

SPRINGING CULTURAL TRAPS

The Science-and-Theology Discourse and the Common Good

There are many different definitions and theories of culture. The period between the late fifties and the late sixties saw intensive debates in the social and cultural sciences concerning the possibility of gaining a theoretically founded common concept of "culture". All theories and definitions seem to share a certain helplessness with respect to their subject. This helplessness is best grasped in the tendency to proffer summarizing formulas for what a culture really is: we get many listings, from the symbolic foundations of human action to the most important human artifacts.¹ But all the definitions and theories of culture seem to agree explicitly or implicitly on the fact that cultures serve the communication of human beings via memories and expectations. With the help of our culture we develop astounding abilities to connect and disconnect, to share and to differentiate our memories and our expectations. We anticipate, reproduce and reconstruct in our memories and imaginations what others remember, anticipate and expect. Moving in the realms of memory and imagination we attune our emotions, thoughts and practices in very powerful ways. We do not have to talk to each other, to see each other and to touch each other all the time. We can, so to speak, manage most of our communication by flying above physical reality, with only occasionally illustrative landings. The complex entity "culture", which one sociologist has called the "brain of the society," makes this possible.

Part of the particular power of our current cultures is that they provide high degrees of secure common memories and expectations, although they can host very different sets of values and virtues. We can put ourselves into others' shoes although we in fact do not share exactly the same hierarchy of values and virtues. This ability is greatly enhanced and cultivated in late modern pluralistic societies and cultures. Different "societal systems", as sociologists say, operate with different symbol-systems and rationalities: law, politics, the market, the sciences, education, the arts, religion - they do not follow one common code. And most of these systems or spheres are highly differentiated in themselves, as for example a look at the sciences and the humanities, at the differentiated system of the markets, at the highly

1 Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture. A New Agenda for Theology* (Fortress Press: Minneapolis 1997), chapter 1.

patterned world of media and infotainment and at the ecumene of the Christian churches and the orbit of the religions can tell us. We live in a complex world that does not exhibit a one-hierarchy-order, but rather a multihierarchical texture. And our cultures allow us to navigate in this world with some trust and some success.

But the powers of our cultures to allow for an attunement or at least a clear differentiation of shared memories and expectations seem to be limited. The relation of theology and science seems to reveal some of these limits. The interesting question now is whether these limits are grounded in a reality "out there" - or whether these limits are due to the texture of our culture. Are we even trapped by our culture, blinded, led into systemic distortions? We do know that our cultures are no innocent entities. On a second order level of thinking, we rightly give high praises to a culture as such. Most people associate culture automatically with "goodness", and they do the same with "morals", "the ethos" and many, too, with "religion". Although human beings can not live without cultures and morals and at least latent forms of religion, on a first order level all these indispensable forms of ordering, shaping and freeing human life can become partially or totally corrupted. We have, for example, seen racist, fascist, stalinist cultures and have seen cultures with an ecological brutality that today seems simply astounding to us. Is the seemingly widening gap or even split between science and theology in our otherwise so hospitable cultures a sign of such a distortion, a minor distortion at least? Are we somehow trapped by our culture?

In what follows I would like first to speak shortly about the gap between science and theology in our culture and how the majority in science and theology seems to cope with it. In a second part I will speak about various endeavors in the twentieth century to bridge the gap. In the last part I will show how a science and theology discourse that dared to deal with a genuinely theological topic led to the discovery of several "cultural traps" that made the discourse so difficult and fruitless for such a long time.

The Gap Between Science and Theology and How Most of the Academy Used to Cope With It

We have been told time and again that modernity brought us a continually widening gap between natural science and theology. To be sure, modern common sense saw itself in a

steadily growing distance to the world of mathematized sciences on the one hand and to the world of the world religions on the other hand. Many tried to help themselves out of this by attributing religion to the "strange world of the past" and the sciences to the equally "strange world of the future". At the same time they profited both from religion's powers to shape aesthetics, morals and mentalities, and from the predictabilities and technological benefits science brought with it. Somehow the powers of the so-called past world and of the so-called future world both came together in the present.

