ii. The Public of Society: The Three Realms of Society

Most Euro-American theologians are involved, we have noted, in three publics: the wider society, the academy and the church. The first of these publics may be described by the generic word "society."[15] In highly developed societies (i.e., those advanced industrial, technological societies with democratic polities and capitalist, socialist or mixed economies) the word "society" seems preferable to the other natural choice of "culture." For "society" is a word coined by social scientists as the broadest term available to encompass three realms: the technoeconomic realm, the realm of polity and the realm of culture. In relatively non-theory-laden terms these three realms may be further specified as follows.[16]

implicitly addresses all three publics. The very character of the fundamental existential questions which theology addresses provides the basic warrant for this statement as principle. The analysis of representative societal, academic and church-related theologies throughout this book will provide the warrants for the statement as fact.

To refuse to face the complexity of the social reality of the theologian may well prove as damaging as an earlier theological generation's refusal to face historical consciousness. For the results of that refusal lie all about us in the contemporary theological context: a relaxed if not lazy pluralism contenting itself with sharing private stories while both the authentically public character of every good story and the real needs of the wider society go unremarked; a passionate intensity masked as authentic prophecy that resists necessary pleas for empirical evidence while demanding compliance to a particular ideology; a rush to the right for the false security of yet another restoration—too often a restoration which, like that of the Bourbons, has forgotten nothing and learned nothing; a reigning pathos among those who still demand argument and evidence (in a word, publicness) and whose inability to cut through the swamp of privateness may finally force them to become those who lack all conviction. We all know the truth in Kierkegaard's description of the modern intellectual as one become "pathologically reflective" or, for the theologian, the harsh realities in E. M. Cioran's description of many modern intellectuals as "religious minds . . . without religion."[13]

Yet perhaps some explicit reflection on the several publics of the contemporary theologian, indeed of several internalized selves, may aid us all at least to hear one another once again. In that renewed conversation, we may well find that anyone who reflects on ultimate issues is really a "single one," but, precisely as such, one who does not retreat to privateness.[14] Each will attempt, in fidelity to a profoundly personal but not private vision, to find the skills to speak publicly again.

ii. The Public of Society: The Three Realms of Society

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1. The realm of the technoeconomic structure is concerned with the organization and allocation of goods and services. This structure forms the occupation and stratification systems of the society and uses modern technology for instrumental ends.

2. The realm of the polity is concerned with the legitimate meanings of social justice and the use of power.[17] This involves the control of the legitimate use of force and the regulation of conflict (in libertarian societies within the rule of law), in order to achieve the particular conceptions of justice embodied in a society's traditions or its constitution.

3. The realm of culture—chiefly, but not solely, art and religion—and reflection upon it in various forms of cultural criticism, philosophy and theology is concerned with symbolic expressions. Those expressions, whether originating (as in art or religion) or reflective upon the symbols (as in art criticism or theology), attempt to explore and express the meaning and values of individual, group and communal existence. More exactly, culture is, in Clifford Geertz's careful definition, "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life."[18] The realm of culture, therefore, will provide the clues to both the ethos of a society's life (i.e., the tone, character and quality of life—its "style") and its correlative worldview (i.e., the picture people have of the way things in actuality are, their most comprehensive ideas of order).[19] All cultural analyses, including the theological, will concentrate upon the relationships between ethos and world view: for example, whether in a particular instance ethos and worldview are either confrontational or mutually supportive, and how they relate to alternative possibilities of both.

Whether or not particular theologians are explicitly involved in the tasks of responsible citizenship in so complex a society, they are clearly affected by specific roles in that society. One need not become an orthodox Marxist in order to recognize the obvious and, in some cases, determinative influence of the technoeconomic realm on past and contemporary theologians.[20] One need not accept either Daniel Bell's neoconservative prescriptions for our society, nor Leo Strauss' antimodern "return to the polis" suggestions, nor Jürgen Habermas' claim that our society is one involved in "systematically distorted communication," nor any other theory-laden prescription[21] to agree with this initial description of the three interrelated realms that comprise as complex a society as our own.

Indeed, before one engages in any form of prognosis for the present situation, the following comments may serve as a possible consensus statement across the spectrum of conflicting prescriptions. If any society is a complex one with the three realms of advanced industrial societies, then any member of the society (including the theologian) needs to reflect

explicitly on that complexity. Nothing is accomplished by retreats to some romantic notion of the solitary individual unaffected by social reality. We are all, in fact, social selves. We are all in constant interaction with the three realms constituting our present society. Our need is to recognize that fact and its influence on all theology.

