The Kenotic Structure of Max Weber's The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Secularization

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The Kenotic Structure of Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Secularization

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In its classic form the theory of secularization is the story of a Fall. It charts the disenchanting potential of a rupture within the sacred cosmos, said to be responsible for violently sundering human unity with the divine. In most conventional accounts, the secularizing consequences of this primordial rupture are not fully realized until modernity when the culture of the "West" achieves complete emancipation from the supernatural.

In its earliest incarnations this narrative of progressive liberation was used to defend a moral schema that demarcated the modern from pre-modern and religious societies. Although the Enlightenment pretensions of this moral schema have been widely rejected by critics of secularization the association of modernity with secularity has not. The idea that the worldliness and rationality of modern culture lacks spiritual depth remains axiomatic in the social sciences today. Indeed its logic animates recent scholarship identifying the *return* of the sacred in the *post*modern epoch.

Both advocates and critics of the secularization narrative tend to overlook the deeply entangled relation between spirit and flesh that endures within the modern. Using Max Weber's seminal study of Protestantism and capitalism as its point of departure, this thesis demonstrates that secularization is a kenotic process. It is characterized by the passage between spirit and flesh, an active commerce that endures within the modern, as the condition of its secularity.

The kenotic understanding of secularization is tracked through the broader frame of Weber's theory, providing detailed examinations of the narrative of disenchantment, Weber's engagement with Calvinist theology, with particular a focus on the semiology that underpins Calvin's concept of the *fides efficax*, and a number of unorthodox theories of secularization that emphasize the sacredness of the secular. Emerging from within the interstices of this inter-textual dialogue is a narrative of secularization that chronicles the survival of the religious spirit within disjuncture, disenchantment, and even death. This challenges received notions about secularity by relocating the religious within the modern, thus questioning the basis of its difference from both the primitive and postmodern.

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INTRODUCTION: A SECULAR AGE

This thesis uses the work of "founding father" Max Weber to explore the logic of secularization. It asks what the becoming-worldly of the spirit means for religion, and for those societies we commonly designate as secular. Although the focus of this thesis argument is, in one sense, quite narrow – it meditates on a relatively small number of key sociological, philosophical and theological texts dealing with processes of secularization – it addresses enduring questions within the sociology of religion, as well as the broader study of religion.

At its basis this thesis asks what is the nature of the religious spirit? Can religion become secular, worldly, without losing "what is specifically religious about it" (Bruce and Wallis: 1992, 21)? Does the "world-historical" process responsible for secularization describe the transformation of religiosity, or does it simply chart its corruption or decline? If the spirit can, as some "secular theologians" and postmodern philosophers have argued, become worldly, human, or even profane (see Altizer: 1966a; Tillich: 1948; Van Buren: 1963; Taylor: 1982; 1994; 2007; Marion: 2002; Kearney: 2009), then what marks the difference between secular and religious societies, beliefs and institutions? Can bipolarities like enchanted/disenchanted, spiritualist/materialist, worldly/otherworldly be used to describe the particular orientation of divergent systems of belief?

A few clarifying comments are necessary to help contextualize these questions. Secularization is commonly defined as the process "in which the key reference points for the everyday workings of a capitalist society focus on this age and this world and not on any world beyond" (Boer: 2007, 8). It involves what Larry Shiner calls "conformity with 'this world'" (Shiner: 1967, 211). This is when "[t]he religious group or the religiously informed society

turns its attention from the supernatural and becomes more and more interested in 'this world'" (Shiner: 1967, 211). When understood in these terms secularization is a process responsible for the gradual unhinging of social institutions from their *former* reference to the supernatural, a *re*orientation *from* the otherworldly *towards* the worldly. With some important exceptions, to be discussed in the body of this thesis, the reorientation of religion towards the mundane is regarded as a loss for religion, a corruption of its spiritual purity, and an improper compromise with the secular world (Bruce and Wallis: 1992, 21; Berger: 1973, 161; 1993, 42).

But what if it is in the very nature of the religious spirit to be *both* transcendent *and* immanent, to manifest as *both* enchanted *and* disenchanted traditions, to occupy the place of the divine, and yet also to speak with the voice of the social – to wear a human face? If it is in the nature of religion to be different to itself, and in this deviance to remain true to itself, as theorists like G. W. F Hegel (1977) and Mark C. Taylor (2007) argue, then secularization does not chronicle the shift from one state of being, one spatio-temporal reality, or one set of institutional arrangements, into another. Rather, secularization indicates an intrinsic possibility within religion to be open to change, to embrace it as an essential part of its vitality and historical viability.

In the course of answering the questions raised above we will learn about the various ways that theorists have defined secularization. We will also become acquainted with the moral schema used by many sociologists and philosophers of religion to think about concepts like secularization, disenchantment, rationalization and worldliness. Specifically, we will see that theorists of secularization regularly employ these analytical categories to mark progress by

dividing history into distinct epochs, further determining the relative maturity, autonomy and complexity of the societies and cultures thought to occupy them.

Before elaborating how my thesis addresses this notion of historical change, as well as the ideas about the spirit that underpin it, a brief introduction to the concept of secularization is in order. The theory of secularization is explored in some detail in Chapter Two. Consequently, what follows is a brief overview of some of the basic claims made by conventional accounts of the process, its causes and effects.

Secularization: An Overview

At heart the thesis of secularization is a narrative. It tells the story of how the "West" went from being a largely religious, to a mostly secular, society (Casanova: 1994; Bruce: 2002; C. Taylor: 2007). This transformation is measured by the progressive detachment of human society from notions of divine or supernatural guidance. Whether conceived as a "world-historical" process of disenchantment beginning with the primordial "rupture" between "the faith of Israel and the magical-mystical world of the ancient Near East" (Berger: 1983, 2), or a distinctly modern phenomenon, the basic logic remains the same. Forces of differentiation fracture the union of the natural and supernatural spheres, gradually loosening human, social institutions from reference to, or identification with, the divine.

As a result of this intervening disruption humans increasingly come to see themselves as autonomous agents, responsible for their own historical destiny (Weber: 1930, 1952; Berger: 1973; Taylor: 2007; C. Taylor: 2007; Gauchet: 1997; Kalberg: 2007; Gane: 2002). Life becomes

more oriented to mundane concerns, and the world is seen as an entirely natural sphere, independent of a god or gods who may or may not exist (Berger: 1973, 117; Bruce: 2001, 254). History is understood as profane, the product of human action rather than divine providence (Shiner: 1967, 215). And religion, previously responsible for maintaining a "common world within which all of social life receives ultimate meaning binding on everybody" (Berger: 1973, 137), is marginalized from the "life cycle of the individual and the community" (Bruce: 2002, 17). It is either privatized (Wilson: 1982), or else relegated to the sphere of the irrational (Weber: 1948c).

Even among advocates of the secularization thesis, there are many variations on this common theme.[1] There is also considerable disagreement about the consequences of the process itself. Many sociologists question whether the decline of religion is an inevitable outcome of the rationalizing and pluralizing forces concomitant with modernization (Berger: 1993; Bruce: 2001; Davie: 2001; Berger and Davie: 2008; Casanova: 1994, 2003). Scholars like Grace Davie (2001) and José Casanova (1994; 2003) argue that there is little evidence to suggest that there has been a steep decline in religious participation *outside* Western Europe,

[1]It is beyond the scope of this introduction to explore these in any detail. In Chapter Two important aspects of the concept of secularization will be elaborated. However, even there the focus is restricted to theories of secularization that are informed by Weber's writings on disenchantment. For a comprehensive overview of the concept and debates within sociology that address its causes and effects, see Karel Dobbeleare's "Secularization: A Multi-Dimensional Concept" (1981); also, "Some Trends in European Sociology of Religion: The Secularization Debate" (1987) by the same author; José Casanova's *Public Religions in the Modern World* (1994); Steve Bruce's *God is Dead* (2002) and Larry Shiner's older, but still excellent, "The Concept of Secularization in Empirical Research" (1967).

England and its former colonies, leading them to ponder whether the secularization/modernization matrix is not specific to a *particular* type of society.

Further to this, attitudinal surveys have shown that, even in the West, decline in institutional participation has not equated with a correlative decline in belief. As many critics of the secularization thesis have noted, although attendance in institutional forms of religion has weakened dramatically in Western countries, belief in God, and a willingness to identify as "spiritual", has not (Davie: 1994; Heelas and Woodhead: 2005; Hume and McPhillips: 2006; Sointu and Woodhead: 2008).

However, the most vociferous debates about secularization have been reserved for the question of its irreversibility. In recent years critics have argued that secularization is not a uni-directional process, as presumed by many of the "founding fathers" of sociology (see Wilson: 1969, 1982; Lechner: 1991; Casanova: 1994). They point out that processes of secularization and disenchantment produce a "discontent" that eventually encourages the revival of religion in societies formerly regarded as secular (Berger: 1993, 1999; Bauman: 1993; Caputo: 2001; McPhillips: 2002; Marty: 2003).

To be more precise, these theorists use evidence of the re-emergence of traditional forms of religion, as well as a rise in privatized, syncretic modes of spiritual belief, to argue that although modernity encouraged the marginalization of religion, the postmodern world has "made some room for a religious discourse and restored the voice of a religious imagination" to the West (Caputo and Scanlon: 1999, 2). This has resulted in a shift in the terms of reference used by scholars of religion to describe the contemporary situation. Instead of

speaking of secularization and disenchantment, it is now common to talk in terms of de-secularization (Berger: 1999, Caputo: 2001) and re-enchantment (Bauman: 1993; Tacey: 2000, McPhillips: 2002).

How Secular is the Secular Age?

As this brief overview suggests, despite reaching an almost "paradigmatic status" in the sociology of religion in the 19th and 20th centuries (Casanova: 1994, 17), the thesis of secularization is now highly contested. Nevertheless, two aspects of the orthodox account of secularization remain strangely resistant to critique. The first is the taken-for-granted presumption that the spiritual and the worldly are distinct, even mutually exclusive, spatio-temporal realities. The second is the idea that modernity is a uniformly secular epoch, bereft of spiritual depth.

In a sense we would say that the division of the *pneumatic* and the fleshly is written into the very terms of analysis available to theorists of secularization. As we know, the term secular, and its derivatives, secularism and secularization, are based on the Latin word *saeculum*. *Saeculum* means a generation or an age, or the spirit of an age. It designates a span of time, specifically marking a difference between the temporal and the eternal. Its orientation is "this-world", as distinct from the transcendent world "to come".

The 19th century English "freethinker", George Holyoake, drew on this distinction to define secularism as "a code of duty pertaining to this life, grounded in considerations purely human, and intended mainly for those who found theology indefinite or inadequate, unreliable

and unbelievable" (1846, 60). In its (modern) inception secularism is thus set up as an *alternative* to religion. Significantly, it justifies its independence from the "theological" in terms of its indifference to the supernatural, divine or transcendent. According to this understanding, to be secular is to live in "this world" without concern for the otherworldly.

As mentioned above, although critics of the thesis have challenged many aspects of the conventional understanding of the secular, expressed here by Holyoake, the spirit/world dichotomy remains central to the way current theorists think about secular-religious relations. For instance, the eminent scholar of religion, Martin E. Marty, has recently proposed that we abandon the old binary categories that divide societies into either secular or religious, worldly or otherworldly, materialist or spiritual, and begin to think about activities, beliefs and cultures as "religio-secular" (2003, 42

According to Marty, the binary pairings listed above are not opposed, but are, in fact, co-dependent. Moreover, he also argues that the codependency of the religious and secular, expressed semantically by his neologism, is inescapable. Justifying this contention, Marty explains that although the secular might want to see itself as indifferent to, or independent of, the religious, it is not capable of fulfilling the conflicting array of needs demanded by the human social condition. He concedes that secularity is perfectly equipped to achieve excellence in the "operational side of life", but falls short of satisfying the "human heart" (Marty: 2003, 46).

Developing this point further, Marty proposes that humans have a kind of "hard-wired" need for religion because we are always in search of the transcendent meanings

and patterns that give significance to “the joys and sorrows of our lives” (2003, 46: see also Beckford: 2001, 232-233). He asserts that the empirical, this-worldliness of secularity is unable to provide for these “non-sensate” but crucial aspects of human social life (2003, 46). For this reason, he says, the secular will always produce a “discontent” that seeks something “other” in religion (see also Berger: 1993, 1999).

Although Marty’s intervention is provocative, and raises important questions about the enduring place of religion in contemporary societies, it fails to question the either/or logic of the orthodox accounts of secularization. We will note that a division of labour separates the secular and the religious. The secular is consigned to take care of the operational logic of living in rationalized, materialist societies, whilst religion is given over to matters of the heart and soul. In this sense, secularity and spirituality are compliments in a division of labour necessitated by their heterogeneity.

Not only does this either/or economy make it difficult to think the religious and secular *together*, or to think the world *as* spirit (a point we will return to below), it forms the basis of an equally common presumption that attention to one necessarily precludes a concern for the other. The philosophical and theological roots underpinning this logic will be examined in detail in the third and fourth chapters of this thesis. Nevertheless, understanding the basic architecture of this logic will provide some grounding for my intervention.

The mutual exclusivity of the spiritual and fleshly is articulated by St. Paul in his endorsement of celibacy. In the famous letter to the Corinthians Paul argues that although there is nothing inherently wrong with marriage, as “each has his own special gift from God”

(1 Cor 7: 7) – both those married and unmarried – it is nevertheless better not to marry. As Paul maintains, the woman who marries (or man, he mentions both) finds herself caring for worldly things. This is problematic for her spiritual commitments because "worldly things" are intrinsically different to spiritual concerns (1 Cor 7: 32). Consequently, the married woman must experience a "divided mind" when it comes to pleasing the Lord, whereas the unmarried woman can be "dedicated to Him in body as in spirit" (1 Cor: 34).

The logic of Paul's argument is that a concern for the worldly compromises one's dedication to the spirit precisely because the spiritual and the material are fundamentally different. In this sense, to love the world is *necessarily* to neglect the spirit, to give up on the supernatural and to lose transcendence. Although writing in a very different social and historical context, the same basic premise underlies Peter L. Berger's contention, explored in Chapter Four, that the becoming worldly of religion and society represents a corruption of the religious spirit (1974, 11-12; 1993, 131-143; see also Dorrien: 2001, 36).

An instructive digression could be made at this point. This brief introduction to Pauline theology affirms what might be called a conventional reading of his dualism. As we shall see throughout the course of this thesis, Paul is frequently invoked to support bifurcations of this kind. However, as the political theorist and philosopher of religion, Roland Boer, has shown, the Pauline texts are "split by a whole series of perpetual contradictions and ambivalences" (2009b, 1). It is from Paul, for instance, that we get the concept of *kenosis* – to be outlined below – which, as Gianni Vattimo argues, posits secularization as "the constitutive trait of authentic religious experience" (cited in Kearney: 2007, 46). Vattimo's contention is based on a reading of 1 Corinthians 12. He understands that text to suggest that the

Incarnation is an act of self-emptying through which God relinquishes His power and authority, handing it over to the secular orders. The secular becomes the site of God's redemptive love (see Vattimo and Rorty: 2007, 35).

Given the "basic and irresolvable opposition" in Paul's thinking (Boer: 2009b, 3) it isn't surprising that his writings have been taken up by in very different ways by postmodern theorists of religion (see Caputo and Alcoff: 2009; Vattimo and Rorty: 2005; Badiou: 2003; Zizek: 2003; 2000). Georgio Agamben, for example, interprets Paul as an advocate of "radical separation" (2005, 79); while Alain Badiou argues that he should be understood as a philosopher of universalism (2005). Indeed, in *Saint Paul* (2005) Badiou maintains that the separations and divisions Paul uses to demarcate the religious and secular orders, the divisions to which Agamben refers above, are actually *part of*, rather than opposed to, a universal address that encompasses all: Jew, Greek and Gentile (2005, 98-106). Provocatively Babiou argues that separation itself one of the forms that universalism can take.

Badiou's engagement with St. Paul in these terms preempts my own interpretation of secularization as kenosis, outlined in Chapter Four, in important ways. In Chapter Four, as well as in Chapter Five, this thesis utilizes the work of a number of theologians and postmodern philosophers of religion to argue that the distinctions that appear to divide the secular and the religious, the enchanted and disenchanted, and the spiritual and the worldly from one another, are, as Badiou suggests in his reading of St. Paul, unique manifestations of a dialectically defined religious spirit that is, in fact, energized by these disjoining separations.

However, although Badiou's work is philosophically instructive, the debates about the secular/religious relation that have emerged as a result of the recent engagements with the Pauline texts by postmodern theorists like Badiou, Zizek and Agamben, have tended to focus on the *political* implications of Paul's writings; especially on the revolutionary potential of Paul's conception of the relationship between law and grace (see Boer 2009a; 2009b; Zizek: 2003; Agamben: 2007). In contradistinction to this trend, this thesis takes as its focus the more general category of the social. As a result, although philosophical and theological conceptions of the secular are regularly engaged throughout this thesis, it is largely oriented to the social configurations of secularity (and religion).

Returning to our discussion of sociological conceptions of the spirit/world relation. Over the course of this thesis argument we will discover the formative operations of this bifurcation in the work of theorists as divergent as Max Weber, Thomas J. J. Altizer, Steve Bruce, Richard Jenkins and Alistair McGrath. In each instance the logic of mutual exclusivity is employed to designate certain social spaces, modes of religious and cultural practice, as well as historical periods, as devoid of spirit. We will also find that it is used to defend the notion of an original religious purity that, initially held apart from the world, is corrupted by its relationship to it.

This brings us to my second point of intervention. One of the most important criticisms of the secularization thesis to have emerged in the last two decades is the observation that, as Berger puts it, "the world today, with some exceptions … is as furiously religious as it ever was" (1999, 2). As mentioned above, the proliferation of novel modes of spiritual practice in Western societies, as well the rise of very public forms of traditional religion both within and outside the West (Berger: 1999) has been cited as evidence that religion has returned *after a*

period of absence. Philosophers of religion, John D. Caputo and Michael Scanlon, express this contention well when, in the introduction to *God, the Gift and Postmodernism* (1999), they tells us that they

> sought to seize the contemporary moment which has loosened the grip of the old Enlightenment, questioned its intimidating authority, complained about the exclusionary force of its certainties and axioms (among which *secularism* has enjoyed pride of place), and thereby made some room for a religious discourse and restored the voice of a religious imagination … (Caputo and Scanlon: 1999, 2, emphasis in original).

