and (d) into the obediential potency (p. 163) in creatures in relation to
divine initiative (analogous to the obediential potency in atoms and
molecules in relation to their upgraded configuration that constitutes
a living organism).

This reviewer begs to question Stebbins’ interpretation of Lonergan’s
concepts “conjugate” (p. 45) and “asymptotically” (p. 169). The second
word may require a restudy of Lonergan’s reflections on mathematical
“extrapolation” and its relation to transcendent knowledge in Insight
some infinite series as “asymptotically” approaching infinity without ever attaining infinity: every term or every summation of terms that
can be written down before the “etc. . . .” is never infinite. To affirm
that human understanding asymptotically approaches the status of
proper knowledge of the divine essence seems to this reviewer to be
quite consistent with Stebbins’ reference to Lonergan’s essay on “The
Natural Desire to See God.”

The University of Toronto Press is unquestionably justified in investing
its resources in publishing this excellent book and deserves to be
congratulated for the attractive format.

Vicente Marasigan, S.J.

ON NAMING THE PRESENT: GOD, HERMENEUTICS AND CHURCH.
146.

This valuable book is divided into five parts and subdivided into twelve
articles previously published in Concilium since 1978 and selected for
their relevance to the author’s plan, brilliantly presented in Part One,
to promote theological conversation, particularly with the marginalized,
by finding a name for “the present.” He also sees the need of con-
versation between three sectors of the Western theological world:
antimodernity, modernity and postmodernity, each with its own inter-
pretation of the decrees of the Second Vatican Council.

The proposed topics of conversation, ranging through Part Two to
Part Five, deal with the multi-faceted God in theology, history and
psychology, with the Holocaust, Exodus and the changing cosmology,
with Catholic concerns in ecumenism and transformation, and with the
pluralism of interpretations of divine revelation.

The style is very intricate and may call for several carefully repeated
readings that gradually reveal the panoramic breadth of “the present”
and inspire the fascinated reader to identify and sympathize with the
author in his raging struggle.

Alas, this reviewer’s struggle may be raging in an “abyss of indeterminacy” (p. 16). For if the modern notion of presence is as unreal as the postmoderns say, and if the postmoderns have no alternative notion except what can be hazily inferred from reading Parts Two to Five, how can “the present” be named?

Nor are the discussions about historical consciousness very helpful. As previously pointed out by Bernard Lonergan, general history is still pre-systematic. Consequently, neither the “grand narrative of Eurocentric modernity” nor the “suffering of all those . . . set aside as non-peoples” (p. 43) can significantly remedy the pre-systematic indeterminacy of “the present.”

The negative scenario of the “death of the subject” (pp. 15-18) may yet lead to the more positive hope for the birth of a new intersubjectivity that is ecumenical, transcultural, biospheric and ontic. Such intersubjectivity may well be the intrinsic purpose of bringing the marginalized into the theological conversation desired by Tracy. This raises problems:

One problem concerns languages where nouns and names predominate. Peoples whose native languages or dialects (e.g. this reviewer’s Tagalog), unlike Western languages, emphasize verbs rather than nouns, would find it very difficult to join the conversation. For instance, to translate this review into Tagalog, noun for noun and verb for verb, would bury it in an abyss of indeterminacy.

For now, the only alternative is for Tagalog-speaking preachers and catechists to pray for the miracle that the rich insights of Western theologians like Lonergan and Rahner will eventually “trickle down” — or out — into the margins located in the “far” Far East, i.e. linguistically far from the languages of the North Atlantic.

But we of the margins feel gratified that our apophatic groanings seem to suggest something in the light of Tracy’s remarks. Or perhaps it is the language barrier that disqualifies our indigenous baylang sinasaniban from joining the game of conversation. Still it is possible for some harmony between the Western center and the Far East margin to manifest itself. A manifestation need not be a conversation using names. A manifestation can be harmony apophatically hummed by a plurality of primal voices.

(Or is it the harmony that hums the voices? This question arises from a meditation on points proposed by the eminent Indian Jesuit Michael Amaladoss about an Asian theology of harmony. See Landas 8 [1994] 209-18 and 9 [1995] 139-42.)

Vicente Marasigan, S.J.