In the interests of clarity and brevity I shall state my own assumptions for the description of each realm. The appeal of these assumptions, if any, must be, in accordance with the present limited purposes of this analysis, intuitive or counterintuitive for the reader.[22] My hope is that by stating my assumptions as explicitly as possible, the reader will find it easier to accept or reject them.

1. In the technoeconomic realm, I assume the value of technology but also the disvalue of an all-embracing technocracy for the whole society. In brief, functional or instrumental rationality is both necessary and appropriate for questions in the technoeconomic structure. The standard understanding of instrumental rationality seems appropriate here: a use of reason to determine rational means for a determined end. In the technoeconomic sphere, that "end" is ordinarily some form of success or failure in feasibility or efficiency. The major problem of instrumental reason is also obvious: its relative inability to define *ends* for the polity and culture on other than either an instrumental or a merely intuitive basis.

Except for the strict technocrat, most observers agree that instrumental rationality becomes dangerous to the wider society when its evident successes in the technoeconomic realm encourage us to employ only instrumental reason for articulating and resolving value questions for either the polity or the culture. Here the most difficult questions for the wider society emerge when one reflects upon the societal consequences, in both polity and culture, of technological advance.[23] For if instrumental rationality provides the sole paradigm for public, reasoned discourse in society, then we are not dealing only with a technological society but with an emerging technocracy, where the eclipse of practical reason for political decision and action is assured.[24] Then the more usual alternatives for rational, public discourse on societal issues too often turn out to be either unexamined and naive intuitions on value issues by a technological and bureaucratic or Hobbesian elite, or the conflict of special-interest groups.[25] In either case, a truly public discussion of issues of value for the whole society on other than either an intuitive or instrumental basis is quickly short-circuited.

What John Courtney Murray named "civic discourse" or Walter Lippmann articulated as "a public philosophy" for the society is disowned as perhaps applicable to an earlier and simpler age but clearly inappropriate to our complex technological society.[26] Humanistic reflection on values seems ever more confined to humanistic enclaves in the realm of culture. And that realm can itself become a "reservation of the

spirit''[27] wherein a marginalized art, a privatized religion, a scienticized politics, an ineffectual philosophy and cultural criticism may continue their now harmless pleasures. Indeed, like the ancient Sybarites, humanists may even flourish on the assumption that they do not stray too far from the reservation and do not offer other than ''personal preference'' options to the instrumentalist discussion of values for the society as a whole. Narcissus may be allowed his curious pastimes. The polis, however, is both unaffected and unimpressed.

2. In the realm of polity, the one realm where all the citizens of the polis presumably meet, civic discourse and a genuinely public philosophy grounded in comprehensive notions of rationality and the demands of practical reason are imperative.[28] In American society, one need not romanticize the genuinely public discourse of the ''Founding Fathers''[29] nor minimize the vast differences between their basically agrarian society and our own advanced industrial, technological one[30] in order to realize that a public discussion of polity issues appealing to all intelligent, reasonable and responsible persons is a necessity, not a luxury, for any humane polity. In the wider Euro-American society, one need not romanticize the politics of Plato and Aristotle, nor minimize the lack of correlation between the original Greek polis and modern society, in order to realize that the Greek ideal of civilized discussion of issues for the polis remains an exemplary limit-concept even in our present vastly more complex society.[31] If we continue to assume the value of reasoned, public discourse in a critical and argued fashion, if we continue to affirm the related values of individual liberties and equality as shared and often conflicting values for a democratic polity, then the discussion of these conflicts cannot be left to either a technological and bureaucratic elite nor to the happenstance of special-interest groups.