The more or less lazy but comfortable double ignorance of modern common sense between natural science and religion (respective theology) is not the whole story. Even scholars with great academic gifts and efforts seem to have great difficulties in bridging the gap. The complexities of an adequate scholarly treatment of religious topics and the complexities of an adequate scholarly treatment of natural-scientific topics are so demanding and they seem so incompatible with each other, that only very few human beings on this planet are able to join seriously and actively the academic discourse in both realms. A human life seems not long enough and a human brain seems not potent enough to become truly familiar with both worlds. The times of the "universal geniuses" are long gone. What priests and healers in some remote parts of our planet seem to be able to embrace in the life-worlds of their tribes, seems absolutely impossible in a world which witnesses or at least believes in its market-, media- and technology-driven "globalization".

Modern science and modern theology have, of course, not simply submitted to resignation in the face of this development. They have not simply given up the belief in the one world, the one reality, the unity of knowledge, the unity of truth. Many modern scientists became, as Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker once put it: "agnostic, but open" toward religion. Although some reacted quite aggressively to religion and theology, assigning it to the realms of other-worldliness, of hyper- and virtual reality, of personal feeling and a mere certainty that is not able to sustain truth claims, many scientists honored this so called realm of meaning or the existential realm. And not a few theologians specialized in the realms of meaning and existence, often moving into all sorts of moralism, lay therapy and entertainment. The more academically oriented theologians and scientists, however, resisted this development by claiming that at least the history of the past, the interest in past worlds and past truth-claims should keep theology in the common academic orbit.

But this type of resistance also had its price. The good news always seemed to be yesterday's news. Academic theology became obsessed with history of religion and--with itself, its own history. Doing good jobs in interpreting and reinterpreting past worlds and its own classics, theology only seldom risked an analytical theological view of the societal and cultural reality of today. Only in times of trial and trouble did a truly systematic theology come alive. Those, however, who did risk addressing issues of the present and the future, seemed to move toward the boundaries of their academic disciplines or even across the border. Very often they became morally active speakers for specific causes. In this case, those theologians, for example, who were ecologically concerned met, of course, also scientists who were ecologically concerned. But the commonality in the moral agenda did not--or at least: not yet--provide a commonality that could be transported back into the academic orbit and stimulate interdisciplinary research. The gain of a moral commonality was in most cases at the cost of an estrangement from the academic environment.

The final approach with which some academic theologians tried to react against the widening gap between theology and science was a move toward radical abstraction or toward a transcendentalization of all religious topics. Speaking of God just as "the ultimate point of reference" or of faith as a trusting relation to the other side of my inner self-reference, they tried to offer ultimate forms that no reasonable person could resist accepting. The price of these offers of theology and religion "in a nutshell" was finally self-secularization and self-banalization of theological discourse. While some scientists accepted this needle-point theology as an attempt toward academic honesty, most of them chose to find it simply boring. "Are you merely interested in everything, or also in something specific?" This laconic question of Samuel Becket was for some modern scientists right on target over against the "ultimate point of reference" or the subjectivist "inner other". For a growing number of people, however, who do not feel at home with the metaphysics of the ultimate point or with post-cartesian subjectivity any longer, these theological offerings are nothing but declarations of bankruptcy: the lust to control everything by one construct or one thought alone. A naive confusion of the unity of reality and truth with one simple thought or idea--if this is all theology has to offer, we better get rid of this pretentious enterprise. In the midst of all these not very inviting and convincing general moves to set things straight again, we have, however, seen more promising and more illuminating moves between science and theology.

Specific Endeavors to Cross the Borders Between Science and Theology and the Limits of External Approaches

Among the publicly most visible and influential attempts to bridge the gap between science and theology in the twentieth century are the short and snappy statements of genius scientists about God and creation.

"I believe in Spinoza's God, revealed in the harmony of all that is." This confession of Albert Einstein's has been quoted frequently. Even more frequently have we heard and read his famous objection against quantum theory with the words: "Der Alte würfelt nicht!" "The Old Guy does not throw dice!" We owe many thought-stimulating and thought-provoking remarks to great scientists, who used and still use religious language and metaphors to express their fundamental convictions. These remarks turned into golden words, entering the orbit of world-famous quotations. Some of these remarks had quite an impact on theological work and thinking. Alfred North Whitehead's statement: "God is the fellow-sufferer, who understands", is one of these. Not only great scientists of past times with clearly different worldviews from ours like Newton, Faraday and Maxwell, but also leading natural scientists of the 20th century provided us with such golden words about God and creation in the perspective of a scientist.