This is exemplary of the pervasive view within contemporary scholarship on religion that although both the premodern and postmodern worlds support or supported a variety of ways of being religious, modernity was a "secular age" (C.Taylor: 2007). In Chapters Two and Five an examination of theories of disenchantment and re-enchantment will reveal a widely held belief that the instrumental rationality of modern science replaced enchantment and magic (McPhillips: 2002, 180), whilst the utilitarian worldliness of capitalism banished any real concern for the otherworldly (Weber: 1930). Coincident with this view is the contention that we would have to wait until the Enlightenment ran its course (Caputo: 2001), until the limitations of a "cold and comfortless" disenchantment became apparent (Berger: 1993, 29), that is, until postmodernity, for religion and enchantment to *return*.

A Kenotic Theory of Secularization

This thesis argument will demonstrate that to regard modernity as a secular age evacuated of enchantment, and to see the spirit as simply external to the world, is to underestimate its capacity to be *both* enchanted *and* disenchanted; to inhabit the modern, the rational and the secular, *as well as* the religious. In the pages that follow it will be argued that secularization is a *kenotic* process.

Like the Pauline texts generally, the concept of kenosis, introduced by Paul in Philippians 2, has enjoyed considerable attention over the years by scholars seeking to challenge the strict separation of the secular and the spiritual (see Hegel: 1977, Merleau-Ponty: 1964, Altizer: 1967, Marion: 1991, Ward: 1998, Vattimo: 2007, Kearney: 2007). This interest primarily lies in the way the biblical concept implicates apparent opposites within one another: the divine in the human, the spiritual in the worldly, the infinite in the historical, and the universal in the particular. As we shall see in Chapter Four, Paul uses the term kenosis to describe a gesture of self-negation by which God sets aside His difference to the world, and through this act of sacrifice, enters into it. However, it is critical to note that God is not lost to the world through this act of self-sacrifice. Rather, like the Incarnation, with which it is associated, kenosis involves a process of carnalization in which the spirit *becomes* the world.

In this way the concept of kenosis is able to capture something that conventional accounts of secularization struggle to articulate. Unlike a conventional account that argues that the divine becomes immanent in the secular world only through an act of corruption, or by losing its spirit, the logic of kenosis implies that the religious spirit can enter into the worldly *without ceasing to be itself*. However, it also needs to be noted that, in contradistinction to secular

theologians such as Thomas J. J. Altizer, (whose theory of modern enchantment is examined in Chapter Four), the carnalization of the spirit described by this thesis does not achieve a simple union of the divine with the world. As mentioned above, although capable of being in and of the world, the kenotic spirit retains its transcendence, its sacred character, even when it inhabits the body of the world.

This is where the work of Max Weber reveals itself to be an important resource for this thesis argument. 90 years since his death, Weber's work is still a key point of reference for sociological examinations of secularization, disenchantment and rationalization. Although he is most famous for his thesis that a particular religious tradition (namely, ascetic Protestantism), was involved in the genesis of modern capitalism, Weber's work on secularization has more often been used to justify the common-sense idea, outlined earlier, that society and culture have progressively become detached from those religious roots.

According to a conventional reading Weber is one of the founding fathers of a theory of secularization that describes the gradual estrangement of modern society from the religious ideas and forms that *once* inspired its social institutions (see for example Bruce and Wallis: 1994, Casanova: 1994, Dobbeleare: 1981, Lechner: 1991, Shiner: 1967, Pierucci: 2000, Heclo: 2003). As Bryan Wilson argues, Weber shared the views of the other founding fathers of sociology, arguing that modernity would witness a decline in religious belief as a result of the privatization of religion and the general trend towards cultural disenchantment (Wilson: 1979, 269). Specifically, Weber is said to have endorsed the view that supernaturalist ideas and practices, and institutions founded upon such orientations, were fast becoming "anachronisms in the development of modern society" (Wilson: 1979, 269).

Despite a number of important exceptions, which will be discussed in the body of this thesis (see Fenn: 1969; Swatos and Kivisto: 1991), these statements are exemplary of a common understanding that Weber's writings describe the detachment of modern institutions from their supernatural referents, and the evacuation of the spirit from those institutions. This position can be seen in essays like "Religious Rejection of the World and their Directions", where Weber posits a direct conflict between the religious ethic of brotherliness and the rationalizing imperatives of modern capitalism (Weber: 1948). The same intractable tension between spirituality and modernity is outlined at the end of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930), in Weber's 1917 "Science as Vocation" Lecture (1948), and in his various writings on disenchantment. These will be taken up in more detail in the second and fifth chapters of this thesis.

As this introductory discussion should have made clear, when read in this way Weber's relevance to this thesis is somewhat limited. As an advocate of a concept of secularization that takes for granted the bifurcation between the spiritual and the worldly, using it to posit a break between secular modernity and the religious spirit, Weber would seem to exemplify precisely the kind of thinking that this thesis seeks to challenge. Whilst I acknowledge that these limitations in his thinking exist, a deconstructive approach to Weber's texts reveals the possibility of using his work to develop a more radical, more thoroughly kenotic, understanding of secularization. To understand what is meant by deconstruction, it is best to turn to Jacques Derrida, with whom it is most closely associated.

A Note on Method

In *Of Grammatology* (1976), in a chapter appropriately titled "The Exorbitant. Question of Method", Derrida explains what deconstruction is (and is not). Deconstruction, he says, is a practice of reading that aims to produce a signifying structure which brings to light "a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command in the patterns of the language that he uses" (Derrida: 1976, 158). Every text, so Derrida explains, is written in a language and a logic that governs the meaning of its arguments, but which is also, always, beyond the command of the author. By attending to that which the author cannot command (but which, nonetheless, "authors" his/her text), a deconstructive reading allows us to perceive the distance within a text or body of work between what an author consciously intends and what his/her text actually says. In other words, it draws out the meanings, theses, propositions, presuppositions and conclusions that speak themselves (in accordance with the logic that governs their production within a specific field or discipline) in spite of the author's best efforts to ignore or marginalize them. Dragging this sub-text out from under the manifest meaning of the text thus produces a tension within the text that may have gone unnoticed by more conventional modes of critical engagement.

In our case, a deconstructive reading of Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930) has illuminated a seemingly impossible contradiction between Weber's expressed intention to show that processes of disenchantment excised the religious spirit from the Protestant work ethic, producing a de-deified, dis-enchanted, secularized modern ascetic culture, and aspects of his argument which suggest just the opposite; that is, that the secularization of Protestantism (and modernity more generally) occurs because the divine becomes too intimate with the worldly, thus disappearing into it. Thus the text, as it is

classically understood, insists that secularization signifies the detachment of the divine *from* the world, while its sub-text testifies to the possibility that secularization actually describes the collapse of the divine *into* the world.

This points to a friction within Weber's argument, and the theories of secularization that his work has inspired. However, the awkward alliance of these competing claims about the relationship between the spiritual and the worldly should not be read as a simple "mistake". Rather, their conjunction within the same argument illuminates a paradoxical logic that does indeed, as Derrida suggests, "govern" the system of logic used by Weber, and other theorists of secularization, to articulate their claims (Derrida: 1976, 158). In short, when read together, these contradictory explanations for the secularization of the Protestant ethic suggest that secularization is a movement that involves both transcendence (the differentiation, disassociation and distancing of the spirit from the world) *and* immanence (the communion of the spirit with the world). In short, a deconstructive reading of Weber's text reveals the kenotic structure of secularization.

A word of clarification needs to be made before moving any further. While my deconstructive reading has produced an expanded understanding of secularization, one that actively displaces the co-ordinates that orient Weber's argument, it is not an alternative, or oppositional reading. It seeks to displace, but not to *re-place*, the conventional interpretations of Weber's work that have focused largely on the aspects of his text that emphasize transcendence, disenchantment and detachment. This is an important methodological detail to take note of. As Derrida insists, a deconstructive reading "must be intrinsic and remain within the text" (1976, 159). It must take account of the conventional or classical understanding of a

text and, *from a place within it*, explore that which has been omitted, marginalized or ignored by it (see also Caputo: 1997, 79). The immanent nature of a deconstructive reading thus allows us to acknowledge that whilst Weber, and the other theorists of secularization examined in this thesis, made significant oversights with respect to the nature of secularization and the potentiality of the religious spirit to inhabit times and places that have traditionally been understood to limit its vitality, it only by attending to their struggles to confine the proper boundaries of the religious spirit (its absence from secularity) that I have been able to uncover the kenotic structure and logic of secularization. In this sense, Weber is, as much as I am, or Altizer, or Hegel or Mark C. Taylor or any of the other theorists used in this thesis is, an author of this theory of secularization as kenosis.

The attempt to undertake a "responsible reading", as Caputo calls it[2], of this field of study, has meant that a great deal of space needed to be given to Weber's foundational essay, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930), as well as to its reception within the discipline of sociology. The basic architecture of this thesis is set up by Weber's argument about ascetic Protestantism's relationship to modern, secular capitalism. After tracing Weber's thesis, that although religious ideas helped to create many of the central institutions of modernity, the religious spirit was eventually excised from modern culture when Protestantism acquired an autonomy from its religious roots, we turn to the apparently conflicting explanations for the secularization offered at the end of the book.

[2] As Caputo puts it, "a deconstructive reading is exceedingly close, fine-grained, meticulous, scholarly, serious, and, above all 'responsible', both in the sense of being able to give an account of itself in scholarly terms and in the sense of 'responding' to something in the text that tends to drop out of view" (1997, 77).

After an incipient discussion of what the competing explanations of secularization could mean for how we read the thesis of secularization, we move onto Weber's theory of "world historical" disenchantment. Examination of the discourse about disenchantment allows us to see why sociologists and philosophers of religion have been so convinced by the idea that secularization is primarily a process of detachment. Chapter Two provides a comprehensive elaboration of this historical narrative, as well as theories of modernization and secularization. This discussion reveals a moral schema at work in the notion of secularization-as-detachment used to define the modern as more mature, complex and independent than its enchanted past.

However, in the work of Mark C. Taylor, Peter L. Berger and Marcel Gauchet, we also locate a temporal paradox that suggests a closer causal relationship between enchantment and the forces of differentiation thought to disrupt it, than has previously been recognized by scholars in this field. To be specific, we find that the transcendence commonly associated with disenchantment is indigenous to the "timeless plenitude" of primordial enchantment.

Chapter Three returns to *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930) to examine what this intimacy infers about modern processes of disenchantment. A semiotic analysis of Calvin's theory of grace, used by Weber to support the claim that Calvinism's disenchantment was ultimately responsible for the loss of the spirit, sees the very notion of human autonomy – intrinsic to the concept of modern secularity – collapse into divine immanence. A turn towards questions of language and representation at this point allows us to highlight the theological significance that Calvin's doctrine of the *fides efficax*, which draws an equivalence between the material (worldly signs) and the immaterial (the grace they represent), has for Weber's argument. In sum, to comprehend the *fides efficax* as worldly signs of election is to acknowledge

the presence of the divine within the flesh of the laboring human (secular) body. Calvin's understanding of the signs of grace complicates, in other words, the separation of the material and the spiritual that has generally been thought to define Protestant (Calvinist) theology.

This chapter also explores the notions of corruption and commerce that underpin the Fall logic used by the narrative of disenchantment to localize the spacing and timing of the contamination of the spirit.

In Chapter Four, referring to Altizer's radical theory of secularization, the possibilities for thinking the modern as enchanted are explored. It is also in this chapter that the concept of kenosis is outlined. Critical approaches to the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation are used to sketch an understanding of a spirit that endures within disjuncture, disenchantment, and even death. This argument is made with reference to Hegel's dialectical understanding of the Spirit, as that which finds itself in its own otherness.

The final chapter returns to Weber's "Science as Vocation" essay to raise some challenging questions about our concept of history and the notions of progress and departure that underpin it. The chapter begins by outlining contemporary theories of re-enchantment, with a particular focus on theorists like Richard Jenkins, who use evidence of re-enchantment to highlight Weber's inability to acknowledge the enduring role of enchantment in modernity. Jenkins' critique of Weber allows us to revisit reservations, raised in Chapter Two, about the limitations Weber imposes upon spiritualism and enchantment. Returning to Weber's SAV lecture we discover evidence of a spirit that is both enchanted and disenchanted, a spirit whose contradictory nature animates the modern, inspiring even its most "secular" dimensions.

Taking a broader view of what Weber offers us here, we pause to reconsider the *linear* notion of history employed to demarcate the premodern from the modern, and the modern from the postmodern. If the enchantment endures within the modern, and if the modern anticipates a desire for re-enchantment usually associated with the postmodern, then we are faced with a concept of historical time that does not respect the divisions regularly used to hold these epochs apart from one another. This prompts us to interpret the modern as a present-time congested with modes of being religious (or otherwise) that are usually extended only to its past and future. This discussion is not intended as a comprehensive theory of history. Rather, it is an exploratory meditation on the nature of narrativity.

Framing

Before we proceed to the argument proper, two final qualifications need to be made. This thesis chronicles the life of the religious spirit and its adventures through the history of "the West". The gradual development of the concept of kenosis across the pages of this text will demonstrate precisely what I mean by the religious spirit or spirit of religion is: understanding the worldly or incarnate nature of this spirit will tells us much about how it behaves, what its characteristics are, who worships it, and who denies its existence altogether. Nevertheless, some clarifying remarks about the particular social, cultural and religious history that has shaped the concept of the spirit to be developed in this thesis need to be made at the outset.

My understanding of the religious spirit has emerged through an analysis of a very specific body of sociological, philosophical and theological literature; namely, that which has

been shaped by Max Weber's seminal essay *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930). For this reason, much of the theoretical literature examined here has retained the Western and Protestant frame of Weber's essay. Consequently, when I speak of a "religious spirit", or even a "spirit of the modern West", it should be understood that I am usually drawing on a philosophical and theological discourse specific to Protestant religious traditions and the sociological debates surrounding their relationship with secularization.[3] In particular, the concept of religious spirit developed in this thesis is informed by the theology of kenosis, and other biblical concepts (like the Incarnation) that emphasize the worldly and human character of the divine.

Like Weber, when I refer to the "West", I have in mind those countries where the experience of secularization was largely informed by Protestantism; and where, in turn, the meaning and social function of religion was itself shaped by the processes of rationalization, industrialization, and urbanization that characterize modernity: namely, Great Britain (and its colonies), The United States of America and (Protestant) parts of Western Europe. Although I am largely treating these countries as similarly "Western", it needs to be noted that commonalities between them often begin to disappear as soon as we begin to closely inspect the social, cultural and political configurations that define them as discrete nation-states.

[3] Although written separately, it is generally agreed that Weber's essay on Protestantism and capitalism belongs to his more general studies of the process of rationalization and the peculiar economic ethics of the different world religions (see Tenbruck: 1989). Weber's comparative studies have been engaged most extensively in Chapter's One and Two in the discussion of disenchantment. However, given that Weber viewed the relationship between Protestantism and secularization as special and historically unique, these digressions have been minimal. Although Weber's writings on Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism can give us significant insights into his theorization of rationalization, the issue of secularization is not explored in any detail in those studies.

One can find any number of differences in the Western European, North American or British experiences of secularization. These differences often derive from the unique the legal, political and linguistic traditions that inform their religious cultures. For example, whereas the United States has become the (somewhat paradoxical) paradigm for the constitutional separation of church and state, the British monarchy continued to be supported an established church. Despite this, religiosity in the Unites States played, and continues to play, a more central role in American social and political culture than it did in Europe at the same time – as Weber himself noted after a visit to the United States in the early years of the 20th century (1948d).

In a similar fashion, the experience of modernization in Lutheran Germany cannot be equated with the social and cultural transformations that took place in Calvinist Geneva or Puritan England in the 16th and 17th centuries. As will be discussed in Chapter One, theological divergence within the various forms of European and Anglo-American Protestantism influenced the speed at which rationalized economic structures and their corresponding "ascetic" cultures developed. In turn, this altered the way that notions of divine immanence and transcendence were negotiated, and thus how the relationship between the secular and the worldly was envisioned.

While not denying the importance of theological, political, geographical and economic differences within Protestant nations, or even between Protestant and Catholic "Western" countries, this thesis is not, and does not aim to be, a comparative study of Western

experiences of secularization. Nor does it explore the way other religious traditions and non-western societies have understood the spirit/world dichotomy examined here.

This is not only because the thesis is theoretical in nature and attempts to produce general principles or analytical constructs (that can then be used to understand specific empirical examples). One of the key arguments of this thesis is that the religious spirit, in so far as it is kenotic, inhabits the differences that seem to preclude it. In this sense, although "confined" to a semantic horizon set by this western Christian tradition, the concept of religious spirit developed in this thesis should not necessarily be considered limited (at least in any absolute sense).

A detailed examination of a wide range of literature about the history of disenchantment and the emergence of secularity in the West will demonstrate that the "Protestant spirit" actually includes social and cultural forces often thought to preclude it, (capitalism, secularity and scientific rationality, for example). Furthermore, a critical engagement with the theory of disenchantment will demonstrate that our understanding of this spirit is fundamentally shaped by its relation to religious traditions which theorists like Weber commonly (try to) define it *against*: Catholicism, Near Eastern cosmogony, mysticism, enchantment. In this sense, we will see that the terms "Protestant" and "secular" cannot be thought in isolation from, or opposition to, these other systems of knowledge and modes of being.

Finally, a word on my rhetorical style. At its most basic level my argument attempts to shift the way we have traditionally thought about the secular and the secular character of

modernity. Undoubtedly there are many ways this could be done. However, as explained earlier, I have chosen a deconstructive approach that necessarily relies on a great deal of textual analysis. This kind of reading practice thus requires an attention to detail that is methodical, but can also appear cautious and repetitive. Indeed, certain texts, or even particular passages of key texts, have been elaborated comprehensively, and returned to more than once, as the logic animating their arguments becomes clearer. For this reason, the rhythm of the argument moves slowly at times, building its momentum only gradually.