In the Western tradition of ethical philosophy, for example, one finds authentically public ways to discuss policy issues. Whether those ways be based upon teleological, deontological, axiological or responsibility models for ethical reasoning, or upon some ''mixed theory,''[32] there seems little doubt that all ethical arguments are in principle open to all intelligent, reasonable and responsible persons. As grounded in comprehensive notions of practical reason, they are public—not private. As a single example in recent American history, one may recall the many discussions of John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*.[33] Rawls' work, as most critics admit, provides one clear focus for arguing about the concept of justice for a society like our own. Rawls' commitment to the tradition of analytical philosophy does not disallow the discussability of his arguments by alternative ethical traditions (e.g., Marxist or ''natural law'' traditions). His use of an initial model of ''reflective equilibrium'' allows all participants in the discussion to make appeals to their own informed intuitions and distinct theories of the good. His use of what is, in fact, a mixed theory for ethical reflection

allows any intelligent and rational person to enter the argument on genuinely common grounds without prior commitments to Rawls' own "personal preferences." His distinction between "thin" and "fuller" theories of the good should also allow, in principle, the employment of resources from particular traditions for the wider common good.[34] Nor should this discussion be limited only to professional philosophers. For no reflective person in our society can avoid the issues of present polity, especially those issues grouped under the rubric of social justice and specified for a democratic polity as the complex, conflicting and ever-shifting set of relationships between individual liberties and equality.

These questions affect us all. If anyone, including the theologian, claims not to be thus affected, then that person, as Aristotle long since reminded us, is either a god or a beast, not a human being, a social and political animal.[35] Do we not need to ask ourselves anew whether our society can continue to allow itself the fatal luxury of demanding professional competence in every major area of our communal lives except value issues? Perhaps our awe at the astonishing achievements of technology and our correct and healthy recognition of our individual ignorance in the area of technology tempt us to be too willing to hand over the realm of polity to a technological and bureaucratic elite whose own sense of ethical issues is in fact highly unprofessional.[36] Indeed, that sense is often some form of personal intuition heavily influenced by bureaucratic imperatives. Do we not seem too content to retreat from the realm of polity and retire with whatever remaining dignity we can muster to the sphere of our private lives where "personal preferences" are still allowed to reign?[37]

Yet this attitude cannot but be judged dangerously naive and eventually fatal. In fact, if our society applied only "intuitions" to the techno-economic realm, society would wreck the technoeconomic structure itself with more than deliberate speed. The application of instrumental reason alone to ethical questions (in the manner of some proponents of social engineering and systems analysis) is similarly destructive. Instrumental reason is justly praised for its expertise in determining rational "means" for agreed upon "ends" and in determining "feasibility" rationally, but "validity" only intuitively. Ordinarily that same use of reason is merely "intuitive" in determining "ends" for the common good of the polity itself.

The more comprehensive notions for practical rationality, and thereby for "publicness," articulated in such paradigmatic ideal societies as the ancient Greek polis or the New England town meeting, and refined through centuries of moral reasoning and ethical reflection, need far wider recognition in the realm of polity than present circumstances admit or sometimes even allow. Otherwise we should honestly admit that the present complexity of our society entails a scenario something like this: The realm of culture is, in fact and in principle, to be shunted into the margins of society, into the realm of the private; the realm of polity is to become,

in principle, a realm where technocracy and bureaucracy reign and where both mediating structures and institutions[38] along with more comprehensive notions of rationality other than the purely technical one for use in rational policy making are now ruled out as impossible, indeed, as frivolous options. An initial step of clarification in this crucial realm is further reflection upon the full range of what will and will not count as reason-giving procedures.

3. In the realm of culture, intuitive and developed senses of values may be found in the classical symbolic expressions of the major traditions informing the culture.[39] Both ethos and worldview, affectivity, style and cognitive principles of order may be analyzed by appropriate methods in all humanistic studies, including philosophy and theology. It seems correct to observe that theologians, whatever their particular social locus (a particular university, seminary, political movement, base community, etc.), relate principally to the realm of culture and, through that realm and its notions of practical reason, to the realm of polity. Religion, after all, is a key cultural index. Indeed, in its cultural functions, religion serves, to recall Clifford Geertz's widely accepted definition, as "a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations . . . by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing those conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic."[40] The presence of the religious reality in a culture, whether in the form of a religious dimension to the everyday disclosed in limit-situations and limit-questions or, more usually, in the symbols of explicitly religious traditions, demands careful analysis from all those interested in values, including those interested in "fuller" theories of the good for the polity.