Among these famous quotes, however, are also many skeptical and agnostic ones. Steven Weinberg's "The more I looked at the universe, the more I found it pointless," was used by him and by others with strong anti-religious and anti-theological twists. Carl Sagan used Steven Hawking's world-bestseller: *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes*² for a strong agnostic propaganda on its first pages, saying: "This is also a book about God -- or perhaps about the absence of God."³ The word God fills these pages. Hawking embarks on a quest to answer Einstein's famous question about whether God had any choice in creating the universe. Hawking is attempting, as he explicitly states, to understand the mind of God. And this makes all the more unexpected the conclusion of the effort, at least so far: a universe with no edge in space, no beginning or end in time, and nothing for a Creator to do."⁴

"Nothing for a Creator to do"? If we look more closely at Hawking's own complex

2 Toronto: Bantam Books, 1988.

3 Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, p. x.

4 For a detailed discussion see M. Welker, „Creation: Big Bang or the Work of Seven Days?“ *Theology Today* 52, (1995), 173-187.

argumentation--probably with only a minority of his readers--we encounter quite a different story. In an intriguing way we see that the mind of a great cosmologist can become somewhat confused theologically. Hawking is playing with three concepts of God. The first concept is based on Hubble's discovery that the distant galaxies are moving away from us. Hawking states: "An expanding universe does not preclude a creator, but it does place limits on when he might have carried out his job!"⁵ This is the God of the Big Bang or the God of the first second. This concept, however, so Hawking, could become questioned, if we found a unified theory that would connect quantum mechanics and the general theory of relativity, and that could describe the universe as "completely self-contained, with no singularities or boundaries."⁶ The question then would be: "What place, then, for a creator?"⁷ And this is the question that Sagan picks up for his provocative blurb.

But Hawking himself does not only play with agnosticism. He rather states: This would be "the ultimate triumph of human reason--for then we would know the mind of God."⁸ A titanic cosmic piety, God's mind and Human mind united, could also be the second concept. Only in one perspective, it seems as if now the first second is also to be taken away from God, as if God were to disappear with the removal of the absolute beginning. In another perspective, that which is supposed to then become clear is described in religious, indeed doxological forms: "we would know the mind of God"!

Hawking, however, finally and thirdly hints that the merely cognitive triumph and victory through insight into God's plan and mind would still be deficient: "Even if there is only one possible unified theory, it is just a set of rules and equations. What is it that breathes fire into the equations and makes a universe for them to describe? ... Is the unified theory so compelling that it brings about its own existence? Or does it need a creator, and, if so, does he have any other effect on the universe?"⁹

One hardly takes a great risk in assuming that the dominant common sense in the contemporary Western world also moves back and forth between these three positions. In an instructive and analytically helpful way Hawking is mapping a religiously confused

5 Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, p. 9.

6 Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, p. 174.

7 Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, p. 141.

8 Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, p. 175.

9 Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, p. 174.

contemporary common sense. So it pays to listen carefully to a great scientist who addresses with some continuity religious issues, even when the theological outcome is quite poor. In other cases, when a mathematician and natural scientist takes contents of religious traditions seriously, the outcome can become much more promising. Alfred North Whitehead was a mathematician and natural scientist who took contents of the Jewish-Christian traditions seriously. In a much more comprehensive way John Polkinghorne does so in our days. We can not go into details in dealing with these theologically fruitful endeavors in this context. But one can, as an example, show that Whitehead was able to give shape to a whole theological movement, so-called "process theology", because he took biblical wisdom-traditions seriously, with their specific realism and rationalities. He analyzed processes of universalization and individualization and the coevolution of these processes: "Religion is world-loyalty." And: "Religion is what the individual does with his own solitariness."¹⁰

As impressive as Whitehead's abilities are to give religion a place in his metaphysics and his theory of culture, one should also clearly see the limits of his approach. A theologian who is not blinded by Whitehead's sophisticated metaphysics and by his even more stimulating theory of modern culture will see that Whitehead engages only a small spectrum of the canonic biblical traditions, grown over more than a thousand years. Whitehead engages the wisdom traditions, in Job, in some of the Psalms, in the book of Wisdom and in some parts of the New Testament, particularly of the gospels. This limited but serious and thought-shaping contact with grand religious traditions already leads to very powerful statements about religious issues.