I have tried to "step back" from the tight focus of this analysis wherever possible and place the texts, as well as the socio-structural processes they describe, in their historical context. Broader networks of scholarly conversation and debate have also been used to interpret the theories of secularization offered by thinkers such as Max Weber, Peter L. Berger, Marcel Gauchet, Mark C. Taylor, Richard Jenkins and others. Moving in this way has afforded me the intensive focus necessary to appreciate the tensions and ambiguities at work in Weber's writings, as well as in the writings of others. Tracking these tensions across the various texts analyzed here, I have been able to articulate a different way of thinking about the infinite possibilities available to the religious spirit.

CHAPTER ONE: THE PROTESTANT ETHIC AND THE SPIRIT OF CAPITALISM

Max Weber wrote the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* in 1904. It was published in two installments in the *Archiv fur Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, a sociological journal of which he was chief editor, in November 1904 and June 1905. In 1919 it was revised and expanded for publication in Weber's general studies in the sociology of religion: *Die Gesammelte Aufsatse zur Religionssoziologie* (Essays in the Sociology of Religion, 1920) (hereafter GARS). That second edition was translated into English in 1929 by a 26 year old Talcott Parsons, and has subsequently gone on to become one of the most widely-read texts in the sociological canon[4].

As mentioned above, the PE occupies an unchallenged position in the sociological canon. In 1998 it was voted the fourth most influential sociology book by The World Congress of Sociology, conceding first place to another of Weber's books, the posthumously

[4] There now exist a number of English translations of the PE, most recently, Stephen Kalberg's 2001 edition, and Peter Baehr's and Gordon Wells' 2002 version. While it is generally agreed that the Kalberg and Baehr and Wells' translations are more faithful to Weber's original, I have largely relied on Parsons' 1930 edition. Primarily, this is because the argument presented in this thesis is intended to address the reception of Weber's work in sociology, as well as its influence on sociological and philosophical debates about secularization. Both here and in subsequent chapters we shall see that key terms and phrases taken from the Parson's edition have provided the coordinates for discourse about Western secularization, and the processes of rationalization and disenchantment that are said to underpin it. Nevertheless, my reading of the PE has been informed by these more recent translations, and by current discussions surrounding the interpretation of Weber's intentions (see Kalberg: 2000; Baehr: 2005). Marianne Weber's *Max Weber: A Biography* (1975) has also been a useful point of reference because it reproduces many of the ideas presented in the PE in the social and historical context in which they were forged.

published *Economy and Society* (1978, hereafter ES). It is perhaps no surprise then that the sociologists Delacroix and Nielsen accord it a "quasi-sacred status" in the social sciences (2001, 510). The subject of endless exegesis and an unprecedented number of re-interpretations, there now exist countless essays and books that expand on Weber's thesis, re-tell it as part of the broader story of "western" modernization, or else treat it as a general method for understanding social and economic change, applying its argument to other religious traditions, cultures and historical moments[5]. Indeed one could say that Weber's essay on the religious foundations of modern rationalization is something of a rite of passage for sociologists of religion. This contention is certainly supported by Delacroix and Nielsen who recently discovered that it is difficult to find sociology textbooks that *don't* mention the PE (2001, 546).[6]

Significantly, the influence of Weber's thesis has not been confined to the walls of the academy. As Mervyn Bendle noted in an essay celebrating its centenary, the PE has "penetrated deeply into the scholarly *and* popular culture of the West" (Bendle: 2005, 235, emphasis added). Like Bendle, Delacroix and Nielsen argue that the PE thesis has found its way into the popular imagination of "the mainstream culture of English-speaking countries" (Delacroix & Nielsen: 2001, 509-510). Indeed, in the writing of this doctoral thesis there have

[5] Excellent summaries of the different trends in these exegeses can be found in Bendle: 2005; McGrath: 1990; Berger: 1983; Eisenstadt: 1968.

[6] Kalberg confirms this, noting that the PE is prescribed reading for "undergraduates in social science courses" (2001, 41).

been at least 4 radio programs dealing with the themes of the PE.[7] Although much of this interest was inspired by the centenary of its publication, the academic engagement with Weber's text has been consistent and ongoing throughout the hundred years of its life, indicating an influence commensurate with Marx's *Capital*, Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Durkheim's *Suicide*, and perhaps even Darwin's *Origin of Species*. It would be fair to say that, like these classics, the PE is a text that has done much to shape the contours of scholarly debate in the 20th century (and, indeed, beyond).

So then, what does this quasi-sacred text, now over one hundred years old, have to say that continues to be influential? The central concern of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (hereafter PE) is the question of the development of the modern forms of cultural and economic rationalism associated with modern, Western capitalism. It is Weber's contention that capitalism could not have emerged in the West when it did without certain "magical and religious forces, and the ethical ideas of duty based on them" (PE, 27). Although he acknowledges the importance of what he calls the "economic factor" in the rise of Western capitalism (material conditions, like the availability of labour or capital), Weber is nevertheless convinced that it was only "the ability and disposition of men to adopt certain types of practical rational conduct" that could explain the rise of economic rationalism (PE, 26).[8] For as

[7] See the following ABC Radio National programs: The Ark: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Jan. 28, 2007; Encounter: *Charity*, May 24, 2009; The Spirit of Things: *John Calvin*, Jul. 29, 2009; The Spirit of Things: *Seven Deadly Sins: Sloth*, Dec. 6, 2009

[8] Gerth and Wright Mills provide a summary of Weber's major disagreements with historical materialism in their introduction to *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (1948). "He felt that Marx as an economist had made the same mistake that, during Weber's day, anthropology was making: raising a segmental perspective to paramount

Weber goes on to explain, the rationalization of conduct required by capitalism is of such a penetrating quality, and so obverse to the "natural relation" men and women have to economic activity (PE, 53), that its rise to prominence must have been supported by a system of beliefs or an ethos that legitimated it.

Before we examine the reasoning behind this claim, we should pause to consider the broader context of Weber's argument. As Weber himself notes, in his time the conventional way of thinking about religion and capitalism was defined by an oppositional, or mutually exclusive logic. There was a generally accepted idea that "people filled with the spirit of capitalism" were "indifferent, if not hostile, to the Church" (PE, 70). Religion, so Weber reminds his readers, was thought of as other-worldly in its orientation, a form of piety that sets itself above the materialism of capitalism's operational logic (PE, 42, 70). Indeed, although Weber does not say so directly, he suggests that this unexamined opposition is informed by a more pervasive presumption (common to both his time and our own) that modern culture itself, by dint of its worldliness, is entirely at odds with religious or spiritual forces.

The uncritical acceptance of this logic of opposition is important because, as Weber

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importance and reducing the multiplicity of causal factors to a single-factor theorem" (1948, 47). Despite this disagreement, Weber qualifies that it was not his "aim to substitute for a one sided materialistic an equally one-sided spiritualistic causal interpretation of culture and history" (PE, 183). As Kalberg clarifies, while Weber argued that "questions of causality cannot be addressed by reference primarily to economic forces [or] material interests …" (2005, 23), his intervention was really motivated by, what he took to be, the *singular focus* of materialist explanations (Kalberg: 2005, 23). Weber's interest in religious and spiritual causes should thus, as Kalberg argues, be situated within the context of a "multicausal" approach that embraces the role played by material interests, ideas and values, institutional structures, and social class (2005, 22-27).

suggests, it makes it difficult for "modern" men and women to see the sometimes subtle ways in which our apparently secular institutions have been informed by religion (PE, 183). In other words, taking for granted that religion can be defined by "other-worldliness, asceticism, and ecclesiastical piety" (PE, 42), and that these characteristics stand in direct tension with the worldly "web" of modern culture (PE, 90) has blinded us to the possibility of an "intimacy" between them. As Weber notes, "modern man is in general, even with the best will, unable to give religious ideas a significance for culture and national culture which they deserve" (PE, 183). It is the formative role of this intimacy that Weber's essay seeks to illuminate.

The argument presented in the PE is two-fold. At a more general level Weber wants to show that religion has been a generative force in the history of the West, especially in the development of its modern, capitalistic culture. This contention coincides with a much more expansive sociological project, outlined in the texts that make up the GARS and *The Economic Ethics of World Religions* series (hereafter WEWR). In addition to this, the PE tries to demonstrate that a *specific* religious tradition has been responsible for the *particular* outcome of this development. As the title of the essay indicates, it is Protestantism, or its ascetic forms, that provided its adherents with the ability and disposition to adopt the rational forms of conduct necessary to support capitalism, and through it, the secular culture of the modern "western" world. Given this, let us now turn to the detail of Weber's text and see just how he demonstrates these two claims.

The *Ethos* of Capitalism

Attending to the first of these two interrelated arguments, Weber introduces the

foundations for his largely spiritualist approach to the question of capitalism's origins with a general discussion of the forms of rationalization required by modern capitalism, and the relation to the world of work that these forms of rationalism imply. In this discussion Weber paints a picture of early modernity as a time when the rational economic conduct necessary to support capitalism lay dormant within the culture, held in check by certain "spiritual obstacles" (PE, 26) associated with the Catholic world-view of the late Middle-Ages. This picture allows Weber to introduce Protestantism as the liberating force that would, with its historically unique economic ethos, overcome these obstacles.

As Weber points out, the distinctive feature of modern capitalism (that which differentiates it from older forms of capitalism, such as adventure capitalism) is "the rational capitalistic organization of (formally) free labour" (PE, 21). Importantly, this feature of the industrial organization of the capitalist economy provides the basis for yet another characteristic peculiar to its modern, western form: the pursuit of profit through exact calculation (PE, 22).

These features of the capitalistic economy are significant because, as Weber argues, they require (or encourage the development of) a more pervasive rationalization of society and culture. This includes the rational dissection of time, rational and meticulous book-keeping, the legal separation of household and business, or personal and corporate property, the technical utilization of scientific knowledge within the economy, the development of rational structures of law and administration, and a calculable legal system which guarantees the consistency of economic transactions (PE, 21-25). In short, capitalism demands a socio-cultural matrix that, as Herman Lüthy puts it, represents nothing "less than the entire inner structure governing

Western society's attitudes" (1968, 89)

A note on Weber's understanding of rationality is necessary before proceeding any further. The concept of rationality is obviously integral to Weber's thinking. However, readers of Weber will know that he frequently deploys the term to describe widely divergent contexts and processes, with little attempt to provide qualification for what links them under the common concept of rationality. There is, for instance, the rationalization of legal and bureaucratic administration in western modernity (see Weber: 1968a, 656-658; 1948e, 240), but also the rationalization of mystical contemplation, which, as Weber notes, must seem "specifically irrational" when "viewed from other departments of life" (PE, 26). There is the rationalization of means – an instrumental rationality that characterizes the scientific culture of the "Occident" (Weber: 1948a, 129-156). But there is also rationalization of ends, or ultimate values – as in the case of religious concepts of salvation, which require the development of a logically consistent image of the world and its meaning (Weber: 1948b, 267-301).

Moreover, as Weberian scholar Stephen Kalberg has pointed out, "Western rationalism" is itself but one type of societal rationalism, of which "Chinese rationalism" and Indian rationalism are variants (2005, 27). Indeed, in his seminal study of the concept of rationality in Weber's work, Roger Brubaker identifies no less than sixteen apparent meanings of the rational: deliberate, systematic, calculable, impersonal, instrumental, exact, quantitative, rule-governed, predictable, methodical, purposeful, sober, scrupulous, efficacious, intelligible and consistent (1984, 4).

Such an expansive list may only serve to confuse, rather than clarify, Weber's concept

for the contemporary reader. However, Brubaker's text is helpful as it goes on to outline the qualities that make "Occidental" rationalization "peculiar and special" to Weber. He notes that in Weber's writings western rationalization is generally marked by

> the depersonalization of social relationships, the refinement of techniques of calculation, the enhancement of the social importance of specialized knowledge, and the extension of technically rational control over both natural and social processes. (Brubaker: 1984, 2)

And, as Weber argues in the "Author's Introduction" to the second edition of the PE, although many other cultures have made some "advances" towards this kind of rationalization, they have failed to achieve such a penetrating form of rationality encompassing all aspects of social, political and religious life (PE, 13-16).[9] A more detailed analysis of how rationality functions in Weber's work will be undertaken in the following chapter. This introductory discussion should, however, help contextualize Weber's comments, outlined below, on the rational *ethic* implicit in capitalism.

In addition to the existence of formally free labour, Weber argues that this massive

[9] It should be noted that although Weber often speaks of rationalization in terms of achievement, he was also quite pessimistic about the effects that these achievements would have on culture generally. As he warns in "Science as Vocation", the rationalization of culture and knowledge may have lead to a deeper understanding of "what is", but it has, at the same time, cut us off from the transcendent moral frameworks from which we derive meaning (Weber: 1948a). Weber's complicated relationship to these questions will be discussed in the following chapter.

socio-economic apparatus of rational calculation is supported by a vocational ethos, the perfect expression of which he finds in the writings of the great American capitalist, Benjamin Franklin. I will cite a small excerpt of the document referred to by Weber as the "pure" form of this vocational ethic.

> Remember, that *time* is money. He that can earn ten shillings a day by his labour, and goes abroad, or sits idle, one half of that day, though he spends but sixpence during his diversion or idleness, ought not to reckon *that* the only expense; he has really spent, or rather thrown away, five shillings besides…..
>
> Remember, that money is of the prolific, generating nature. Money can beget money, and its offspring can beget more, and so on. Five shillings turned is six, turned again it is seven and threepence, and so on, till it becomes a hundred pounds…. He that kills a breeding-sow, destroys all her offspring to the thousandth generation, He that murders a crown, destroys all that it might have produced, even scores of pounds. (PE, 48-49)

Weber uses Franklin's *Necessary Hints to those That Would be Rich* (1736) and *Advice to a Young Tradesmen* (1748) to demonstrate two things about the "spirit of capitalism". Firstly, the equation of time with money contains an imperative to submit *all conduct* to the rational pursuit of profit. This includes even those aspects of life usually regarded as external to "work" – i.e. leisure time. In this sense, the vocational culture of capitalism encourages an infiltration of the kind of behaviour that functions to increase profit in business - calculating, rationalizing, methodical conduct - into spheres of life nominally outside the workaday world. The

significance of this inflation of the category of work for Weber's overall argument will become apparent when we turn to his analysis of the specifically *Protestant* ethic that undergirds Franklin's relationship to work.

Secondly, as Weber interprets it, the making of money is seen here as "an end in itself" (PE, 51). Money can always beget more money. Wealth can always be increased. In this sense, it has no final goal, no logical end. For this reason Weber surmises that economic acquisition is not treated merely as a means for the satisfaction of material needs; what he calls the "natural relationship" (PE, 53). Rather, "[m]an is dominated by the making of money, by acquisition as the ultimate purpose of his life" (PE, 53).

This suggests to Weber that the making of money has a deeper or higher purpose. The nature of this higher purpose is indicated, for Weber, in the fact that to forgo the opportunity to increase profit, by taking a holiday for instance, or by failing to put your money to work, is seen "not as foolishness but as forgetfulness of duty" (PE, 51). Likewise, to spend money on luxuries, to enjoy it, is seen as an unproductive waste. In Weber's eyes, this gives the pursuit of profit the character of an ethos, or calling. Put differently, it is seen as a virtue (PE, 54).[10]

[10] Dickson and McLachlan dispute Weber's interpretation of Franklin's attitudes to making money as ethical. They point out that Weber's use of Franklin's writings is selective, and that he imputes to them a sense of morality that is not present in the texts themselves (Dickson and McLachlan: 1989, 81-89). The two authors argue that Franklin's writings are best characterized as "prudential advice", not as a moral ethos to make money. They provide evidence to suggest that Franklin enjoyed a comfortable life, which is not in keeping with the ethos of

Weber argues that these two features of the vocational culture of capitalism – the extension of a peculiarly calculating, methodical, and rational mode of conduct into daily life and the imperative to increase profit as a kind of end in itself – make it a historically unique system. As mentioned above, Weber considers the capitalistic ethos to be totally alien to "the natural relationship"[11] (PE, 53), which he associates with "the old leisurely and comfortable

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frugality and temperance suggested by Weber (Dickson and McLachlan: 1989, 86-87; see also Trevor-Roper: 1967).

While it is true that Weber does present a somewhat selective view of Franklin, and that his use of terms like "preach" and "sermon" (PE, 50) to describe his writings does colour it in specific ways, Dickson and McLachlan themselves quote passages from Franklin's writings that contain extensive references to the moral, even religious basis for his economic "virtues" (1989, 88). Moreover, and the significance of this point will become more apparent as we proceed, the two critics neglect to mention that Weber himself concedes that Franklin's "prudential" advice was an example of a *utilitarian* ethos of material accumulation that, whilst retaining a sense of moral duty, had been thoroughly secularized and evacuated of any specifically religious content. That Franklin's attitudes appear to give a worldly or materialist slant to the spirit of capitalism only serves to demonstrate Weber's larger point; namely, that the spirit of capitalism is a secularized version of the Protestant ethic that underpins it.

[11] What constitutes the natural for Weber? Why is the old leisurely lifestyle more "natural" than capitalism? To a contemporary reader the alignment of the natural with what is clearly a historically specific and culturally/religiously contingent form of political economy might seem odd. Although Weber doesn't qualify what the "natural" means, it can be assumed that, like many of his contemporaries, he associated it with that which escapes, or precedes regulation and control. This is suggested by his description of monastic life – with its systematic, self-disciplined relationship to labour – as an "overcoming [of] the *status naturae*" (PE, 118, emphasis in original). Furthermore, although he never addressed it specifically, it is clear that an uncritical understanding of

attitude to life" (PE, 68), where business hours were moderate, "where relations among competitors" were "relative good" (PE, 67), and where, most importantly, economic acquisition was treated merely as "the means for the satisfaction of … material needs" (PE, 53), thus encouraging the enjoyment of wealth (PE, 60).

The unnaturalness of capitalism's utilitarianism suggests to Weber that it was not a spontaneous development, or the inevitable outcome of the evolution of economic forms, as "the theorists of the superstructure supposed" (PE, 56). He surmises that in order to get off the ground, modern capitalism would have had to "fight its way to supremacy against a whole world of hostile forces" (PE, 56); the most important being the spiritual or ethical attitudes obstructing the development of rational economic conduct (PE, 26).