It is in the realm of culture that both participation in and critical reflection upon symbols, including religious symbols, principally occur. The artist, the religious personality, the philosopher, the theologian, the social scientist, the literary critic devote major energy to interpreting participatory symbols, including their relevance to the needs of the whole society. In the original meaning of a "liberal education," that knowledge worthy of a free mind, all informed participants in the realm of culture were both humanists and involved in practical reason.[41]

In earlier and less complex societies, the role of culture in polity was usually more direct than in our own. No doubt the very complexity of present society—a complexity which includes a technology demanding specialized knowledge for informed judgment, and an accelerating centralization of power in an elite bureaucracy which tends to level the power and role of all mediating institutions (family, church, neighborhood, school, etc.)—affects all realms. Those effects are clear: a widespread tendency towards privateness; a diminishment of belief in the possibility of authentic civic discussion in the community; and, finally, the tendency

to discourage, in both piecemeal and systematic fashion, any significant role in the realm of polity for those whose principal home is the realm of culture.

Whether avant-garde artists or countercultural movements in our century have chosen or have simply recognized their effective absence from the realm of the public remains a moot point.[42] It is the case, however, that art has become increasingly marginalized in our society. Indeed, as we shall see in later chapters, art seems to live principally as the realm of private taste and omnivorous consumption. The claim that the work of art, often through its powerful conscious or unconscious negations of present actuality,[43] discloses a truth about our common human condition often strikes both artists and the general public as counterintuitive. We have been too well socialized into the belief that the artist is, really, "a bird of paradise," a romantic soul yearning to express some purely private vision of the self.

Unfortunately, the artist can internalize this image and spend too much effort in "advertisements for myself." The same socialization process frees the public to allow these diversions. What, after all, is art but a now attractive, now repulsive expression of another's private self? It all depends, after all, on one's "private" taste. Exhausted by the paramount reality of the everyday, a reality itself ambiguously transformed by the same technology and bureaucracy, we can use the escape route of the artist to effect our own temporary vicarious escapes from our other, our "real" responsibilities. With neither Plato's insight nor his honesty in demanding that we remove the arts from the polis,[44] we effectively force the artist into a romantic and finally private misconception of a role. Thereby do we, contra Plato and his unconscious successors, impoverish our communal lives by evicting the symbolic resources of art from the realm of the public into the world of fancy and privateness. One need not romanticize the role of the artist to realize the truth of Ezra Pound's dictum that artists serve as "antennae of the race." They *are* antennae to new visions of human possibility, new values and forms of personal and communal life, new fuller theories of the good. Indeed, beauty, as I shall argue in later chapters, is a signal clue to truth itself.

In an analogous fashion, one need not (indeed, should not) absolutize the claims of any religion[45] in order to realize that any major religious tradition does disclose in its symbols and in its reflections upon those symbols (i.e., its theologies) some fundamental vision of the meaning of individual and communal existence providing disclosive and transformative possibilities for the whole society. Both ethos and worldview are disclosed in any religion. One need not minimize the need for reasoned public discourse upon all claims to truth in order to recognize the indispensable role that cultural symbols, including the religious, can play in the wider society.[46]

This remains especially true of a society like our own, characterized in fact by cultural pluralism and committed in principle to a democratic polity. Where art is marginalized, religion is privatized. Indeed, religion suffers even greater losses than art by being the single subject about which many intellectuals can feel free to be ignorant. Often abetted by the churches, they need not study religion, for "everybody" already knows what religion is: It is a private consumer product that some people seem to need. Its former social role was poisonous. Its present privatization is harmless enough to wish it well from a civilized distance. Religion seems to be the sort of thing one likes "if that's the sort of thing one likes."

The oft-quoted dictum of Paul Ricoeur is relevant here: "The symbol gives rise to thought, but thought always returns to and is informed by the symbol."[47] In the present context: If society is to employ the resources of the realm of culture for value questions in the realm of polity, then we must find better ways, as a society, to discover, recover and analyze the symbolic expressions in our culture. If one recalls the role of the Calvinist understandings of covenant in its contributions to the American Constitution, if one recalls the theological principles of Martin Luther King's struggle in the civil rights movement, one will realize how religious symbolic resources have in fact functioned as important factors in American society. Martin Luther King, through his personal appropriation of the symbolic resources of his religious and cultural heritages, was able to articulate, and to express in action, otherwise unnoticed and untapped ethical resources for the societal struggle for social justice.

