

Why is the indirect service that theology performs for witness nonetheless a real service to witness itself?

The key to an answer is that witness itself makes or implies certain claims to validity—specifically, to be appropriate, credible, and fitting—that may or may not be valid claims, but that have to be valid if witness itself is the undertaking it purports to be. In other words, witness, by its own claims, subjects itself to a standard of judgment beyond itself by which it has to be measured and judged valid, else it is not really itself, or, at any rate, not wholly so.

For this reason, even a critical reflection on witness that would eventuate in invalidating its claims would be a service to it itself as well as, presumably, to others faced with having to make a decision about its validity. In this critical respect, witness differs logically from other kinds of speech acts involving other kinds of validity claims. Thus, for example, an expressive speech act articulating my wants or desires expresses or implies a validity claim of sincerity. To this extent, critical reflection on this claim might have something to do with validating it, although the real validation of this kind of claim has to be found in the consistency of my subsequent behavior as the person making it. But, while reflection, or, at any rate, rationalization, might directly serve an expression of my wants, there's no basis for talking about its providing any indirect service. Either reflection, or rationalization, directly serves my expression of wants or it does not serve them at all. In the case of a constative speech act, however, there is also a claim to truth; and reflection can be of indirect service to this kind of a speech act by critically validating, or invalidating, this claim. And the same is true, mutatis mutandis of a regulative speech act.