Unmaking Tradition

The attitudes expressed by Benjamin Franklin in the excerpts provided by Weber may not strike the contemporary reader as unusual. Acquisition as the ultimate purpose in life has been thoroughly normalized by a capitalistic culture that prizes the rational pursuit of wealth. Indeed, one could say that although Gordon Gecko's maxim, "greed is good", may have shocked the cinema-going audiences of the 1980's, the image of the honest, hard-working, "self-made man" still resonates with the kind of unquestioned sacredness reserved for national

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the natural underpins Weber's critique of modern life as increasingly "machinic" and de-humanizing (Weber: 1968b, 988; 1401-1403).

heroes.[12]

However, Weber reminds us that the ethics conveyed by Franklin's writings would have been "unthinkable" in the Catholic Middle-Ages (PE, 74). As he notes, the church treated economic acquisition as morally suspect. In the first instance, the activities of the pre-modern capitalist were "in continual danger of collision with the Church's doctrine on usury" (PE, 74). This made it "somewhat dangerous to salvation", and was thus treated cautiously by a society concerned with the question of their eternal fate (PE, 74).

Moreover, there was a general sense that economic activity, although one of the "unalterable necessities of life in this world" (PE, 73-74) was tied up in worldly pursuits that could only lead one away from a truly ethical existence. As Weber points out, prior to the Reformation it was generally accepted that the religious life, the very epitome of ethical conduct, should take place *outside* the profane spheres. The economy, falling squarely into this profane arena, was thus a distraction insofar as the path to salvation was concerned. It was therefore unimaginable within this religious world-view to see the pursuit of gain as having an intrinsic ethical value, as it does for Franklin.

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[12] This image speaks to a number of themes to be discussed in this thesis. The "self-made man" is sacred because it represents the possibility for the individual to overcome what would normally be considered the social-structural constraints of birth and class. This is why Australian entrepreneurs like Frank Lowy are often regarded with greater reverence in the popular media than similar figures like James Packer and Lachlan Murdoch's: son's of successful entrepreneurs who have been born into their wealth, and whose success seems to be a product of external social forces, rather than the "sweat" of their own backs. The Protestant "work ethic" is obviously an antecedent to these contemporary values, as will be discussed in later in this chapter.

There are other more specific reasons why the demarcation of religious and worldly spheres within the Catholic Middle-Ages, and the placement of the economy in the latter, plays an important role in the "spiritual obstacles" obstructing the development of capitalism. The spirit of capitalism, so Weber claims, requires a methodical, unrelenting attention to work and a single-minded devotion to the pursuit of profit. Above all, it treats work as a kind of calling, a duty, to which all aspects of life are subordinated. As mentioned above, such a relationship to work necessarily results in the ascetic rationalization of life. For when time itself is money, all facets of life take on the character of work, and life must lose its "spontaneous and planless" character. Life must become systematic, deliberate and controlled.

Interestingly, Weber notes that this form of rationalization, so necessary to the development of Franklin's vocational ethic, did not suddenly appear *after* the Reformation – as might be suggested by the title of the essay. Weber concedes that a similar form of vocational ethic was in fact the highest ideal of the Christian monastic tradition – a tradition which clearly precedes Luther's Reformation. Weber points out that, as a result of the famous Rule of St. Benedict, followed by the monks of Cluny, the Cistercians and the Jesuits, spiritual life became "emancipated from the planless otherworldiness" of earlier forms of religious life, and developed a "systematic method of rational conduct with the purpose of overcoming the *status naturae*" (PE, 118).

We are reminded here that, in a manner akin to Franklin's attitude to work, the most urgent spiritual duty of the monk was to overcome the spontaneous and impulsive enjoyment of earthly pleasures and submit them to a spiritual purpose. "Thus it trained the monk, objectively, as a worker in the service of the kingdom of God" (PE, 119). In Weber's eyes, the

monastic order, where “worldly” labour did indeed take on the character of a calling, is evidence of a form of ascetic rationalization, amenable to capitalism, but preceding it. Indeed, as Talcott Parson’s points out in an article that aims to expand upon certain aspects of Weber’s PE thesis, some of the most sophisticated (that is, rational) modes of social and economic organization that developed throughout the Middle-Ages came from within the monastery (Parsons: 1968, 45).

However, it is equally important to note that the intensive rationalization of monastic life always remained relatively distinct from the Catholic laity. As Weber notes, although monastic life was held up as the very ideal of religious life, and was therefore a model for life in the secular social sphere, “the holiest task” of the monk was “to surpass all worldly morality” in a life dedicated solely to religion (PE, 121). Accordingly, the frugal and ascetic attitude to work embodied by the monastic model remained cut off from the broader social sphere. And thus, as Weber argues, the intensive rationalization of monastic life “left the naturally spontaneous character of daily life in the world untouched” (PE, 154).

Let us take stock of what has been said thus far. Weber has argued that the spirit of capitalism is characterized by the subordination of one’s life to the ultimate goal of increasing profit. This requires an intensive rationalization of the whole of one’s life. Both of these characteristics were held in check by a world-view that, on the one hand, regarded the pursuit of profit as “avarice”, and thus morally suspect, and on the other, had contained the rationalizing potential of religious/ascetic life in monasteries set apart from society.

Having outlined these obstructions to the development of capitalism, Weber is able to

argue that what was needed to get capitalism under way was a change in the religious climate of the "Occident". Specifically, it required the reversal of the religious ethic that demarcated the economic sphere, and worldly activity more generally, from the religious or ethical life. A "bridging" element was needed to unleash the rationalizing potential of the monastery onto the wider socio-economy.[13] It is Weber's contention that this required nothing short of a revolution in the way that the secular (and the economic sphere it encompassed) was divided from the spiritual. According to him (and many scholars would agree with him),[14] this revolution was set under way by the founder of the Protestant Reformation: Martin Luther.

Luther and the Sanctification of Worldly Work

Weber has presented the reader with the writings of Benjamin Franklin, arguing that they represent an economic spirit characterized by an ascetic attitude to work, and the treatment of worldly labour as a moral duty; a task to which you have been called (PE, 78). Weber makes the ambitious claim that this particular concept of a calling – in the secular or worldly sense exemplified by Franklin - is virtually unknown outside the Protestant world (PE, 79). Introducing the connection that links Franklin's "spirit of capitalism" to a specifically Protestant ethic, Weber says that it is only in Protestantism that worldly work receives the kind

[13] Habermas describes the problem in these terms: "before the rationalization potential of the Occidental tradition could be released and cultural rationalization could be transformed into societal rationalization… [t]he asceticism that flowered in medieval monastic orders had to penetrate all *extrareligious departments of life*" (1984, 214-215, emphasis in original).

[14] See, for instance, Taylor 2007; McGrath, 1990

of ethical colouring that the Catholic world-view reserved for the religious task.[15] This, he argues, is the result of Martin Luther's theology, and its later interpretations by the leaders of the various Reform movements. Weber's analysis in this section of the PE is based on Luther's vernacular translation of the Latin Vulgate – the authoritative version of the Bible, translated into Latin by Jerome in the fourth century.

Weber is careful to note that although the notion of a calling in the sense defined above is a distinctly Protestant concept, the Catholic world of the Middle-Ages was not without a strong sense of a vocation as a task set by God. However, and this difference is critical to Weber's argument, the Catholic understanding of a calling specifically denoted "the divine call to a life of holiness especially in a monastery or as a priest" (PE, 210). Thus, the one called should "surpass worldly morality in monastic asceticism" (PE, 80); that is, they should take up the task in a religious vocation *set apart from secular life*.

In a footnote to this section of the PE Weber demonstrates that the Catholic notion of a religious calling was distinguished in the Vulgate from the more mundane sense of vocation as *opus*, *professio* or *ars* – terms which connote work, but which are devoid of the same sense of

[15] Many commentators have questioned Weber's interpretation of the Protestant understanding of the calling as a specifically worldly task, as well as his presumption that it represents a novel theological innovation (see for example, McGrath: 1990, 209-211; 238; George and George: 1968). Indeed Weber's treatment of Catholicism is generally regarded as "far from realistic" (Stark: 1968). As we shall see throughout this thesis, rather than providing full account of Catholicism, Weber often uses it as a point of comparison to highlight the logical or rational superiority of Protestantism. There is actually an implicit Orientalism in this, as Weber regularly aligns the magic and primitivism of Catholicism with a more "primordial" form of enchantment, associated for him with Asian religiosity. This issue will be addressed in greater detail in the second chapter of this thesis.

moral or ethical importance (PE, 204-206). It is Weber's contention that Luther erased the difference between these two types of relationship to work by refiguring the notion of a calling as a task ordained by God, *but to be fulfilled in worldly life*. This erasure is signaled in Luther's vernacular translation of the Bible by his use of the Germanic word *berufen* (occupation) to signify both the secular labour of daily activity *and* the sense of a religious calling. By using the German word *berufen* to signify both the secular and religious connotations of a calling, Luther collapsed the semantic and even theological differences between them. According to Luther's theology then, to be called to work by God did not entail a transcendence of the world. Rather, what it required was a performance of one's worldly duties with the same dedication and commitment, the same care, as the monk would perform his.

The readjustment of the lines of demarcation separating the religious from the secular can be explained by Luther's understanding of the doctrine of Divine Providence. Weber notes that Luther's views on this matter were formulated through an interpretation of one of St. Paul's letters to the Corinthians.[16] It may help orient us to Luther's thinking if we attend to his interpretation of the passage in question.

> Only as the Lord hath distributed to each man, as God hath called each, so let him walk… Hath any man called being circumcised? let him not be uncircumcised. Hath

[16] St Paul plays an important role in debates about the nature of the secular and its relationship with the religious. It is from St. Paul's call to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, that we get the conventional understanding of the separation of the religious and secular spheres. However, although Paul is often read as a dualist, his theology is by no means straightforward. As Roland Boer points out, Paul's advocacy of the separation of secular and religious authority is often subverted by other passages, like Romans 13, that suggest that the governing (worldly) authorities have been ordained by God (Boer: 2009b).

> any man being called uncircumcised? let him not become circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing; but the keeping of the commandments of God. (1. Cor, vii.)

In this passage St. Paul is attempting to make a break with Jewish law. He wants to assert that in the Christian faith the Jewish taboos and laws of exclusion have become void. As he sees it, all individuals, irrespective of their participation in this system of law, can be called to God. Luther interprets this passage of the New Testament to mean that, "one may attaint salvation in any walk of life" (PE, 84). Indeed, because God had ordered the world according to his Will, each person should remain in their station, for this station reflects God's plan. Whether one was born a butcher, a farmer, a banker, or into an aristocratic family, the fulfillment of worldly obligations affiliated with that position, if done in an honest and dedicated way, is in fact "the only way of living acceptably to God" (PE, 80).[17]

It should be clear that Luther's reformulation of the sphere in which a calling could take place is critical for the eventual development of innerworldly asceticism. By placing worldly work within the religious sphere Luther collapsed the Medieval, Catholic separation of spiritual and mundane spheres.[18] This is important to Weber's argument because, as he puts it,

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[17] McGrath cites a well-worn phrase that perfectly exemplifies Luther's thoughts on this. He quotes Luther as saying, "[t]he world could be filled with the service of God – not just the churches, but the home, the kitchen, the cellar, the workshop and the fields" (McGrath: 1988, 224).

[18] This is not to suggest that Luther did not himself affirm the more general distinction between religion and secularity in other ways. As Taylor points out, although Luther reintegrated the secular and religious in the field of work, "[o]ne of the distinguishing features of [his] thought is its thorough-going dualism" (Taylor, 2007, 63). This

this “gave every-day worldly activity a religious significance” (PE, 80).

A number of consequences follow from this collapse, many of which can only be worked out through an elaboration of Weber’s thesis. However, one crucial aspect of this reformulation that immediately becomes apparent is that Luther’s theological unification of the religious and the secular takes place in the world of work. And thus, as Weber sees it, Luther’s concept of the calling, a calling that embraced the secular sphere but remained invigorated by intense religious devotion, could potentially inject worldly activity with the strict, ascetic, rational conduct that had been reserved for the religious life – exemplified for Weber by the monks.

Superceding Luther

The founder of Protestantism is thus attributed with the role of initiator for a revolution that would eventually transform the very fabric of modern society. However, despite dedicating an entire chapter to Luther’s notion of the calling, Weber goes on to qualify that the revolutionary potential that his “protest” offers for the economic development of European society would have to wait half a generation to be realized with any “permanent concrete success” (PE, 87). In the fourth and fifth chapters of the PE Weber shows that despite the unquestionable influence that Luther had on the direction taken by the Reformation, it is really only in Calvinism that the rationalizing potential of Reform theology

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is attested by the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms which asserts a difference between spiritual and temporal authority. See also McGrath: 1988, 205-211.

was given its fullest expression.

Weber cites two reasons for the failure of Lutheranism to produce the modes of conduct necessary to ensure the development of a rational spirit of capitalism. The first is Luther's economic conservatism. Weber describes Luther's views on capitalism as "definitely backward" (PE, 83). He notes that the German reformer opposed the practice of usury, and indeed "interest in any form" (PE, 82)[19], and remained fairly "traditionalistic" in his relationship to worldly work; that is, Luther felt that precisely because the orders of the world were set by God one should simply accept them as they were (PE, 85).[20] As Weber sees it, the framework of this attitude provides no good reason to go out and change or improve one's lot through the kind of intensive rationalization recommended by the likes of Benjamin Franklin.

Differences emerge quickly when Luther's attitudes are contrasted with Calvin who, as religious historian Alister McGrath tells us, was "cognizant of the basic principles of capital"

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[19] Herman Lüthy points out that "[t]the most immediate motive of Luther's rebellion against the Roman Church … was a revolt against the corruption of the Church and simultaneously an outcry against the great capitalist organizations of the time…" (1968, 99). He concludes that "[t]he Reformation, insofar as it was concerned with the affairs of *this* world, was *also* and very explicitly a protest against the worship of the Golden calf. To use modern jargon, it was an outbreak of an anticapitalistic movement…" (Lüthy: 1968, 99, emphasis in original). McGrath supports this reading of Lutheranism reminding us that the conservatism of his economic outlook, its general ignorance of the important issues dominating urban finance, was shaped by "the social realities of the unsophisticated rural German territory he set out to reform"… a "world preoccupied with the perennial problems of late feudal rural life" (1990, 230). On this issue see also Taylor: 2007, 70.

[20] On the implications of Luther's traditionalism for social or political transformation see McGrath: 1990, 209-210.

and the productive nature of capital and human work (1990, 231). As McGrath emphasizes in his commentary on Weber's PE thesis, Calvin's attitudes towards the economy, "although not themselves explicitly capitalist, … can be said to favour the growth of capitalism" (1990, 233). In the city of Geneva he helped to overturn the prohibition on usury and allowed for a variable rate of interest, which, we are told, showed that he was aware of "the pressures upon capital in a more or less free market" (McGrath, 1990, 231). In addition to this, he supported the generation of new industries.[21]

[21] Although McGrath seems to support Weber's reading of the positive causal relationship between Calvinism and capitalism here, he acknowledges that the issue is contentious. He cites economic historian Jean-Francois Bergier as saying that Calvin's adopted home, the city of Geneva, was amongst the first European cities to develop the key factors allowing for the emergence of something like modern capitalism – the availability of capital, manufacturing skills and a distribution network, all which arose along side the famous Genevan banking system (McGrath: 1990, 229). However, he also points out that many of these developments preceded Calvinism, and were more a matter of historical contingency than the direct outcome of Calvin's religious ideas. For instance, he mentions the economic imperatives underlying Geneva's need to maintain political independence from Savoy and Berne (McGrath: 1990, 230). McGrath does concede, however, that Calvinism did have an *indirect* effect on the development of capitalism in Geneva by attracting skilled (Protestant) workers and manufacturers fleeing persecution in France, and by instilling a work ethic that broke through old class distinctions, censuring "those who regarded themselves as above manual labour" (McGrath: 1990, 232). McGrath also notes that Calvinism did eventually become consonant with capitalism precisely because, as Weber suggests, it encouraged the bourgeois values of thrift, diligence, perseverance, hard work, and dedication that became enshrined in European society throughout the 17th century (1990, 233-234). McGrath is supported here by a number of theorist who have argued that although there is no direct, *causal* link between Calvinism and capitalism, the two became mutually reinforcing throughout the 17th century through a series of historical exigencies. Trevor-Roper, for instance, supports the idea that capitalism and Calvinism became intertwinned in European society, but suggests that this relationship could arise only when the Puritans softened their stance towards worldly goods; that is, when they adopted a more tolerant, semi-secularized attitude to society (Trevor-Roper, 1967). Herbert Lüthy also confirms

This brings us to the second reason for Weber's dismissal of Luther, alluded to above. There is no doubt that Calvin and Luther's divergent attitudes towards the burgeoning forms of capitalism emerging in Europe during their time had some impact on the direction of their ideas and the effect that these ideas would have on the social landscape of early modern Europe. Indeed, Mark C. Taylor argues that Calvin's "fateful decision" on the practice of usury "literally changed the face of the earth" (2007, 70). However, readers familiar with Weber's broader sociological project will also know that the German scholar locates the heterogeneous impact of these two Protestant traditions on the development of capitalism in another area of their thought. According to Weber something more fundamental within Luther's theology than his views on finance hindered the development of innerworldly asceticism (and thus behaviours amenable to early modern capitalism). As Weber puts it, Luther, "and still more his church" "undermined the psychological foundations for a rational ethics" by allowing the believer to experience the "ecstatic-contemplative absorption of the divine spirit by the soul" (PE, 86).

In the comment cited above, Weber contends that an experience of union with the divine adversely affects the possibilities for rationalization. This connection may appear

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that, "since the 17th century Dutch, English and … French Huguenot bankers became the more important than the old Italian and South German banking houses which had previously been supreme" (1968, 98). Like Trevor-Rope, Lüthy qualifies that this had less to do with new techniques of banking supported by Calvinism, than it did with a general shift of the great trading centres northwest; a shift that owed as much to the influence of Protestantism upon the political and intellectual transformations of the period, than it did to anything explicitly economic (Lüthy: 1968, 101-104).

somewhat opaque to the non-specialist. Why would an ecstatic communion with the divine prevent the development of rational ethics? What does the particular form of the relation between the believer and the divine have to do with economic relations, relations one would presume to be worldly?