Other intellectuals did not need to share the Protestant commitments of Reinhold Niebuhr in order to learn from his analysis of the dialectical relationship of the Christian symbols of "grace" and "sin" that Americans had ignored a deeper dimension of our social and political life.[48] Nor did one need to share the explicitly Catholic warrants in John Courtney Murray's correlation of Catholic "natural law" theory with the theories informing the principles of the American tradition in order to find new or renewed insights for present polity issues.[49]

It is difficult to envisage King or Niebuhr or Murray willingly accepting a privatization of religion. Indeed it is impossible. Yet it is all too possible to imagine many contemporary theologians eagerly moving to some local "reservation of the spirit." Less obviously, perhaps, than those artists who accept their marginalized status in society, but no less fatally, theologians can also rest easily on the reservation. They can even learn to sing its praises and embrace its privateness. They too can define their public not as the wider public of the society and its current almost desperate impasse on serious reflection on values. Rather they can rest content with the public of some smaller group of equally charming, equally private selves in some particular resting place in the increasingly marginalized realm of culture. If the whole realm has become marginalized, why com-

plain? One will, after all, find civilized persons with whom to share the joys of privateness. With luck, one might even find a religious Bloomsbury.

A major assertion of this book may now be stated as a claim: If any human being, if any religious thinker or theologian, produces some classical expression of the human spirit on a particular journey in a particular tradition, that person discloses permanent possibilities for human existence both personal and communal. Any classic, as we shall see below, is always public, never private. Yet even before studying the warrants for that claim, there is some utility in raising to explicit consciousness the dilemma that all in the realm of culture face. Then, at least, certain realities of our actual situation may surface for serious attention: dissatisfaction with the marginalization of the realm of culture, a discontent with an ever more privatized self on a deceptively harmonious reservation, a recognition of one's responsibility to that wider public we call society and its ever more complex present actuality and sometimes frightening future prospect. Perhaps one may even hope that rendering these realities explicit may impel some theologians, whatever their particular social locus, to recognize their public responsibilities to genuinely public discourse for the society as a whole. If humanists, including theologians, in the realm of culture continue to accept their marginalized status,[50] then the alternatives are the short-run enchantment of self-fulfillment and the long-run despair of societal value bankruptcy. If publicness is to be exhaustively defined by instrumental reason, then the adventures of reason will never again inform an authentically public civic discourse in the realm of polity—the realm where, finally, we all must meet.

iii. The Public of the Academy: Theology as an Academic Discipline

The "academy" serves as a generic word to describe the social locus where the scholarly study of theology most often occurs. The journey from the emergence of theology as a "science" in the medieval University of Paris to contemporary discussions of the place of theology in a university setting is a long and complex one.[51] A helpful focus for the discussion is the modern notion of an academic "discipline." Just as the medieval theologians struggled to articulate the claims to meaning and truth of theology on the model of an Aristotelian science, so too modern theologians attempt to understand theology as an academic discipline.

Various proposals for articulating that question have been espoused in our period, usually under the rubric of discussions of theological method. Among the major proposals, for example, one may note in the Swedish university context Anders Nygren's lifelong attempt to demonstrate the strictly "scientific" character of theology as a mode of "objective ar-

gumentation," the latter specified by a linguistic philosophy and "value-free" motif research.[52] In the German context the major work on this issue is clearly Wolfhart Pannenberg's recent attempt to demonstrate the strictly scientific (in the European sense of *Wissenschaft*) character of theology, leading to his constructive proposal for the reordering of theological studies around the basic rubric of a theology of religions.[53]

In the more pluralistic Anglo-American setting many proposals have been put forward. As a major example, Bernard Lonergan has developed an empirical transcendental method in *Insight*, and correlated his earlier studies on the medieval notion of theology as a science with his later work on the contemporary notion of empirical science and the centrality of method over logic.[54] His method is designed to meet the needs of a situation formed by historical consciousness and the emergence of the many specializations in all modern fields of study, including theology. Lonergan's important constructive proposal for scholarly collaboration in theology consists in rethinking the present range of field and subject specialities as eight functionally related specialties (research, interpretation, history, dialectics, foundations, doctrines, systematics, communication).[55]

Lonergan's extraordinary achievements in methodology, still too widely overlooked, consist principally in employing his own empirical-transcendental method as the key by which the present diversity of field and subject specialties can be transformed into *functional* specialities. Precisely as newly forged functional specialities, the ideal of collaboration in religious and theological studies can become the actuality of functional interdisciplinary work. All these recent proposals have united with recent historical work on past paradigms for theological method to focus the attention of many theologians on formal questions of "method."