But in the twentieth century we have not only seen the movement of the geniuses between science and theology. In response to that movement most of us could respond only by following it with admiration, by regarding it with a slight skepticism, or by adopting from it stimulating quotations and new patterns of thinking. We have also seen a lot of broad academic step by step work, and a lot of investment from the side of individual common sense on this topic, particularly in the last third of the century. In all sorts of schools and classes, in groups and centers for continuing education, in retreat centers and societies, in first rate academic consultations and in popular books and journals the topic of science and theology has been treated in various ways. The strong investment of the John Templeton

10 Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), p. 59 and pp. 16 and 58.

Foundation has stimulated the installation of several hundred courses in "Science and Theology" or "Science and Religion" in colleges, mostly in the English speaking world. In several parts of the world centers have been built for the academic exchange between science and theology. I mention only Robert Russell's initiative in Berkeley, Arthur Peacocke's in Oxford, the cooperation of John Polkinghorne, Janet Soskice and Fraser Watts in Cambridge and the Vatican observatory research group in Tucson, Arizona and Castel Gundolfo. The first chairs and lecturer positions have been created. In many parts of the world colleagues have started multi-year interdisciplinary dialogues and consultations, the two consultations at the Center of Theological Inquiry in Princeton among them. Finally, the last 20 years have brought a broad flow of academic and semi-academic literature in this field. A whole academic sub-culture has emerged.

It would be risky to say that the impact of all these activities on the gap between science and theology has been breathtaking. To be sure, a long period of mutual disinterest and ignorance has come to an end. But the basic constellation I described before has remained very much the same. In the light of the multi-year consultations we had in Princeton we made some good guesses why this is still the case.¹¹ The vast majority of the discourses and activities remained external to theology and science. They remained on an observer-level. Many dealt with the history of science and theology. Some dealt with moral issues that scientists and theologians should raise, particularly with burning questions of natural ecology. Some dealt with the important issue of methodologies, but rarely putting the methods to the specific test. Finally, some discourses were searching for bridge-theories or discussing classic theories like those of Aristotle, Teilhard, Polanyi, Lonergan, and Whitehead as candidates to facilitate the dialogue. But most of these discourses, although they were helpful and engendered insight and trust, did not touch on the cultural configuration we are in. They did not lead to the discovery of cultural traps that limit and even block the discourse between science and theology. This was different with an enterprise which dared to work on a theological content and topic.

Discovering and Springing Cultural Traps For the Common Good

The discovery that an interdisciplinary discourse on the topic of eschatology can maintain a

11 For the documentation of these consultations see John Polkinghorne and Michael Welker, eds., *The End of the World and the Ends of God: Science and Theology on Eschatology* (Harrisburg, Pa: Trinity Press, 2000).

critical and nuanced realism while dealing with cultural and religious issues provided excitement in our interdisciplinary discourse. We saw why most eschatological statements are quite inaccessible to present-day common sense. We saw why these statements remain simply extravagant for a way of thinking and experiencing caught in a reductive materialism and a scientific naturalism. Do these statements not belong to the realm of fantasy, of dreams or of pathological phenomena? Or is there a possibility to make the reality characterized by these eschatological imaginations, symbols, rationalities and rhetorics accessible to common sense that is caught within the boundaries of naturalism?

The answer given by the natural and cultural scientists and the theologians was, "Yes, there is such a possibility." However, it means that scientific naturalism has to be opened up. Without attempting to jump into another world, a hyper-real world or a virtual world, the boundaries of naturalism have to be grasped and cautiously extended. Both continuity and discontinuity with the natural world have to be conceived with regard to the eschatological realm. If we want to make this clear to common sense that is estranged from religious thought and feeling and tied up in naturalism, we will first have to show that eschatological topics deal with cultural and historical events. We will then have to discriminate religious events from merely cultural and historical ones.

The excitement that accompanied the common move into realities unseen but yet real was even enhanced by the discovery that we were able to question a whole set of mostly latent presuppositions that had governed and restricted much of our own previous thinking and certainly also the thinking of other theories we used to work with. We discovered these restrictions as cultural traps which reinforced each other.

The first trap can be called the *modernist trap*. This is the illusion that we can and must reach a universal perspective that can integrate all the different cultural spheres or disciplines with a simple epistemic move. For the science-and-theology discourse that meant: We just have to establish a methodological, metaphysical or transcendental level, we have to reach a level of a meta-discourse, in order to bridge the gap between both of them. Without denying the value and importance of such strivings, we became aware that this attempt easily loses contact with both sides, playing in a realm of a philosophical or quasi-philosophical theory, which develops icons and ideals of science and philosophy accessible to common sense, but does not do justice to either one of them. Instead of encountering and enduring the differences and

looking for both continuities and discontinuities between their realms of experience, it tends to smooth and to idealize, both, commonalities and differences.