As we move through Weber's thoughts on this question we will see that this seemingly esoteric point actually contains the key to Weber's argument – not only the argument that capitalism was supported by the religious ethics of ascetic Protestantism, but the more general claim, elaborated in the texts that make up the GARS series, that the specifically rational nature of these ethics transformed the cultural landscape of modernity in such a way as to finally preclude religion's place in it. This aspect of Weber's thesis is centred on the relationship between worldly conduct and religious ideas about salvation.

Religious Rationalization

In his more general studies in the sociology of religion, Weber demonstrates that there is a direct correlation between the pathway nominated by a religion as the key to salvation and the development of modes of conduct thought to be able to achieve it. Different pathways correspond to different modes of conduct, or, in more technical terms, to different religious ethics.

To understand this point some background is needed. In "The Social Psychology of World Religions" (1948b)(hereafter SPWR) Weber states that religious ethics emerge as a response to the problem of theodicy; that is, to the problem of unjust suffering. As he

explains, religious systems function to provide a meaningful and logically consistent explanation for the existence of those things in this world experienced as senseless (SPWR, 281) - "distress, hunger, drought, sickness, and ultimately … death" (SPWR, 280). Part of this response includes the determination of rules of conduct designed to overcome or accommodate this suffering.

The Old Testament ethic, for instance, states that humankind suffers because they have sinned against the Laws of a supra-mundane Creator God. In the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve defied the direct commandment of God by eating from the Tree of Knowledge. As a result they were banished from the Garden and thus condemned to live in exile, apart from God. However, God does not abandon humankind altogether. From time to time He intervenes into earthly life, selecting emissary prophets to guide humanity in its quest for redemption. The most important of these prophets is Moses who, at Mount Sinai, elaborated the Ten Commandments. These commandments represent a system of ethics which, if followed, ensure that the people of Israel live in harmony with God's will. And, as Weber puts it, "if one behaved correctly" one could regain that lost Eden (1952, 230), where humankind lived in immediacy with their Creator. In this sense the Commandments function as a system of ethics that, if obeyed, ensure redemption.

As Weber understands it, the correlation between religious explanations of suffering and the ethical systems designed to overcome these causes provide religions with the potential for the rationalization of worldly conduct. At its most basic level this potential arises as a result of the imperative for the ethical system to correspond, in a logically consistent way, to the religious image of the world (1978, 30; see also Tenbruck: 1989, 65).

There is, however, a more specific way in which the problem of theodicy encourages rationalization, and this varies significantly across divergent religious traditions. As Weber tells us, a religious tradition could determine modes of conduct in response to the quest for salvation that are highly rational, or indeed rationalizing. Or else, it could develop a religious ethic that encourages modes of conduct that have, despite conforming to the rule of logical consistency, a less rationalizing impact on worldly activity.

Theorist in this tradition argue that the ancient Israelites, for example, have an ethical system that encourages its believers to develop and adhere to an extensive legalistic code, to lead a methodical life, to actively engage in the world - indeed to master nature, and bring it under an objectifying perspective - ultimately leaving it open to rational and empirical exploration (Weber: 1952; see also Habermas: 1984; Bruce and Wallis: 1994; Bruce: 2002). Moreover, and this is a critical point for Weber, in this religious system, the human is called into communication with God "solely through the ethical quality of his conduct in this world" (SPWR, 291).

As Weber sees it, such a system is likely to encourage the sorts of behaviours necessary for the development of a rational worldly ethics: the desire to intervene into the chaotic nature of the world (*status naturae*), and to bring it into line with God's will (SPWR, 291); which Weber presumes to be rational in the sense of being systematic, predictable and consistent.

In the religions of China, on the other hand, "a rational economy and technology of the modern occidental character" were "out of the question", because the ethical system

remained based on magical ideas that were anti-rational (Weber: 1951, 227). Weber elaborates this point saying that, despite the development of an immense and highly rational bureaucracy, "the power of chronomancers, geomancers, hydromancers, meteromancers .. and a crude, abstruse, universist conception of the unity of the world" impeded the rationalizing potential contained within the religious ethics (1951, 227).

> For the various popular religions of Asia, in contrast to ascetic Protestantism, the world remained a great enchanted garden, in which the practical way to orient oneself, or to find security in this world or the next, was to revere or coerce the spirits and seek salvation through ritualistic, idolatrous, or sacramental procedures. No path led from the magical religiosity of the non-intellectual classes of Asia to a rational, methodical control of life. (Weber: 1963, 270)

The difference Weber aims to articulate here between the Judaic, and later Protestant, ethic and the Chinese ethic is located in what Weber calls *disenchantment*, which entails the elimination of magical means for salvation and the unification of the world under an abstract, unifying principle (Weber: 1951, 226). The details of Weber's theory of disenchantment and its relationship to the development of rational forms of worldly conduct will be elaborated in detail in chapter two. In the context of our present discussion it is important to note that Weber identifies magical ideas, and a conception of the unity of the world of humans with the world of spirits as impediments to the development of this rational worldly conduct. Moreover, this is the case even where, as Weber concedes, the development of a rational bureaucracy was possible – as in the case of China. What explains this?

On the one hand, that Weber treats the emergence of a rational bureaucracy as less significant in the history of societal rationalization than the development of a rational *economic* ethic tells us that he is less concerned with rationality *per se*, as with a *particular* notion of the rational, one that is anchored in, and measured by, the eventual development of western capitalism. In other terms, Western capitalism, characterized by the rational organization of formally free labour, is used as the end against which all forays into rationalization – from the very basic rationalization inherent in theodicy, to the self-disciplined, intensive labour encouraged by Christian monasticism - are measured.[22]

As we have seen, within this schemata, the eventual development of this pre-determined "end" requires an intensive, purposeful, utilitarian rationalization of *worldly* or secular conduct (in contradistinction to the rationalization of contemplative attitudes for instance, which are strictly oriented to the religious sphere). As Weber sees it, a religious ethic of worldly conduct can arise only where supernatural or spiritual forces are positioned *outside* the world; and where, *as a consequence*, the means for achieving salvation necessarily precludes contact with, or manipulation of, divine and spiritual forces (SPWR, 290).

As will be explained below, it is Weber's contention that when spiritual and supernatural forces are seen as continuous with the world the believer tends to seek out "irrational" means for salvation. These include the manipulation of spirits, and forms of

[22] As Kalberg notes, "modern Western rationalism" is an ideal-type used by Weber to identify regularities within a type, and make contrasts to other types (2005, 15). Thus the particular form of capitalism developed within the West, which Weber uses to define the uniqueness of its rationality (see PE: 20-27), stands out over and above other aspects of the social systems he investigated.

ecstatic or contemplative communion with the divine. Additionally, returning once more to Weber's comments about the religions of China, when the world itself is seen as "the best of all possible worlds" (1951, 227), an attitude Weber refers to as "world-affirmation", there is no imperative for an interventionist relation to the world at all. As Weber puts it in "Conclusions: Confucianism and Puritanism", the conclusion to *The Religion of China* (hereafter CP), "the right path to salvation consisted in *adjustment* to the eternal and supra-divine orders of the world" (CP, 228, emphases added).

Although the details of Weber's concept of disenchantment will, as mentioned above, be discussed in more detail in Chapter Two, it is important to make note of some problems with Weber's account of Chinese religions. In the first instance, as Peter L. Berger points out, Weber has a far too undifferentiated view of Asian religions (1983, 3). He tends to lump them all together under the umbrella term the "magical", or "enchanted", garden of Asian religiosity. This enchantment is characterized by passivity, an acceptance of the world's orders, "naivety" (CP, 227), and magic. In this sense it resembles an Orientalist approach to Asia.

As we shall see throughout the course of our investigation of Weber's theory of disenchantment, although Weber's view of the Orient is formulated through a universalist notion of human history "observed from the vantage point of Europe, or the West" (Said, 1985, 101) – which is to say, for the view point of western capitalism – the demarcations used by him to reduce the Orient to the Occident's more primitive and naive "other" are not confined to the traditional geographic distinction between the West and the East. What we see emerging here are the basic premises of a distinction between two forms of religious ethic: an enchanted religious ethic, where the divine is immanent in the world, and where communion

with it is possible; and the disenchanted ethic, where, as a result of the divine transcendence, contiguity with the supernatural is strictly precluded. As will become apparent, this distinction is used by Weber to defend differences that divide the West in and of itself, producing aspects of its religious and cultural heritage as a sort of internal orient, a lingering primitivism that must be overcome (by its more mature, more disenchantment other) into order to bring modernity into being.

Weber's discussion of the heterogeneity of Calvinism and Lutheranism's relationship to the development of a rational ethic of worldly conduct introduces some of the themes of this internal division. As the theological basis of this distinction becomes clear only through Weber's discussion of Lutheran, Calvinist, *and* Catholic notions of salvation, a further digression is necessary at this point.

Theological Impediments of Economic Rationalization

As many critics of the PE point out, Weber's account of Catholicism in the PE is somewhat truncated. It lacks the extensive detail afforded to his accounts of Lutheranism and Calvinism.[23] However, as inadequate as they may be, Weber's comments about the medieval Catholic institution are important for the overall development of his argument, and help to contextualize his dismissal of Lutheranism (on the grounds of its perceived enchantment).

In a basic sense we can say that the Catholic Church shares the God of the Old

[23] See Eisenstadt: 1968; Stark: 1968.

Testament.[24] It believes in the same supra-mundane God, and shares with ancient Judaism many of the same ethical commandments. One might expect then, that it would develop a similar ethic of religious testing, where the individual is called solely through the ethical quality of their conduct. However, Weber contends that the Catholic institution provides a less rational version of this model because the Church functions as a sort of go-between, mediating God's Word to believers. As he points out, the Catholic priest interprets scripture (a scripture that was, we must remember, written in Latin and thus inaccessible to the vast majority of Catholics), performs the sacraments that bestow grace, and in this function, is able to restore the sinner to the flock. As Weber summarizes it,

> The priest was a magician who performed the miracle of transubstantiation, and who held the key to eternal life in his hand. One could turn to him in grief and penitence. He dispensed atonement, hope of grace, certainty of forgiveness (PE, 117).

Weber contends that the Catholic sacramental apparatus weakens the rationalizing potential of the Old Testament ethic it shares with Judaism. As he goes on to explain, although the average believer living under the Catholic system was required to act ethically, to obey the commandments, and live in harmony with the Church's teachings, atonement for sins was always possible, and could even, as Luther famously protested, be bought (with indulgences).

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[24] The literary critic and religious scholar Harold Bloom would disagree. He is critical of the term "Judeo-Christian", arguing that Judaism is not the parent of Christianity because the two faiths are essentially irreconcilable (Bloom: 2005, 8). Bloom's point is that by co-opting the "Old Testament" as a mere prequel to the New Testament, Christianity reduces essential differences between the faiths. This is an important insight, but cannot be explored further in this thesis.

Weber surmises that the possibility of atonement "for hours of weakness or of thoughtlessness" reduced the need for the believer to organize their moral acts into a consistent "rationalized, system of life" (PE, 116). As he puts it, whilst atonement was available as a "sort of insurance premium" against damnation, "the normal medieval Catholic layman" could live ethically "from hand to mouth" (PE, 116). Or, to use Berger's words, the "sacramental system provided innumerable escape hatches from the sort of total rationalization of life demanded by Old Testament prophecy" (1973, 127).

One of the great achievements of the Lutheran system was, insofar as Weber's narrative is concerned, to break through the tutelage of the Catholic Church by rejecting its claim to be the privileged mediator of God's Word. Luther declared that the path to salvation was not through good works, and could not be assured by any human institution – such as the sacraments of the Church outlined above. Putting forward a theological argument that would rock the religious landscape of early modernity, Luther claimed that the individual could be redeemed (restored to God, made divine) *sola fides*, by faith alone.

Sola Fides

Importantly, the doctrine of justification through faith, as it is commonly called, asserts that righteousness cannot be acquired through any human act. No act of merit, ethical or otherwise, nor any duties performed by the priest, can guarantee justification. The faith that saves is an effect of grace, and comes to the believer from God alone. It is a free gift, and cannot be earned. Indeed, as McGrath notes, it depends solely on the gratuity of God's forgiveness (1990, 239). The ultimate imperative of this doctrine then is to trust in God, to act

in accordance with His will, and to ready oneself for His saving grace.

A more detailed examination of the doctrine of *sola fides* will be undertaken in Chapter Three. Nevertheless, even at this juncture it is obvious that this salvific economy has the capability to rationalize religious ethics and the modes of practical conduct commensurate with it. Cut off from the mediating structure of the church with its elaborate ritualistic sacraments, the individual must now take personal responsibility for their salvation. In Weber's eyes, this has the *potential* to encourage a more consistent, systematized approach to the religious ethic. As he puts it, citing Sebastian Franck, "the significance of the Reformation [lies] in the fact that now every Christian had to be a monk all of his life" (PE, 121). By this he means that, precisely because the individual could not seek atonement from the church, they must unify their "good works" into a way of life that avoids moments of weakness. Parsons puts this point succinctly when he says, the primary obligation of the believer in the Protestant system was "no longer the commitment to accept the *particularized* obligations and sacraments administered by the Church, but to act on the more *general* level in accordance to God's will" (1968, 50, emphasis added).

The presumption that the movement of Protestantism's salvific economy away from the Catholic Church's structures of mediation necessarily entails a correlative shift from particularity (of ethical conduct) to generality, seems to equate responsibility for one's own salvation with self-discipline. It is almost as if, without the watchful, but nevertheless forgiving gaze of the church, the individual comes to embody the disciplining principle associated the "morally demanding" God associated with the Old Testament. In other words, as the individual adopts the role of monitoring their own behaviour, constantly subjecting it to moral

scrutiny, the externality of religious authority, command and potential punishment becomes internalized. Put differently again, divine authority or discipline becomes immanent in the believer.[25]

Returning to the narrative of Weber's argument, as mentioned above, Weber identifies something within Luther's interpretation of this structure of grace, common to all the Protestant traditions, that prevents such a wide-scale and transformative rationalization from taking place. On the one hand, Weber contends that Lutheranism does not go *far enough* in the removal of the sacramental structure of the Catholic Church. As he reminds us, Lutheranism retained the sacrament of the confession. In this sense, it implied that sanctification was always possible "through penitent contrition", and thus, in Weber's words, it "left the spontaneous vitality of impulsive action … nearly untouched" (PE, 126).

There is another aspect of the Lutheran concept of salvation that Weber takes issue with. As he outlines, saving faith, for Luther, is an effect of grace. It is experienced, and indeed sought, in the experience of "the entrance of the divine into the soul of the believer" (PE, 112). For it is when the believer feels the active presence of the divine spirit moving within

[25] In some ways Weber's discussion of the disciplinary regimes of Protestantism pre-empts Foucault's theory of power as omnipresent and embodied (Foucault: 1990). Indeed Weber's thesis gives Foucault's analysis of the Panoptican and the modern surveillance society a religious context (see Foucault: 1977, 195-228). It is no coincidence that the religious ethic described by Weber was the predominant form of faith in Bentham's England. The correlation between the two authors also suggests a radical re-reading of the Protestant subject, to be examined in Chapter Three. Namely, if the individual comes to embody the disciplinary authority of God, then, as Foucault points out with respect to the operations of power, can we not say that the subject has *become* God; that the subject *is* God?

them that they have an experience of righteousness. Accordingly, salvation is sought in a *unio mystica* with the divine (PE, 112).

For Weber, this means that although the believer seeks always to act in accordance with God's Will, and, as exemplified by Luther's concept of the calling, to passively accept what God has given them, they are also concerned with maintaining an openness to this experience of absorption in the deity. As Weber sees it, this tends to express itself in a "contemplative" search for God. Consequently, the type of ethical conduct to emerge within this spiritual milieu tends towards the emotional, mystical, and contemplative: behaviour that seeks to escape from the world, to seek God in other-worldly experiences (PE, 112).[26]

As we can imagine, a religious ethic like this is not commensurate with the kinds of behaviour Weber identifies at the origin of capitalism. The methodical, rationalized, and ascetic participation in worldly work that Weber describes as "the spirit of capitalism" requires an active participation in the orders of the world. As the comments above suggest, there is no motivation for such participation within the Lutheran schema. As Weber sees it, in Lutheranism participation in the world is always subordinate to a passive acceptance of a world ordered by Divine Providence, and to the yearning for emotional or mystical experiences that

[26] We might want to question Weber's characterization of contemplation as a refusal to engage with the world. One only has to think of mystics like Meister Eckhart who advocated a contemplative relation to God which concurrently maintained a direct and active relationship with the worldly orders, to see that Weber's "ideal-type" is something of a caricature (see Eckhart: 1981; Laclau: 1997). Indeed, although Weber makes passing reference to what he calls "the inner-worldly" mystic who "remains in the orders of the world" (1948c, 326), his two-fold typology is so entrenched in his understanding of the motivations for rational worldly conduct that the reader would be forgiven for missing the concession altogether.

draw the believer away from work in the world.

This prevents an active engagement with the world because, as Weber puts it in a different but related context,

> the economy and all other action in the world … [are] considered religiously inferior, and no psychological motives for worldly action … [can] be derived from the attitude cherished as the supreme value… contemplative and ecstatic religions have been rather specifically hostile to economic life. (SPWR, 289)

Outlined above is the logic employed by Weber to excise Lutheranism from the puzzle of capitalism's origins; or, as Weber himself puts it, to show that Luther's church is "of questionable importance for the problems we are interested in" (PE, 86). Before moving on to examine how Calvinism acts as a corrective for Luther's "mystical emotionalism", I would like to pause and consider something curious about the dismissal of Luther at this juncture of the essay. As we read on we will notice that Weber continues to make regular references to Luther. Weber returns to Lutheranism again and again throughout the course of the PE in order to highlight certain peculiarities in ascetic forms of Protestantism. In this sense Luther acts as a point of comparison to Calvinism. This is particularly apparent in Weber's typological distinction between the vessel and tool of God's will (discussed below).

Luther's importance for the historical narrative is thus anything but "questionable". Indeed, as we shall later see, it is *only* within these diacritical arrangements, contrasting Calvinism to Lutheranism, Catholicism and the Near Eastern religions – in short, to enchanted

religious types – that Weber is able to make some of his most important claims. What this analytical dependency between the different religious traditions means for the supposedly unique character of ascetic Protestantism will be discussed in due course.