An influential although not determinative reason for this interest in method is the continuing presence of theology in major secular and church-related universities. Indeed, both Pannenberg's and Nygren's proposals are explicitly related to the crisis of legitimation for theology in the contemporary German and Swedish state universities. The same kind of process of legitimation emerges in the more pluralistic North American scene. Here theology may be done in several distinct academic settings: the church context of the seminary where professional training for ministry is the primary responsibility; the departments of religion and/or theology in the major church-related colleges and universities; the divinity schools of the older secular universities; the departments of religious studies in other private or state colleges and universities. All proposals for theological method are affected by the particular academic location of a particular theologian.

For some the situation seems so confusing that they argue, in effect, that theology, in its confessional and professional modes, belongs solely

and exclusively to the churches. Theology should not be present in a university setting where all "normative" claims for a discipline—especially one which seems to possess an "exclusivist" norm—are suspect. Indeed, the choice of the title "religious studies" rather than "theology" for university departments often serves to indicate the distance which its proponents desire from theology's traditionally normative claims. "Religious studies," therefore, indicates an objective, nonnormative scholarly study of religion as distinct from what is viewed as, at best, the theologian's use of special "confessional" criteria or, at worst, special pleading for traditional norms.

Indeed the conventional alternatives for the academic study of religion are sometimes posed in some such manner as the following: Religious studies is a study of religion in keeping with the standards, methods and criteria of all scholarly study of any phenomenon.[56] It cannot and should not allow for the use of special criteria (for example, a demand for personal faith in a particular religion in order to understand that religion). Theology, conventionally understood, demands just such special criteria. As a discipline, theology belongs, therefore, to the churches and its seminaries and possibily to church-related institutions of learning. It does not belong in a secular university in a pluralistic culture. In that sense, this familiar conventional wisdom on the American scene is analogous to the insistence in Sweden, Germany or France that the university setting is not the proper one for normative, especially "confessional" enterprises. Thus does one find the proposals of Nygren and Pannenberg, which effectively both dispute this common misunderstanding of theology and reconstruct theology along the lines of other modern sciences in the modern European university.

In a curious union of unlikely allies, some church leaders agree with the secular critics of theology. Indeed, sharing the same conventional understanding of theology's strictly confessionalist role, these church leaders join some secular academics to insist, for their own distinct reasons to be sure, that theology belongs only in church-related institutions, not in the secular university. In Italy, for example, this position is adopted by some church leaders with the result that there are few departments of theology in Italian secular universities. Even in church-related universities problems of legitimation emerge. There the arguments about theology's relationship to the sponsoring church institution can become acute and usually focus on the issue of academic freedom. The issue then is not the need to legitimate theology's presence as a scholarly discipline. Rather, the issue becomes how to relate the academic "norms" of the theologians to the "ecclesial" norms of church authorities.

Other theologians, myself among them, believe that theology clearly belongs as an academic discipline in the modern university. Impelled by that concern, many university-related theologians (Nygren, Ebeling, Pan-

nenberg, Ogden, Harvey, Küng, Kaufman, Gilkey, Metz, et al.)[57] have been engaged in the construction of proposals for the fully public, here integrally academic, character of theology in the context of the modern university and its internal debate on the character of a scholarly discipline. Other theologians in the same setting effectively enter into various "nonaggression" pacts with their colleagues in religious studies and the wider university. In the time-honored Anglo-American fashion, we hope to muddle through. Fortunately, we are spared some of the legal and political complexities of the French, Italian, German or Swedish scenes, so that by and large we do in fact muddle through. That English, empirical habit is, in my judgment, all to the good. And yet, the very drive to publicness which defines theology's task, the normative status of theological and philosophical discourses, does demand explicit reflection upon theology's constitution as an academic discipline.

