. His claim is that "nothing less than a proper understanding of those central beliefs -- in 'revelation,' in 'God,' in 'Jesus Christ' -- can provide an adequate understanding, a correct 'reflective inventory,' or an existentially appropriate symbolic representation of the fund'l faiths of secularity." Or: "neither supernaturalism nor pure secularism, neither classical theism nor atheism, neither an exclusivist christology nor the rejection of Jesus the Christ can allow us to reflect appropriately or to represent adequately our fund'l faiths in the ultimate worthwhileness of our present actions."

John Dewey,  
A Common  
Faith.

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The revisionist Day will deny:

a) the purely secularist negation of any real ground of  
mg outside ourselves wh. assures us that our faith is  
not simply illusion;

b) any essentially positivist 'revelational' affirmation  
of our supposed ability to transcend this faith in this  
world in favor of some presumably greater, indeed  
supernatural, world. Neither secularism nor  
supernaturalism can adequately reflect or appropriately  
ensure our commitment to the final worthwhileness  
of the struggle for truth & honesty in our inquiry, & for  
justice & even agapic love in our ind'l & social practice.  
He is unable to share many of the trad'l X'tian self-  
understandings precisely bec. he believes that such  
und<sup>ing</sup> negates the fund'l faith of his life as that  
very faith is appropriately expressed in the true  
faith of X'tianity itself.

And he will find the secularist understanding of  
the ~~self~~<sup>secular</sup> affirmation of the ultimate worth of our lives  
in nature & its inconsistent w. the fund'l faith wh. it  
reflects. The secularist's rejections of theism & X'tianity  
are neither coherent nor able to account for our common  
experience as involving an affirmation of the final  
worthwhileness of existence. "Such theologians believe  
that only a coherent articulation of the reality of the X'tian God  
can provide an adequate reflective account of both the  
unavoidable presuppositions of our inquiry & our moral  
activity, and of the basic faith in the final meaningfulness  
of an authentic life wh. secularity itself has articulated w.  
such power." (10)

The X'tian faith is at heart none other than the most adequate  
articulation of the basic faith of secularity itself.

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