The Lonely Believer

Although the Frenchman John Calvin was a follower of the Reformed movement begun by Luther, his theological vision took him in an entirely different direction (see McGrath: 1990; Taylor: 2007; Zachmann: 2007). As Weber notes "[t]he Calvinist also wanted to be saved *sola fide*" (PE, 114). However, in Calvin's thought the experience of faith, and the means regarded as appropriate for achieving it, radically differ from the "mysticism and emotionalism" of the Lutheran (PE, 114).

Calvin believed in the unequivocal transcendence of God. For him God was a radically different being, separated from the human by an "unbridgeable gulf" (PE, 103). His will was unknowable and His decrees, though unavoidable, could neither be questioned, nor even properly understood. They came to the human subject from afar, with the weight of an absolute Law. In this sense, the human lived in an utterly profane sphere, and although God was the creator of that sphere, He was nevertheless wholly other to it.

For this reason any emotional community with God, such as that which developed in Lutheranism, was impossible. As Weber argues, in Calvinism "a real penetration of the human soul by the divine was made impossible by the absolute transcendentality of God" (PE, 113). As a consequence, as Weber will go on to explain, the "path to salvation is turned away from a

contemplative 'flight from the world' and towards an active ascetic 'work' in the world'" (SPWR, 290).

This last point needs further elaboration. Calvin's thought is what Weber calls disenchanting (PE, 105). By this he means that divinity belongs to God and to God alone. It cannot be embodied in any human institutions or rituals. Thus the world and all human institutions are divested of any magical, spiritual or sacred properties. As Weber notes, even the sacraments of the church – which remained important to Lutheranism - are reduced to the status of the "*externa subsidia* of faith": "ordained by God for the increase of His glory" but "not a means to the attainment of grace" (PE, 104). In more accessible terms, what Weber us saying here is that the most important rituals of the Christian church, the sacraments designed to bring the believer into *contact* with God, are evacuated of any spiritual content or capacity. As a consequence of this disenchantment the salvific value of religious rituals are denied.[27]

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[27] Here Weber reiterates a conventional understanding of Calvin's attitude towards the sacraments. However, as Calvinist scholar, Randall Zachmann has recently argued, there is "an increasing catholicity in the development of Calvin's theology" (2009, 438). As Zachmann demonstrates, through careful exegesis of his major writings, Calvin

> increasingly insists that the pious need to contemplate both images of God throughout their lives, especially on Sunday, when they are to consider the works of God in the universe, even as they contemplate the living images of God in Christ in the Gospel, baptism, the holy Supper, and the various rites and ceremonies of worship. (Zachmann: 2007, 438).

In Chapter Three we will see why these two images of Calvin – as radical iconoclast, and yet appreciative of the living presence of the divine in worldly practice and worship – reflect a theological vision that is both enchanted and disenchanted, both rationalistic and mystical.

Indeed, making this point clear, Weber notes that

> [t]he genuine Puritan even rejected all signs of religious ceremony at the grave and buried his nearest and dearest without song or ritual in order that no superstition, no trust in the effects of magical and sacramental forces on salvation, should creep in (PE, 105).

The disenchantment implicit in Calvin's thinking has important consequences for the development of rational, worldly ethics. As we can see, in this theological system the believer cannot hope to escape a sense of sin-stained unworthiness by becoming a *vessel* filled with God's love (as the Lutheran could). Separated by an unbridgeable gap, the Calvinist could, as Weber argues, live in accordance with God's teachings (or, in more familiar parlance, could be redeemed in God's eyes) only by becoming a *tool* of God's will.[28] And, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, it is when the relation to God is characterized by instrumentality, when the believer is cut off from magical or mystical forms of salvation, that it becomes imperative for the believer to prove him or herself to God "*solely* through the ethical quality of" his or her "conduct in this world" (SPWR, 290). In short, *distance* from God becomes the motivation for rational activity in the world.

[28] Weber deploys the term "tool" as a way of managing the implicit *connection* that any relation between the human and divine must entail. He does so with the presumption that an instrumental relation some how protects the autonomy of God from the human. The notion that such a separation can be maintained in a relationship where the individual's actions, indeed the status of the individual as saved or reprobate, are wholly determined by God's agency is questionable. We will return to this theme in Chapter Three.

Weber provides us with a summary of this logic when, in a slightly different context, he contrasts the "active asceticism that is a God-willed action of the devout who are God's tools" with "the contemplative *possession* of the holy" found in mysticism (1948c, 325, emphasis in original). The passage deserves to be quoted at length because the terms Weber introduces here are significant for the broader context of his argument.

> Mysticism intends a state of 'possession', not action, and the individual is not a tool but a 'vessel' of the divine. Action must thus appear as endangering the absolutely irrational and other-worldly religious state. Active asceticism operates within the world; rationally active asceticism, in mastering the world, seeks to tame what is creatural and wicked through work in a worldly 'vocation' (inner-worldly asceticism). Such asceticism contrasts radically with mysticism, if the latter draws the full conclusion of fleeing from the world (contemplative flight from the world). (1948c, 325)

Although, for Weber, Lutheranism is not strictly speaking a mystical religion, numerous comments throughout the PE suggest that the rules of conduct that apply to mysticism can be extended to the Lutheran tradition.[29] The importance of this citation from *The Religious Rejection of the World and its Directions* (1948c) (hereafter RRW) is thus clear. By maintaining contiguity with the divine Lutheranism undermines the rationalizing potential of his own doctrine of justification through faith. Weber situates Calvinism on the other side of

[29] For instance, Weber remarks that "Luther stood close" to the "religious life that tends to mysticism and emotionalism" (PE, 114). He also attributes the "naïve emotionalism" of Pietism, as well as its tendency towards religious ecstasy, to Lutheran influences (PE, 137).

this dichotomy. It actualizes the rationalizing potential of the Reformed doctrine of faith precisely because it cut the believer off from the divine, and because, as a consequence of this, it reduced the believer's relationship to Him to an instrumental one.

Ascetic Mastery of the World

The question remains as to why an instrumental relation between the believer and the divine would support a more rational, world-oriented ethic. Additionally, why does the believing Calvinist feel compelled to engage with a world regarded as profane, on behalf of a God whose intentions are presumed to be utterly unknowable? This question becomes more puzzling when we recall that Calvin was a firm believer in the doctrine of predestination.

In summary, the doctrine of predestination states that "man, dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself" for salvation (PE, 100). The gift of grace is the sole product of an objective power, extended to humankind "without any foresight of faith or good works" (PE, 100). Thus it is a binding decision that no human action can change, nor any consciousness resist. For, as Weber explains,

> to assume that human merit or guilt play a part in determining this destiny would be to think of God's absolutely free decrees, which have been settled from eternity, as subject to change by human influence, an impossible contradiction. (PE, 103)

Moreover, according to the doctrine, the determination of grace has been made "before the foundation of the world was laid" (PE, 100). Those who have been called "unto

everlasting life" will be saved, and those who have not, will not, and indeed cannot, be saved.

The implications of the doctrine of predestination are, as Weber famously notes, entirely fatalistic (PE, 232). And yet, it is this doctrine that Weber isolates as the most important factor motivating the believing Calvinist to systematically rationalize the world in line with a set of ethical commands. Even contemporary readers of the PE, familiar with its basic premises, must be forgiven for asking why one would bother to obey God's commandments, to "tame what is creaturely and wicked in the world" (RRW, 325), to bring it into line with God's decrees, if neither the intention nor the outcome of such piety could effect, *in any way*, one's chances of salvation?

As we have seen, the doctrine of predestination contends that no human can change the fate of his or her state of grace. However, as Weber points out, bringing us to the central crux of his thesis, with so much at stake in one's status as elect or damned, the question of one's election must have assumed central importance for those living under the doctrine.

> The question, Am I one of the elect? Must sooner or later have arisen for every believer and have forced all other interests into the background. And how can I be sure of this state of grace? (PE, 110)

As Weber suggests here, people living under the terrible weight of the doctrine of predestination were eager to assuage the deep inner loneliness of uncertainty in the face of such an ultimate determination (an uncertainty that could not be resolved by the Church, and thus one which the individual must face alone), by proving to themselves that they had been

elected as members of the "invisible church". Inevitably, as Weber sees it, this gave rise to the question if there was any "infallible criteria by which membership to the *electi* could be known" (PE, 110). How could one find out if they were chosen or damned? How could this all important state of grace be recognized?

In Calvin's thought, as in Luther's, the only sign of grace is the faith that it produces in the believer. We will recall that the doctrine of justification through faith states that faith arises as an effect of grace. Thus faith in God, faith that one is indeed elect, is the only means by which grace can be assured. As Weber reminds us, according to the official teaching on this question, "lack of self-confidence is the result of insufficient faith, hence imperfect grace" (PE, 111).

There is, however, one other way in which grace came to be determined. As Weber tells us, Calvinist doctrine asserts that the chosen have been elected to be stewards of God, to act in the world to increase His glory. The faith that they receive as an effect of grace is thought to produce worldly effects which achieve just that. That is, the elect "has the *fides efficax*… he is able by virtue of his rebirth and the resulting sanctification of his whole life, to augment the glory of God by real, and not merely apparent, good works" (PE, 114).

The importance of this seemingly esoteric theo-ology to Weber's argument becomes apparent when he notes that by good works the ascetic Protestants specifically meant the conscientious performance in the calling God has chosen for you. As Weber notes, it is hard, continuous bodily or mental labour in a stable profession that was seen as a willingness to "do the works of him who sent" you (PE, 156), and thus taken to be a sign that the person was

indeed a steward of God. As a result of this doctrine, so Weber tells us, “intense worldly activity is recommended as the most suitable means” of attaining self-confidence about election. “It and it alone disperses religious doubts and gives the certainty of grace” (PE, 112).

The psychological effects of the doctrine of predestination are consequently identified as a theological motivation for a culture of industriousness. As Weber goes on to explain, in this religious environment, unwillingness to work was seen as a sign of reprobation (PE, 157). The logic of this is explained by the fact that it is “not leisure and enjoyment, but only activity that serves to increase the glory of God” (PE, 157). Or, as the Puritan writer, Richard Baxter, puts it, “every hour lost to labour is lost to the glory of God” (cited in PE, 158). Consequently, loss of (potentially productive) time through sociability, idle talk, more sleep than is deemed necessary for health (six to eight hours), and luxury were treated as deadly sins (PE, 157-158). Even sport was accepted as morally sanctioned only “if it served a rational purpose, that of recreation necessary for physical efficiency” (PE, 167). As a means of sheer enjoyment it was “strictly condemned” (PE, 167).

Weber contends that this culture of industriousness resulted in the “thoroughgoing Christianization of life” (PE, 125); a Christianization where “the process of sanctifying life could … almost take on the character of a business enterprise” (PE, 125). Indeed, the correlation between the “saving of souls and the balancing of accounts”, as Lüthy puts it, is made stronger by the fact that Christians were asked, not only to work ceaselessly in a methodical and industrious way, but were also enjoined to actively pursue the increase of profit in that work. Weber cites the doctrine that justifies this.

> If God shows you a way in which you may lawfully get more than in another way… if you refuse this, and choose the less gainful way, you cross one of the ends of your calling, and you refuse to be God's steward. (PE, 162)

Weber argues that this culture justified the activities of the bourgeois business man (PE, 177), and was thus "bound directly to influence the development of a capitalistic way of life" (PE, 166). Not only this, but because this Protestant ethic eschewed the products of labour, that is, material wealth, as morally suspect, it also encouraged the productive investment of capital (PE, 172). As Weber explains, wealth was regarded as the natural product of industrious labour. Thus it was seen as a sign of God's blessing. The more that could be made, the better. However, as a means for enjoyment it was seen as reprehensible: "you may labour to be rich for God, though not for the flesh and sin" (PE, 162).

Bringing the many facets of his argument together, Weber tells us that the combination of a release of acquisitive activity with a limitation on consumption resulted in the "accumulation of capital through ascetic compulsion to save", and its productive re-investment (PE, 172). Perhaps even more importantly, the Protestant ethic – as it would come to be known - favoured the development of a rational bourgeois economic life. It eradicated any sense of guilt about the acquisition of money (PE, 176), and encouraged the sort of relationship to work and the production of wealth that Weber identified in Benjamin Franklin's writings. As Weber suggests,

> one only has to re-read the passage from Franklin, quoted at the beginning of this essay, in order to see that the essential elements of the attitude which was there called

> the spirit of capitalism are the same as what we have just shown to be the content of Puritan worldly asceticism. (PE, 180)

Weber's neat return to the point of departure seems to bring this epic narrative to a close. To summarize what has been said above, the ascetic Protestant's positive evaluation of worldly work as a means for attaining certainty of grace, the determination of the fruits of the labour (i.e. wealth) as a sign of God's blessing, and the moral proscription discouraging the enjoyment of that wealth, are cited by Weber as evidence that ascetic Protestantism "did its part in building the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order" (PE, 181).[30]

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[30] It needs to be noted that Weber's thesis has been dogged by criticism since its publication in 1905. There were many early critics (such as Fanfini: 1935, and Samuelsson: 1964) who completely rejected Weber's contention that a causal relation could be made between Calvinism and capitalism. Still today, thinkers like Delacroix and Nielsen, cited earlier, claim that the PE lacks any empirical evidence (2001). Yet many other critics have emerged who concede that Weber's overall argument contains a "kernal of truth", even if some of its causal claims cannot be empirically established (see Eisenstadt: 1968; Fischoff: 1968; Lüthy: 1968; McGrath: 1990). As McGrath notes, "the appeal of Weber's thesis lies in its obvious consonance with the observable. The demonstrable affinity of Calvinism and capitalism … is something which requires to be explained, rather than to be demonstrated" (1990, 237). The specific concern of this thesis is the contribution the PE has had to our understanding of secularisation, rather than the historical relationship between Calvinism and capitalism. Consequently, a more detailed elaboration of the critical reception of Weber's PE *on these grounds* is not possible here. However, it is interesting to note that many of Weber's more sympathetic critics see the strongest link between Calvinism and capitalism in the transmission of its religious ethics into modern, bourgeois, secular European culture (see especially Germani: 1968; McGrath: 1990; Shiner: 1967). The association of Protestantism with capitalism is, for these commentators, thus a more general relation of influence encouraging the development of modern secular culture (see Berger: 1973; Bruce: 2002; Taylor: 2007). The significance of this will become apparent over the course of this thesis.

The Secularization of the Protestant Ethic

Weber's argument would seem to have run its course at this point. He has argued that ascetic forms of Protestantism unleashed a religious ethic into the modern "West" which penetrated all spheres of life. This ethic submitted all that had been spontaneous and planless to a rationalizing imperative: methodical, conscientious labour in a calling. And this vocational ethic, as Weber has been at pains to demonstrate, was a formative force in the birth of "our specifically worldly modern culture", (PE, 90): the "iron-cage" of capitalism (PE, 181). Thus the initial claims which Weber's PE brought to the table appear to have been affirmed. The reader can now see that religious forces have indeed played an integral part in the development of Western forms of rationalism, and that this rationalization has been the result of a very specific form of religious ethic; an ethic of inner-worldly asceticism peculiar to ascetic Protestant traditions. The Protestant ethic is thereby revealed to be the spirit of capitalism. Or so it appears.

Up until this point Weber's PE essay would seem to provide us with historical evidence to support a thesis that, to use the expression of one of Weber's more recent translators, is as "iconoclastic" as it is "counter-intuitive" (Baehr: 2005, 6). That is, Weber has demonstrated that a religious logic, a theo-logy, underpins aspects of a capitalistic culture commonly regarded as worldly and (therefore) secular. In this sense, he makes a direct intervention into the received logic, popular in his own time, that these categories are distinct, if not alien. In his own terms, he illuminates an intimacy (between religious piety and material acquisition) where scholars have only ever seen a conflict.

In doing this Weber would appear to restore the potential for religious literacy to

"modern men" who "even with the best will, are unable to give religious ideas a significance for culture" (PE, 183). In other terms, the PE would appear to rise to the heuristic challenge of instilling in its readers new tools for reading history and culture, new eyes capable of recognizing the hidden forces that lie behind the secular surface of things.

What then are we to make of Weber's comment, cited in part above, that the essential elements of the spirit of capitalism are the same as those which make up the ethic of Puritan worldly asceticism "only *without the religious basis*, which by Franklin's times had died away" (PE, 180, emphasis added)? This qualification is significant. It suggests that the spirit of capitalism is not, in fact, akin to the Protestant ethic, but is rather its secularized version: the ethos minus its religious content. This impression is reinforced by Weber's contention, offered a few pages before the comment cited above, that throughout the 17th century, "the intensity of the search for the Kingdom of God commenced gradually to pass over into sober economic virtue; the religious roots died out slowly, giving way to utilitarian worldliness" (PE, 176). At this point, the spirit of asceticism "escaped from the cage", (PE, 183) and modern capitalism was "emancipated from its old supports" (PE, 72).

These comments appear to represent quite a drastic shift in the general direction of Weber's argument. To remind the reader of where we began. Weber opens the PE with the proposition that the

> supposed conflict between other-worldliness, asceticism, and ecclesiastical piety on the one side, and participation in capitalistic acquisition on the other, might actually turn out to be an intimate relationship. (PE, 42)

For one hundred and seventy three pages of the PE he skillfully weaves together the crepuscular intimacies that tie economic acquisition to other-worldly concerns. His careful analysis brings us to the point where the reader can see that concrete aspects of modern capitalistic culture were born "from the spirit of Christian asceticism" (PE, 180). This analysis seems to justify Weber's own claim to have produced an essay that intervened into the accepted logic that opposes these categories. Moreover, it also gives weight to his admonishment of modern men and women for their blindness with respect to the role played by religion in culture.

However, with less than ten pages to go, Weber seems to change track. Instead of giving us reason to believe that in treating modernity as secular we have all been short-sighted, he confirms that our presumption of their mutual indifference is well founded. Indeed, if the influence of religion upon aspects of modern culture has come to an end as long ago as the 17th century, one is justified in asking why we should concern ourselves with the question of their relationship. Surely any relationship between them would come under the purview of the historian, or the scholar interested in the shadowy figures of our past.

The terms used by Weber to explain this secularization of the Protestant ethic are important for how we read his overall contribution to theories of secularization. They are also more complicated than would first appear. Thus some elaboration is necessary at this point.