One appropriate focus for that discussion is the character of an academic discipline itself. Stephen Toulmin's recent analysis of what constitutes a discipline[58] has helped clarify the otherwise vague term "discipline" in such manner that all disciplines in the university may find a new focus for their endless methodological disputes. Toulmin's analysis, which is marked by careful attention to historical and social realities (for example, the historical emergence of new disciplines and the role of professional organizations and journals),[59] refocusses the discussions from more formal analyses of "method" and more global studies of "paradigm shifts"[60] to more concrete historical and empirical analyses of the actual functioning of the various disciplines. In sum, the Anglo-American empirical approach to these issues receives in Toulmin's work its best exponent. Rather than just "muddling through," we are called upon to study the empirical (i.e., historical and sociological) realities informing every academic discipline.[61]

Toulmin distinguishes three kinds of rational enterprises in terms of their disciplinary status: "compact" disciplines, "diffuse" disciplines and "would-be" disciplines. The paradigm for a discipline is, of course, the "compact" discipline, especially as found in the "hard" sciences. The remaining two forms (the "soft disciplines" and/or the "humanities") diverge in distinct ways from that paradigm.

The "compact" discipline is characterized by five principal features:

> (1) The activities involved are organized around and directed towards a specific and realistic set of agreed collective ideals. (2) These collective ideals impose corresponding demands on all who commit themselves to the professional pursuit of the activities concerned. (3) The resulting discussions provide disciplinary loci for the production of "reasons," in the context of justificatory arguments whose function is to show how far procedural innovations measure up to these collective demands, and so improve the current repertory of concepts or techniques. (4) For this

> purpose, professional forums are developed, within which recognized "reason-producing" procedures are employed to justify the collective acceptance of novel procedures. (5) Finally, the same collective ideals determine the criteria of adequacy by appeal to which the arguments produced in support of those innovations are judged.[62]

"Diffuse" and "would-be" disciplines diverge from the paradigm in several ways. The two most important divergences (applicable to such disciplines as psychology, sociology, anthropology and, I suggest, to both religious studies and theology) are: first, a lack of a clear sense of disciplinary direction and thereby a host of unresolved problems; second, a lack of adequate professional organization for the discussion of new results.

To consider the latter factor first: in contemporary American theology, a university-related theologian is likely to be involved in several professional organizations whose membership includes a de facto diversity of paradigms on the nature of theology. More specifically, in the United States, besides professional responsibility for different journals, an individual theologian is likely to have professional involvement in such societies as the American Academy of Religion, the American Theological Society, the Society for Values in Higher Education or the Catholic Theological Society of America, as well as involvement with particular groupings of theologians and other scholars for specific theological projects. The membership in each group sometimes overlaps but often does not. More importantly, the membership within each group is sufficiently diverse to assure that there is no clear consensus on a particular paradigm for theology as a whole. In fact, there is a constant conflict of interpretations over traditional or contemporary paradigms.

As participation in any national convention of any one of these societies will demonstrate, there exists in theology a host of unresolved problems for its practitioners. More basically still, there exists no clear set of criteria for adjudicating these disputes. There is little doubt for any alert participant in any one of those professional organizations or for any reader of the major journals in theology and religious studies that Toulmin's two signs for "diffuse" and "would-be" disciplines are here amply verified: preoccupation with methodological debate and a tendency to splinter the field into competing "sects." In that fluid situation, the dangers for a discipline are obvious: the continuous diffusion of energies; the unending emergence of sects, schools, paradigms, even fads; too little real collaboration among theologians; too little mutual criticism upon agreed-upon standards, criteria and norms for theological performance.[63]

In that same situation, however, there are genuine possibilities for significant discussion and contributions from those who recognize the complex nature of the problem. Then, the search for criteria of adequacy, the demand for evidence, warrants, backing (in a word, for publicness),[64] the construction and proposal of paradigms for distinct theological disciplines

(e.g., fundamental, systematic and practical theologies) can command serious attention from fellow professionals. Like social science, modern theology as a discipline clearly does not possess a "compact discipline" in the way it once seemed to. Neither the medieval theologians' notion of theology as a subalternated science, with its clear Aristotelian criteria and warrants, nor earlier notions of dogmatics now suffice.

The present search for a new paradigm for theology is complicated further by the relative decline in recent years of earlier neoorthodox paradigms in Protestant theology and the decline of neo-Thomism and its clear set of criteria and its genre of the "manual" in Roman Catholic theology.[65] Other complexities intensify this situation: the different academic settings of theology; the plurality and diversity of standards for performance in professional organizations and journals; the positive emergence of the alternative discipline of "religious studies" and its own search for paradigms, with the accompanying debates on the relationship between religious studies and theology; the continuing emergence of sects, individual virtuosi, and often outright fads under the cover of the now leaking umbrella of that once proud discipline, theology. All these factors are present to disorient any theologian in any academic setting. All these factors encourage every theologian to reflect more explicitly upon criteria of adequacy and more deliberately upon the disciplinary character of theology itself.