The second trap easily goes together with the first one, but is not identical with it. It is the *trap of reductionism*, signaling us that we should minimize or avoid content and that we even have to avoid content in order to make a bridge between science and theology. This reductionism can happen on one side or the other. We have often seen discourses in which science entered with all its complexity and glory, while theology only came up with such reductionist and boring ideas as the "ultimate point of reference" or a transcendental inwardness named "faith", or a realm of the numinous that reduces us to silence. But we have also, although more rarely, seen the other reductionism, where science was ciphered as a representative of a certain concept of nature, a specific understanding of reality or of "the law" that happened to fit into a certain theology. Its own complexity was taken away. It was simply reduced to a sparring partner of theology.

The first two traps could reinforce each other, adding plausibility to each other, creating systematic and systemic distortions. Although we certainly can not avoid employing selection and the reduction of complexity, and although we have to work with typifying modes of thought and leading abstractions, radical reductionism leads to a self-banalization that is not helpful at all for the science and theology discourse.

The third trap could be called the *dualistic worldview trap*. It also fits nicely with the two previous traps, which can recommend themselves as great aids in escaping from dualistic turmoil. We of course can not and should not avoid dualities, differences, contrasts and even conflicts in our life and thinking. But we should not freeze them into a dualism. We do have to face many differences, creative differences, form-giving differences, differences that are hard to bear and even distortive and demonic differences. The differences between science and theology can become fruitful as long as we avoid the great frozen dualisms.

We have to become aware that the side of science is in itself highly differentiated and that the differentiations and differences between theologies in one religion, not to speak of the differences between theologies of different religions, are considerable. So we have to work with provisional, tentative, topic-centered differentiations and dualities. We have to avoid the danger of being frozen by procedures that are overly generalized procedures that lose touch

with the topic, which then lead us from one trap to the next. First we create a helpless situation by fixing absolute dichotomies, and then we move into reductionism or into the modernist trap in order to get out of this mess. Discovering and disabling this trap, we saw that we belong to different truth-seeking communities, with different primary topical fields and certainly different modes and methods, but that we all belong to truth-seeking communities, which have to explore commonalities, analogies and differences in their procedures. They can not do this once and for all, but instead must do it with a clear awareness of the topics at issue and of the contexts of the partners in discourse.

The fourth trap we discovered can be closely related to the dualistic worldview trap. It can be called the *cliché trap*. The cliché trap picks up some characteristics of either theology or science or both of them and overgeneralizes and overstates these. For example: science deals with facts - theology deals with meanings or even just fictions. When such a trap combined two clichés in a popular dualism, it was particularly difficult to spring. Even if one felt that there was only some truth to the characterization of the one side, there was still the other side to be respected. And the other side was all too often protected by what I like to call the Frederick-the-Great syndrome.

Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, loved to play and compose music, and he loved to write poems. It is said that the poets used to say: His poetry is awkward, but he is a great musician! And the musicians are reported to have said: His music is hard to bear, but his poems are outstanding! The Frederick-the-Great syndrome is a shadow on every interdisciplinary work. It is certainly a real danger to every interdisciplinary agenda. But it is also a denunciation, ready to hand. Beyond that, the Frederick-the-Great syndrome can stabilize distortive dualistic clichés. For example the dualistic cliché: science deals with facts - theology deals with meaning; science deals with objectivity - theology deals with individual feeling. When theologians and scientists encounter these dualities individually, they might want to protest the description of their own side. But then, there is the other side and the somehow, somewhat plausible contrast, that finally leads to swallowing the dissatisfaction.