A Curious Corruption

We will recall that the Puritan writers cited by Weber treated the accumulation of wealth with a certain degree of ambivalence. The rational acquisition of wealth, strictly for the means of "making fast on one's calling", was sanctioned. However, the "irrational use of wealth", wealth accumulated for its own sake, or used for the possession of luxury, was absolutely condemned as idolatry of the flesh. The believer was expected to be vigilant in his/her observance of the logic that "[m]an is only a trustee of the goods which have come to him through God's grace" (PE, 170). Put differently, a distance was to be maintained between the other-worldly orientation of the spirit, and the worldly arena in which it undertook its ascetic activity.

Of course, that the uses of wealth were subject to this kind of scrutiny suggest an inherent danger in its pursuit. As Weber notes, "wealth … was a temptation" (PE, 172), one that was known to corrupt the Puritan spirit that sought to produce it. Weber cites John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, to support this claim.

> I fear, wherever riches have increased, the essence of religion has decreased in the same proportion…. For religion must necessarily produce both industry and frugality, and these cannot but produce riches. But as riches increase, so will pride, anger, and love of the world in all its branches…. So, although the form of religion remains, the spirit is swiftly vanishing away. (cited in PE, 175)

What Wesley suggests here is that the spirit of religion is corrupted by its contact with the world. This corruption leads to a secularization of religion, a secularization that, importantly, manifests as an *evacuation of the spirit*. The result of this secularization thus presents itself in the same terms described by Weber. It is a separation of the *form* of religion from the *supernatural content* that motivates it: an emancipation of capitalism from its religious support.

We see the same logic at work in an excerpt from another Puritan writer, cited by Weber in a footnote.

> Those who are eager in the pursuit of worldly wealth despite their souls, not only because the Soul is neglected and the body preferred before it, but because it is employed in these pursuits. (PE, 259)

Like Wesley's comment, this gestures towards a danger inherent in any religious relationship with the world. Alister McGrath articulates the sense of this danger when he says, "those who seem to master the world are often those who are mastered by it" (1990, 221). Weber uses this logic to justify the argument, presented at the end of the PE, that although it was born of a deep concern for salvation, the inner-worldly orientation of ascetic Protestantism becomes secularized by its contact with the world, resulting in utilitarian worldliness.

The rather brief references to a process of secularization responsible for the corruption of the Protestant ethic allows Weber to hold the two parts of his thesis together in some logical relationship. The Protestant ethic that underpins the spirit of capitalism *was* religious, it

engendered a set of rational, capitalistic-like behaviours that *were* motivated by spiritual concerns, but then, on the precipice of modernity its relation to worldly culture was severed. Capitalism enters the modern world in a form that we all recognize: it is worldly, material, utilitarian; indifferent, if not actually hostile, to religion (PE, 70; see also Weber: 1948d).

As we shall see in the chapter to follow, the argument presented by Weber in the PE is a widely accepted explanation for more general processes of secularization. Many commentators on the PE refer to the process of secularization described by Weber in terms that evoke *as fact* the separation alluded to by Wesley. They describe it as a form of "disenchantment" (Habermas: 1984), the liberation of cultural institutions from their religious origins (Pierucci: 2000), the detachment of social and political structures from their theological foundations (McGrath: 1990, 243), the evacuation of those institutions of their supernatural content (Bruce and Wallis: 1994, 2001), and their ensuing independence (McGrath: 1990, 243).

However, when examined closely, we see that there is something curious in the logic of the two Puritan writers cited by Weber in support of his argument, something that is not quite captured by the notion of detachment, liberation, or emancipation. On the one hand, both writers make the point that secularization can occur only when "the Soul is neglected and the body preferred before it". In other words, the spirit and world exist in a relation of mutual exclusivity. To love one is necessarily to despise the other; to attend to one is equally to neglect the other. Their eventual separation is, in this sense, implied by the conditions of their relation (a point that will be discussed in detail in the following chapter). Given this, we might presume that it only takes the smallest imbalance in the delicate economy binding these opposing terms to tip the scales altogether. Indeed, this is suggested by McGrath's characterization of the

inner-worldly ethic of Calvinism as "perennially vulnerable". He says,

> the delicate balance between church and world can too easily be disturbed, leading to their radical separation on the one hand, or – and herein the greater danger was perceived to lie – their coalescence on the other. (McGrath: 1990, 221)

If McGrath's summation seems to have clarified the puzzle of secularization's causes we should think again. We will note that McGrath places two entirely different logics together in this comment. Secularization is caused by a radical separation on the one hand - expressing a mutual exclusivity- and by a coalescence on the other - indicating, as McGrath puts it, "the collapse of the divine into the secular" (1990, 221). Strangely, the same conjunction of competing logics can be found in the Puritan writers cited by Weber. In the very same passages that they identify a separating logic at the heart of the secularization process, they also suggest that it is actually *a failure to maintain the distance* between these supposedly natural opposites that leads to the corruption of the spirit. As the second writer cited contends, the danger with worldly activity doesn't just lie in the fact that the spirit or soul is neglected when we attend to the world, but is more acute when the spirit is put to work *in* the world.

This second explanation seems to completely contradict the logic of mutual exclusivity implied by the first. It is clear that the coalescence of divinity and the world is being attributed to the improper employment of the spirit in worldly activity. But one wonders, how can a spirit that is radically distinct, even alien to the world, be put to work in it? How can there be commerce, let alone corruption, amongst terms that are meant to be mutually *exclusive*? Equally, if indeed the spirit can collapse *into* the world, leading to the aforementioned

corruption, then can we speak if its evacuation, disappearance, or liberation? If, as a result of some unacknowledged consanguinity, the spirit has become one with the world, then surely to love the world is not a neglect of the spirit, but a profound engagement with it.

Perhaps most curious of all is that Weber does not address the tension between these two kinds of logics. His use of Wesley and the other Puritan writers to support his contention that the spirit of religion has *escaped* from the cage, that capitalism has become *emancipated* from its religious supports, implies that he is not even cognizant of it. He simply wants to use the concept of secularization to affirm a series of "natural" antitheses responsible for the production of a modern culture devoid of spirit, and a worldly culture at odds with religion.

How then are we to understand this tension? Does it point to a mistake in Weber's thesis? Has he misrepresented the logic of secularization? Can the seeming paradox identified above be dismissed as the mistake of the writers Weber uses to support his claims? Can it be localized in this way, or is it a symptom of broader problems with Weber's thesis? Does this muddle require a corrective? Must we determine which of the explanations is the right one? Or, does the fact that they sit together within the one thesis, that they draw leverage from one another in some way tell us something profound about the process of secularization and the nature of the cultures it is said to produce, something that cannot be captured by an either/or logic that would seek to settle the tension in Weber's argument one way or another?

To understand the significance of this tension it needs to be placed in the broader context of secularization theory. As mentioned in the introduction, Weber has often been flagged as one of the founding fathers of the thesis of secularization. However, the tension

adumbrated above has largely gone unnoticed by commentators. Both the PE and his other studies in religion have been used to affirm an orthodox understanding of secularization as the progressive *detachment* of the supernatural categories or contents from human institutions. Yet, this introductory analysis should tell us that there is more to Weber's work on the sociology of religion than this tradition would have us think.

CHAPTER TWO: THE DISENCHANTMENT OF THE WORLD

Our analysis of Weber's classic, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* in the last chapter left us with the following questions. Why does Weber interpret the secularization of the Protestant ethic as a degradation of its religious basis? Why is the "utilitarian worldliness" of 18th and 19th century Protestant culture, explored by Weber in both the PE and "The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism" essay (1948d, hereafter PE Sects), equated with a loss of spirit? Why doesn't he consider the possibility that the so-called "collapse of the divine *into* the secular" (McGrath: 1990, 221, emphasis added) might indicate their coincidence, rather than their separation?

Before we proceed to the main argument of this chapter, it may help to re-familiarize ourselves with the context in which these questions were first raised. At the very end of the PE Weber declares that "the great religious epoch of the seventeenth century bequeathed to its utilitarian successor…. an amazingly good …. conscience in the acquisition of money" (PE, 176). This statement is a summary of his main thesis, which is the assertion that ascetic Protestantism helped to cultivate the work ethic required to get early modern capitalism off the ground. However, it also supplies him with the logic to make the *additional* claim that by legitimizing a positive relation to material goods, and to activity oriented to success in "this world", Protestantism sowed the seeds of its own downfall. As Weber argues, the intense attention to things of "this world" corrupted the religious spirit, finally leading to its secularization.

Weber's PE thesis concludes by describing what Ephraim Fischoff refers to as an "irony of fate", whereby "the very fulfillment of religious injunctions [by ascetic Protestants]

… induced changes in the economic structure which in turn engendered the massive irreligion of a capitalist order" (1968, 75).

Fischoff's neat summary is representative of the way in which the PE is usually read. However, closer attention to this widely accepted thesis unveiled a curious tension in the delivery of Weber's explanation for the *causes* of secularization. Part of Weber's argument seemed to suggest that the secularization of the Protestant work ethic was the result of a *detachment* of the worldly forms of religion from their spiritual roots. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this argument presumes an either/or relationship whereby attention to the world naturally equates with a neglect of the spirit. And yet we also found that Weber appealed to another, seemingly divergent, explanation for the causes of secularization.

We will recall that Weber made reference to John Wesley's thesis that riches have a corrupting influence on religion. It was argued that a corruption of this kind *must* entail an improper commerce between spirit and flesh which, we discovered, indicated the movement of the spirit *into* the world. This passage collapses the separating distance employed by Weber to justify the either/or logic of the more conventional understanding of secularization, leaving us with this quandary: why do the two contradictory explanations sit together within the same thesis? And further, why, if indeed there exists an alternative way of understanding the logic of secularization, does Weber neglect to *consciously*, or explicitly, explore it?

It is perhaps not surprising that Weber would fall back on the conventional understanding of secularization as a displacement of the spiritual or supernatural. In the introduction to this thesis we saw that the Judeo-Christian and Greek philosophical traditions

that underpin a great deal of the literature on secularization treat spirit and world as mutually exclusive ontological realities (Handelman: 1982; Rutledge: 1996; Rizzo: 2009). Despite the intuitive appeal of this logic, a logic we have seen reiterated by *both* critics *and* advocates of the conventional explanation for secularization, it is fair to say that Weber's commitment to this logic has a more specific, sociological basis. That basis is, of course, his theory of religious disenchantment.

Disenchantment: a Narrative of Secularization

Weber's theory of "world-historical disenchantment" is a narrative widely used by sociologists, philosophers, and theologians to explain why the modern West is secular, *and* why this secularity is characterized by the separation and subsequent independence of human sociality from the sacred and divine (see for instance, Berger: 1973; Bruce: 2001a; Carroll: 2008; Gauchet, 1997; Habermas: 1984;[31] C. Taylor: 2007). According to this narrative, the movement of history begins with a foundational rupture between the natural and the supernatural, and the human and divine spheres. This primordial fracture is said to make possible a series of developments that are used by theorists to mark the transition between different epochs and the religious typologies associated with them. Our analysis in this section of the chapter will demonstrate that the "logic of the break" supplies Weber with the critical terms to describe secular culture as bereft of transcendence, and independent of the supernatural.

[31] Although Habermas' account of Weber's theory of rationalization is inclined to speak in terms of rationalization rather than secularization, the process by which he charts this development is structurally similar to the others cited here.

In terms of the structure of this chapter, things get a little complicated at this point. It is the aim of this chapter to demonstrate that the disenchantment narrative is principally the story of a Fall, and it is for this reason, above all others, that Weber allows his analysis of secularization to be dominated by the separating logic outlined above. Like the biblical story of Man's[32] exile from Eden, the Fall that precipitates disenchantment violently ruptures a primordial unity in which man, god and nature are said to coexist harmoniously. This fracture institutes an irrevocable loss. Man is separated from all that had previously supported him: his proximity to a familiar and largely benevolent deity, and his easy integration into a natural, sacred cosmos from which the rhythms of his life derive meaning (see Berger: 1973, 120). However, like all Fall narratives this loss is also a potential gain. In key reformulations of Weber's classic narrative we will see that man's separation from natural and divine spheres inaugurates a process by which he will eventually become modern, discovering along the way,

[32] I use the gendered term here only for reasons of consistency. As we shall see, this is how Weber and many others working within this tradition designate the human subject. This is obviously problematic, as the processes associated with this universal "man" are intended to speak for the experiences of women as well. However, this is not the place to pursue these issues. For an excellent critique of the masculinized nature of language see Irigaray: 1985, Spender: 1985 and Grosz: 1989. It should be noted that *some* of the gendered language to appear in Weber's PE text is the result of the idiosyncrasies of its initial translator. As Kalberg points out, at times Weber use of the gender neutral *mensch* (persons) is translated by Parsons as man or men (Kalberg: 2001, 47). That is not to say that the feminine isn't often marginalized by Weber's theoretical framework. As Kathleen McPhillips argues, Weber's key sociological concepts, his understanding of rationality in the public sphere, the internal logic of capitalism, and the Protestant work ethic, are all gendered in ways Weber was unable to acknowledge (McPhillips: 1999). Her work, and the work of other feminists scholars working within the sociology of religion have done much to critically analyze, and offer theoretical alternatives to, what Linda Woodhead calls the "gender-blindness" of discourse on secularization (2001, 67-84; see also McPhillips: 2002, Joy: 2006; Jakobsen and Pellegrini: 2008).

human creative autonomy, a capacity to critically examine and change both himself and the world, a sense of self-sufficiency and, ultimately, maturity.

In this sense, the narrative used to explain the origins of Western secularity is a developmental narrative underpinned by a familiar metaphysical or moral schema. It shares the Enlightenment assumption that "rationalization, social differentiation, and complexity are [not only] better because functionally more adaptive", but are morally superior (Jakobsen and Pellegrini: 2000, 4).

This chapter will demonstrate that Weber uses this schema to divide the history of human development into two distinct categories. On the one side we find modernity, disenchantment, human self-sufficiency, human dignity and moral autonomy. On the other, primitivism, enchantment, innocence, immaturity, passivity and dependence. At times this bifurcating distinction is articulated in terms of religious difference – we shall see that it maps directly onto Weber's assertion of the heterogeneity of Catholicism, Lutheranism and Calvinism explored in the last chapter. However, at other times this schema is called on to mark more general distinctions, most notably the *potential* for moral superiority found in modern Western rationalism. Put simply, it will be argued that Weber's commitment to the narrative of disenchantment, and to its correlative concept of a fragmenting, separating secularization, is sustained by his contention that modern Western rationalism engenders the conditions of possibility for a truly mature ethic of responsibility.

To demonstrate this final claim will, however, require the adoption of a repetitive and at times, seemingly inconsistent, chapter structure. As we know, Weber is commonly regarded

as a *critic* of modernity, deeply skeptical of Enlightenment claims about human progress. Indeed as Ira Cohen reminds us, Weber felt that the rationalizing process of disenchantment had delivered us into a world governed by "morally hollow", and thus ultimately meaningless rules and regulations (see Kalberg: 2005, xiii). Given this widely held perception of Weber's work, it is necessary to address Weber's relationship to the modern before we can properly attend to the metaphysical presumptions underpinning the narrative of disenchantment. It is only after we are able to grasp what Weber truly thought about modern Western rationalism that the significance of the Fall that organizes the disenchantment narrative becomes apparent.

Structurally, this means that after our initial examination of the basic components of the disenchantment narrative we will turn to what might appear to belong more properly at the end of our story: secular modernity. After our analysis of the famous "Science as Vocation" lecture, where Weber demonstrates his commitments to Enlightenment thinking most clearly, we can then return to the origins once again, and undertake a more detailed investigation of the metaphysical or moral basis of those commitments.

The Fragments of a Theory

In what follows we will examine the narrative conventionally used by sociologists and philosophers of religion to explain how the West became secular. As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, the story of the secularization of the West has been told in a number of ways. The most pervasive of these, and the one that informs conventional understandings of secularization, derives from Weber's foundational theory of

disenchantment. What, then, is disenchantment? What kinds of historical processes does it describe?

Although he is uniformly regarded as the author of the theory, Weber was not the first to pen the term. It is largely thought that he borrowed the term disenchantment from the German poet Schiller, who used it to speak of the effects of the de-deification of nature (Pierucci: 2000, 8). At its basis disenchantment refers to the removal or separation of the divine from the world. However, the process responsible for this de-sacralization is less clear.

In his famous 1917 lecture, "Science as Vocation" (hereafter SAV), Weber makes one of the most powerful statements about the cultural effects of disenchantment. Linking it to the intellectualization of knowledge "created by science and by scientifically oriented technology" (SAV, 139) and the rationalization of culture, Weber defines disenchantment in the following terms. He begins by qualifying that an increased rationalization of knowledge does not necessarily mean that there is an increased understanding of the conditions under which we live. Rather,

> it means something else, namely, the knowledge or belief that if one wished one could learn it any time. Hence, it means that principally there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation… One need no longer have recourse to magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as did the savage, for whom such mysterious powers existed. Technical means and calculations perform the service. (SAV, 139)

Later in the lecture Weber returns to the original Schillerian basis of the term, characterizing the disenchantment of the world as the retreat of "the ultimate and most sublime values" from public life (SAV, 155). These references tell us that for Weber, disenchantment involves a shift away from supernaturalism, and thus away from the "purely irrational" basis of religious belief.[33] In this sense it has much in common with the definitions of secularization examined in the introduction. As we have seen, conventional definitions of secularization describe processes by which the bonds connecting human, social institutions to supernatural categories and contents are severed. Part of this process involves the institutional separation of church and state, and the subsequent marginalization of religion from broader society. For some theorists, secularization results in the production of a culture organized by "purely human considerations", supporting a form of secular consciousness oriented to "this world", and this world alone (see Shiner: 1967; Boer: 2007).

Later in the chapter we will see that Weber regarded the eclipse of sacred values in favour of purely utilitarian considerations of function, operation and utility with mixed emotions. As he saw it, the liberation of intellectual knowledge from mystery and superstition, although a valuable cultural achievement, was nonetheless coincident with a process of rationalization that *also* undermined the substantive bases of ethical responsibility. This, Weber felt, had serious implications for the moral health of modern Western societies.