From this perspective, theology's present diffuse disciplinary status should and often does encourage both bold and tentative proposals for criteria and paradigms for understanding theology as an academic discipline. A major contribution along those lines—indeed, a bold proposal—remains Bernard Lonergan's development of a theological method which understands theology as a collaborative, field-encompassing enterprise constituted by eight functional specialities.

In the present discussion, Lonergan's proposal has certain clear merits. First, it recognizes what might be named the disciplinary autonomy of each speciality. Second, it argues for the possibility of genuine collaboration among the disciplines on a publicly adjudicable basis: the functional relationships among the distinct specialities and their distinct criteria based on an empirical-as-transcendental method.[66] Moreover, Lonergan usually explicates criteria for each discipline[67] that allow for public, critical attention from practitioners of each discipline. Whatever the ultimate fate of Lonergan's paradigm (or alternatives like those named above), the fact remains that every theologian is engaged in making claims to meaning and truth.[68] Every theologian, therefore, should render those claims explicit by rendering disciplinary criteria as explicit as possible. The field-encompassing character of both religious studies and theology (more exactly, the fact that they are constituted by several disciplines) inevitably gives rise to their character as "diffuse" or "would-be" disciplines in

constant methodological strife for a more relatively adequate paradigm.[69] The characteristic which distinguishes theology as a discipline from religious studies, moreover, is the fact that scholars in religious studies may legitimately confine their interests to "meaning" while theologians must, by the intrinsic demands of their discipline, face the questions of both meaning and truth.[70]

As the later chapters of this book shall attempt to demonstrate, every theologian must make such claims.[71] Theology's setting in the modern academy and explicit, deliberate reflection upon the character of arguments and criteria in all the relevant disciplines in the academy have helped theology immensely. For that setting has forced theologians to reflect explicitly and systematically upon criteria of relative adequacy, and upon distinct paradigms for distinct theological disciplines and for theology as a whole, with renewed vigor.

Most former models of theology (for example, theology as an Aristotelian science and thereby as a "compact" discipline) are as clearly spent as is the Aristotelian paradigm in science. The present proposals for theology's disciplinary status are, to repeat, still in the realm of "would-be" or "diffuse" disciplines.[72] Some theologians, of course, "solve" this problem by joining a particular theological school or sect and then announcing the presence of a "compact" discipline to their initiates. Most recognize that this is a nonsolution to the difficulty. Theology, like the humanities and the social sciences in the modern university, must and can presently content itself with a "diffuse" or "would-be" disciplinary status.[73] Moreover, theology, like its traditional and similarly normative conversation partner, philosophy, must always struggle in every age to constitute itself anew as a normative and self-constituting discipline concerned with that elusive reality "truth."

That struggle, in the context of the kind of rigorous methodological and disciplinary reflection already existing in both religious studies and theology, may take the route of an explication of criteria of adequacy. Yet whether or not that particular focus develops, theology must take the route of "publicness." Otherwise theology will soon forfeit its right to serious academic attention, and thereby betray its own heritage. To ask the question of the truth of religious claims is not a luxury for theology. Even those theologians who "will not stay for an answer" to that question soon find that the drive to speak a truth about religious meaning—and thereby about the most fundamental, existential questions of our common humanity—will not down.

Despite some confused disclaimers to the contrary, all theologians are in fact involved in publicness. The "public" of the modern academy for theology serves to render explicit, and thereby to clarify, that traditional drive with new disciplinary resources. Across the broad spectrum of different academic settings and different cultures, across the even broader

spectrum of different paradigms for theology's disciplinary status, most theologians do recognize their responsibility to produce theological discourse which meets the highest standards of the contemporary academy. In that sense alone, the academic emphasis of much contemporary theology is a fully positive force for both theology and for the university and, through the university, for the wider society.[74] Theology aids the public value of both academy and society when it remains faithful to its own internal demand—publicness. Without that demand for publicness—for criteria, evidence, warrants, disciplinary status—serious academic theology is dead. The academic setting of much of the best theology, precisely by its demands for public criteria in all disciplines, assures that announcements of that death remain premature.