The science and theology discourse on eschatology challenged several clichés, including dualistic clichés such as: science deals with visible reality - theology, with invisible virtuality or hyperreality, whatever this might be. Both disciplines, this became very clear, deal with both visible and invisible reality. As we have elaborated in the introduction to the book *The*

End of the World and the Ends of God, after quantum cosmology at the latest we can not save science from the burden of dealing with unseen reality. On the other hand, it became clear that the unseen reality with which theology must deal is not a soft element that allows for all sorts of vague guesses and a speculative "anything goes." We have *standards of intelligibility* in both disciplines to disclose the realm of the unseen. And one of the most exciting tasks of the science and theology discourse is to discover, disclose and reshape these standards in conversation on a specific topic, which might indeed lead to a clear differentiation of their tasks. A subtle, critical and self-critical adjustment of this differentiation and difference needs to be aware of the cliché trap, the dualistic worldview trap, and their mutual reinforcement.

The fifth and sixth trap we discovered--without making this as explicit as I am about to do--were specific clichés on both sides that seemed to propose and to sponsor a specific dualism. The trap on the side of theology was that theological eschatology deals with the future, and with an open future after all. Although some of us supported this perspective to some degree, for most of the group it became more and more clear that theological eschatology also deals with past and present realities. There is a richness in biblical eschatological symbols that we should not collapse in a modernist worldview that tells us that our past is fixed and our future is open. Christian theological eschatology deals in specific ways with the different modes of time, the theology of hope being one of these ways. Coming to faith, living in love, becoming justified by God, being sanctified, being enlivened and ennobled by God's Spirit, living in Christ, being the body of Christ, being a new creation, being transformed from glory to glory, being saved for the day of the Lord, entering God's reign, gaining eternal life - all these eschatological symbols focus on different aspects and dimensions of life before God, with God and in God that the Jewish-Christian traditions envision and try to explore. All these different symbols are not just the same soft rhetoric for a vague future transformation that one can't really know anything about. These eschatological symbols, strange and even polluted terms in an environment that has secularized itself to the degree of public religious illiteracy, focus on dimensions of our life that we at least partially have to retrieve into the realms of experience, if we do not want to live with quite reductionistic and even distortive views of reality.

The sixth trap we discovered is the cousin or even the twin of the fifth one. Let us name the fifth trap the "*religion deals with vague future*"-trap. The sixth than can be named the "*science deals with reality and reality is only material nature*"-trap. As you see, a lot of complicated

presuppositions are coming together in this trap. It shapes and reduces reality to the reality with which natural sciences are said to deal. It then generalizes this reality to all reality. In one stroke it seems to give great power to the sciences--but in fact limits their potential to deal with a reductionistic materialism and a very limited understanding of nature. Strangely enough, this *scientistic* concept of nature and reality needs the cousin or twin of the fifth trap or at least an equivalent, to dump all the dimensions of reality that do not make sense to it. Our discourse saw this bad alliance and tried to spring this trap in order to reach a more comprehensive and more truthful picture and understanding of reality, and to open at least a small window between the different approaches.

The discovery of cultural traps and the attempt to spring these cultural traps is not just a luxury, a pleasure for some academics with strange curiosities and too much time for some adventures of ideas. The discovery and the attempt to spring these cultural traps deals not only with boundaries and also with distortions in our focus on our individual academic discipline and on other disciplines. It deals with boundaries and also with distortions in our culture, our worldview, our focus on religion, and our focus on deeper dimensions of our experiences and longings. The discovery of cultural traps and the attempt to spring these cultural traps does not satisfy all sorts of those longings. It does not give automatic fulfillment to our search to expand our experiences and to give them fuller expression. But it can open closed doors and darkened windows. It can give us some access to an unseen reality, which we have blocked out.

In his powerful book *Science and the Modern World* Alfred North Whitehead describes our culture as latently structured by the interplay of scientific, ethical, aesthetic and religious paradigms. Modernity has greatly strengthened the scientific paradigm. This has had many positive repercussions, particularly for the academy, for an exponential development of technology, and for the market. It also has had repercussions on the dimensions of ethics, aesthetics and religion which are difficult to measure. Even the discovery of these paradigm shifts is blocked by powerful cultural factors that might be cultural traps. What we begin to see with some clarity is that the rise of the sciences was accompanied by severe distortions in the realm of religion. Whitehead states: Modernity has lost God. And it is seeking God. The science and theology discourse on eschatology did not work toward divine revelation. It was an academic, not a religious enterprise. But we would not deny, I guess, that our discovery of several cultural traps and the invitation to spring them might bear positive repercussions for

many sides. A more fruitful interdisciplinary academic discourse might not be the only outcome. Ethics, aesthetics and religion will certainly develop differently when we are freed from the traps that our discourse on eschatology was able to see.