[33] It should be noted that when Weber uses the term "irrational" here he means irrational from the point of view of science which demands knowledge based on what can be proven empirically, without reference to revelations of prophets and seers (SAV, 154).

Despite its association with the decline of religious influence, Weber's extensive writing on the economic ethics of world religions demonstrates that disenchantment is, at least initially, a *religious* process. It is initiated within certain religions, and forms an integral part of the more encompassing world-historical process of religious rationalization outlined in the previous chapter (Tenbruck: 1989, 52). According to this wider context the earliest instances of disenchantment can be found in ancient Judaism, in "the rejection of sacramental magic as the road to salvation" (PE, 221-222). As Weber explains, the elimination of "irrational means for salvation" coincides with the shift from one religious type to another; from magic, which is based on the direct manipulation of spirits regarded as immanent in the world, to ethical prophecy based on "doctrine or commandment" (Weber: 1963, 47).

As important as it is, the rejection of magic is only one aspect of disenchantment. In the CP Weber argues that there are "two yardsticks" by which religious rationalization can be measured, the other being the degree to which a religion "has systematically unified the relation between God and the world and therewith its own ethical relationship to the world" (CP, 226). By which he means the unification of the world under a single governing principle, "a transcendent, morally demanding sacred authority" (Habermas: 1984, 212).

These two dimensions of disenchantment are inter-related and principally derive from the particular, and indeed peculiar (in the sense of being historically novel) character of Yahweh, the God of the ancient Israelites. As we know, Yahweh is a transcendent, morally demanding God. He stands outside His Creation, and He stands alone. As Berger puts it, "he appears without mates or offspring, unaccompanied by a pantheon of any sort" (1973, 121). Yahweh forbids the worship of "idols" common in the "animistic" religious of

the Near East (Weber: 1963, 58), and unequivocally denies that His will can be manipulated by magical means. Instead of magic, mystery, or miracle, Judaism offers its believers "ethical prophecy"; that is, prophecy based on the revelation of doctrine and commandment (Weber: 1963, 47).

The shift from magic and ethical prophecy is fundamental to the process of disenchantment for it represents a transition away from what Weber regards as "irrational means of salvation", to a more rational ethic of worldly conduct (1952, 4). In the previous chapter we explored the ways in which, according to Weber's theory of religious rationalization, these forms of "religious innovation" encouraged the development of a rational ethic of worldly conduct.

As we will recall, Weber's understanding of magic includes any religious practice or belief that presupposes the possibility of contact with, or manipulation of, spirits or divine beings. As Weber sees it, when spiritual forces are located outside the world magic is denied. Thus the possibilities for the means of salvation are confined to an ethic of *worldly* conduct. To summarize Weber's argument, when the believer in need of salvation cannot hope to manipulate or compel, nor to seek solace in mystical communion with, God or the gods, their communication with those divine beings is restricted to the ethical quality of their worldly conduct (1948b, 291).

The reason why an ethic of worldly conduct becomes specifically "rational" is explained by the second of Weber's "yardsticks". When the relationship between the world and the divine is unified – as opposed to the pantheons one finds in Greece, China and the

Near East, where there are many gods, sometimes competing at cross-purposes[34] – the ethic can be regulated from a single, abstract principle of unity. As Mark C. Taylor explains, this gives rise to developments, explored in the previous chapter, that assist in the rationalization of culture and society: "abstraction, unification, legalization, rationalization, universalization, standardization, and regulation" (2007, 140; see also Gane: 2002, 18).

Weber's analysis in the PE reveals Protestantism as the "heir of the Judaic ethic" (Tenbruck: 1989, 73). That is to say, the eventual development of modern institutions like a rational and consistent legal system, a rational bureaucracy, and of course, the rational capitalist economy, are said to derive from a capacity for the standardization of behaviour intrinsic to the religious ethic of ascetic Protestantism.

At this point, however, our story gets a little bit murky. The summary above demonstrates the logic underlying Weber's contention that there is a causal link between Judaism's uniquely dualistic interpretation of the world and the development of forms of social action that eventually make possible the genesis of a specifically rational *economic* ethic. Thus, as the citation from *Ancient Judaism* (1952) below makes clear, primordial disenchantment gains its significance for Weber from its purported causal relation to the supremely "rational" Protestant work ethic.

[34] Steve Bruce explains that "[t]he ancient Romans and Greeks had a horde of gods or spirits, who behaved in arbitrary fashion and at cross purposes, and thus made the relationship of supernatural and natural worlds unpredictable. First Judaism and then Christianity were rationalizing forces. By having only one God, they simplified the supernatural and allowed the worship of God to become systematized" (2001a, 253).

> Without the adoption of the *Old Testament* as a sacred book by Christianity, gnostic sects and the mysteries of the cult of Kyrios Christos would have existed on the soil of Hellenism, but providing no basis for a Christian church or a *Christian ethic of workaday life*. (Weber: 1952, 4, emphasis added)

We have already explored Weber's argument concerning the contribution made by the rational work ethic of the ascetic Protestants to the rise of modern capitalism in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries. However, the step that would take us from the rise of modern Western rationalism during that time into the evacuation of sacred values from the same culture remains unclear. Also missing from Weber's account of the "world-historical process" of religious rationalization is any explication of the intermediary phases that could provide a clear causal link between the two historical moments that punctuate this narrative: the introduction of a new conception of God into the Near East and the subsequent rise of ethical prophecy in Judaism in the 8th century B.C, and the secularization of the Protestant ethic over two millennia later.

That there is a connection between religious rationalization, or disenchantment and the eventual secularization of Western culture is one of the main stays of contemporary sociology of religion. In a moment we will examine some of the most influential attempts to reconstruct this connection. However, before doing so, we need to be aware of some of the problems facing these same scholars. Unlike the PE essay, which carefully elaborates Weber's theory of the spiritual factors involved in the genesis of modern capitalism, there is no single book, no essay or lecture, where the theme of disenchantment is systematically or comprehensively developed. As Friedrich Tenbruck, one of Weber's most authoritative commentators has put

it, "the process of disenchantment (like that of rationalization) does not receive a complete and comprehensive treatment in his writings" (1989, 52). It is less a coherent or comprehensive theory than a series of thematically related references, fragments, small sections of commentary "scattered" (Tenbruck: 1989, 50) across "the gigantic ruins" of Weber's mammoth and largely uncompleted oeuvre.[35]

Moreover, these fragmentary comments are often written in sweeping and generalized terms, presented in a way that suggests to the reader that other sources of information are available that could qualify their claims. These qualifying sources, however, prove as elusive as any body of work definitively dealing with the subject (Tenbruck: 1989, 53).

This is not to suggest that the theme of religious rationalization does not play a central part in Weber's work, or that the underlying logic of these claims cannot be gleaned from the fragmentary references we find in his major works on religion. What it does mean though, is

[35] The reference here comes from Karl Jaspers, who described Weber's opus as a gigantic ruin (see Fishcoff: 1963, xvi). As Fishcoff outlines in his introduction to Weber's *Sociology of Religion* (1963), "Weber never worked on his style. He wrote out of intensive cerebral activity and imaginative power but never polished his material … [he] was loath to read his manuscripts or even his printed pieces …" (xvi). The expediency that Weber felt his work required meant that he published most of his work in fragments, in the form of journal pieces or lectures. The books we have today which give his work the semblance of theoretical unity were all published posthumously. Couple this with the fact that he died before completing *Economy and Society* (1968, 1978), the book intended to draw together his major sociological concerns in a comprehensive manner, and we can see why Jaspers would describe it as an inspired, but ruinous opus. On the problem of thematic unity in Weber's work see Tenbruck: 1987; Brubaker: 1984; Gane: 2002, 4-8.

that the neat, causal, linear process linking the religious cultures of ancient Judaism and early modern ascetic Protestantism has become available to us only through the reconstructive efforts of Weber's commentators (see Tenbruck: 1989; Habermas: 1984; Berger: 1973; Pierucci: 2000; Gane: 2002, Kalberg: 2007). It is not surprising then that our exploration of Weber's theory will need to jump between Weber's own writing and later accounts of disenchantment written by commentators attempting to fill in "gaps" left open by him.

The Beginning: Conditions of Possibility

Let us hear the basic story of disenchantment told again, this time attending to the correlation between Yahweh's transcendence and the "breech through which the eventual exit from religion came to be made" (C. Taylor, in Gauchet: 1997, x).

We know that for Weber, disenchantment involves the removal of magic, mystery and miracle from human and natural processes. As we saw earlier, Weber argues that the denial of magical means for salvation opens up the possibilities for ethical rationalization which eventually encourages the development of a highly rational culture indifferent to the supernatural. However, when retold by theorists such as Peter L. Berger, Steve Bruce, Marcel Gauchet and Mark C. Taylor, the theory of disenchantment discloses a more direct root from ancient Judaism to modern secularity.

We mentioned above that Yahweh marks a break from earlier conceptions of divinity. Theorists in this field claim that up until the 8th century B.C, that is, prior to what scholars sometimes refer to as the "great transformation" (see Jaspers: 1953; Armstrong: 2006; Rizzo:

2009), religious life looked radically different from the model inspired by the Biblical traditions. As Taylor, Gauchet and Berger all point out, in the cosmological traditions of Egypt, Babylon and Mesopotamia, the divine did not occupy a specially demarcated zone outside or above the world, as it does in the Biblical traditions. Rather, the gods were thought of as being immanent in the world (Taylor: 2007, 135). There was, of course, a sense of the distinction between sacred and profane spheres or realities. However, as Berger argues, the separating function of this distinction was somewhat compromised by the fact that the sacred realm was itself continuous with the human or worldly sphere (1973, 121). Indeed, as Taylor explains, not only were divine and human realms continuous, the human, natural and divine were "integrated in such a way that each is the embodiment of the other" (Taylor: 2007, 135).

As this tradition of scholarship sees it, this primordial unity was irrevocably changed with the introduction of a new divinity into the religious landscape of the Near East. As mentioned earlier, Yahweh is an otherworldly God, a God who dictates from afar. The natural world is His creation. However, He is not continuous with it. And, as many see it, this fundamental distinction between the Creator and the created bifurcates reality into two carefully demarcated realms, making possible, *for the first time*, the differentiation of supernatural and natural processes, human and divine actions, spiritual and material realities. The world is, quite suddenly, dis-enchanted.

The significance of this bifurcation for the eventual development of secular cultures and systems of belief are numerous. According to Bruce and Wallis, "the projection of the divine at one remove from the world allowed people to see the world as secular" (1992, 14). This is an important step towards secularization because, as Berger describes it, when the

universe is seen as God's creation but "in itself bereft of numinosity" (1973, 117), it becomes "amenable to the systematic, rational penetration, both in thought and in activity, which we associate with modern science and technology" (Berger: 1973, 18). Making the leap from here to the discovery of an "empirical reality in which, indeed, 'God is dead'", Berger goes on to explain that "[a] sky empty of angels becomes open to the intervention of the astronomer and, eventually, of the astronaut" (Berger: 1973, 118).

The crux of Berger's argument is that when humans begin to explore the limits of "what is", they discover that "it" exists independently of God. At this point God becomes superfluous to the rational functioning of the universe. Commentators like Taylor and Gauchet draw similar conclusions about the discovery of human historical agency.

In the introduction to this thesis we saw that the notion of human, historical agency was central to Holyoake's seminal treatise on secularism. Later theorists of secularization regard the liberation of our concept of history from reference to supernatural forces a necessary condition for this development (Shiner: 1967, 215; Rizzo: 2009, 2). In popular discourse the discovery of the human as historical agent is often attributed to the Enlightenment, seen as an effect of the scientific revolution, or else it is thought of as a symptom of some vaguely defined sense of human progress.[36] However, according to the

[36] Berger, for instance, is careful to point out that secularization has social-structural causes, causes that can be traced back to the Old Testament. He mentions this to avoid the "pitfall of ascribing secularization to some mysterious and intellectual fall of grace" (Berger: 1973, 133); or inversely, from the belief that it represents some achievement of an enlightenment of human consciousness (Berger: 1973, 155).

narrative of disenchantment, the separation of the human from the divine is "built in" to the very conditions of their relationship. As Taylor explains,

> [w]hen God withdraws into transcendence, he gradually becomes so abstract that he can be neither represented nor conceived. Turning back on itself in reflection, the human mind glimpses its own power to abstract from everything particular and concrete in its conception of divine transcendence. …The more distant God becomes, the more autonomous laws appear until God no longer seems necessary for the orderly functioning of the universe. At this point, God effectively disappears, and the world develops without divine guidance or intervention. (Taylor: 2007, 140)

We see a similar sentiment expressed by Marcel Gauchet in *Disenchantment of the World* (1997). He argues that,

> [t]he world's objectivity is the result of a radical separation from God, which moreover frees and institutes the cognitive subject in humans by making it autonomous in relation to divine understanding and withdrawing it from the hierarchy of beings. There is no intellectual access to a God radically separated from the world, so humans are now on their own, with only the light of their own investigative faculties to assist them before this silent totality that resists their aspirations for meaning. (1997, 53)

These insights add new light to Weber's contention, explored in the previous chapter, that the insistence upon the utter transcendence of God by the Jewish and Calvinist traditions

was intended to protect the absolute autonomy of divine will (PE, 101-103). In Gauchet's and Taylor's comments we can see that the *unintended* consequence of this doctrine is the creation of a conceptual space in which *the human* can discover the objectivity of the world and the mundane and natural basis of its own reality. In other words, God's autonomy makes way for our own.

There is another, perhaps less obvious way in which this fissure in the Near Eastern universe can be said to make way for the eventual secularization of religion. This involves the role played by difference in undermining what Berger refers to as the "classic" function of religion. Berger argues that the function of religion is to construct a "common world within which all of social life receives ultimate meaning binding on everybody" (1973, 137). Thus it functions most effectively, or is most plausible, when it holds a monopoly over definitions of reality. He argues that in conditions prior to modernity this monopoly was supported by the state and, more importantly, affirmed by society at large.

> The world as defined by the religious institution in question was *the* world, maintained not just by the mundane powers of society and their instruments of social control, but much more fundamentally maintained by the 'common sense' of members of that society. (Berger: 1973, 139)

Likewise, Bruce points out that in Europe prior to the Reformation most social functions were organized and performed by a single institution: the Catholic Church. The Church presided over, and thus gave meaning to, birth, life and death – in the form of the ritual celebration of baptism, christening, confirmation, marriage, and the burial of the dead

(Bruce: 2002, 13). It also oversaw the education of the population, trained physicians, attended to people's healthcare, and provided for the poor. In this sense, as the sociologist José Casanova points out, everything in one's life made sense in relation to a world-view that was fundamentally Christian (1994, 16).

Throughout modernity, following the path paved by rationalization, many of these social functions became differentiated from the church, and were handed over to the care of secular institutions. Once differentiated these occupational spheres began to develop their own bodies of knowledge and skills, eventually becoming semi-autonomous life-worlds (Bruce: 2002, 8-9). Society thus becomes "pluralistic", supporting an ever-increasing number of distinct and competing perspectives on the world.

As many sociologists see it, the fragmentation and autonomization of social spheres plays an important role in secularization (see for instance, Durkheim: 1964; Luckmann: 1967; Luhmann: 1977). Berger summarizes this view well when he points out that within the context of a pluralized and functionally differentiated society, the "plausibility structures" of religion "lose massivity because they can no longer enlist the society as a whole to serve for the purpose of social confirmation" (1973, 154). In this situation, "[t]he man on the street is faced with a variety of religious and other reality-defining agencies that compete for his allegiance … none of which is in the position to coerce him into allegiance" (Berger: 1973, 131). According to Berger, religion becomes relativized.[37] Or as Bruce puts it, it loses its "objective taken-for-grantedness", and becomes just one perspective among many (2001a, 252).

[37] It is important to note that Berger "recanted" some of his earlier work on secularization (see Bruce: 2001b). In the 1980's and 1990's he began to suggest that although processes of societal pluralization had had a negative

This affects the classic function of religion because, as Bruce points out, in the context of modern, highly differentiated societies, although religion may continue to speak to "privatized, individual experience" it ceases to provide society with an overarching moral or existential framework through which *all* of life's experiences are made meaningful (2001a, 252). Or, as Weber puts it in the SAV lecture, the concept of the sacred retreats into the private sphere, causing religion to lose its ability to provide us with "the prophetic *pneuma*, which in former times swept through the great communities like a firebrand, welding them together" (SAV, 155).

And so, following the fracturing force of difference we arrive once more at a conventional definition of secularization: the marginalization of religion and subsequent autonomy of much of social life from its influence. The inclusion of the functional differentiation argument in this summary of disenchantment stories might seem strange. After all, in the accounts discussed above, functional differentiation is identified as a *modern* process. Its departure point is the comparatively unified cosmos of the Christian Middle Ages. Some qualifying explanation is thus necessary at this point.

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impact on religion, they had also created social conditions which encourage counter-secularizing religious movements Berger: 1993, 43; 1999, 3). We will explore the reasoning behind this claim in subsequent chapters. It needs to be said that, although Berger revised his earlier position – that modernization was necessarily secularizing – a number of critical claims remain constant throughout his work. The most cogent to this discussion is the idea that "[p]luralism creates a condition of permanent uncertainty as to what one should believe and how one should live" (Berger: 1993, 45).

We have already seen that for Weber, historically effective levels of societal and religious rationalization are possible only where a significant level of dualism has been introduced into the society's world-view (Weber: 1963, 270; Habermas: 1984, 206). Thus even at the basic level of conditions of possibility, modern processes of rationalization owe some debt to the same founding origins of the scientific and philosophical "discovery" of human autonomy: prophetic Judaism.

The connection between disenchantment and the modern secular culture characterized by differentiation is further illuminated by the Australian sociologist, John Carroll, who argues that Weber's theory of disenchantment is nothing less than a "death of God theory" (2008, 123). Echoing Bruce's assertion that modernity can be characterized by its pluralism, Carroll argues that the moral relativism attendant with this type of society is the result of the loss of stable and determined truths. These truths, he claims, were once anchored by the transcendent values associated with the Judeo-Christian concept of God. Recalling Nietzsche's parable of the death of god, Carroll asserts that, "with the loss of faith in a transcendental power, humans … lose their bearings in the world. In particular, there [is] no fixed point by which to determine what [is] good and what evil" (2008, 120).

The reference to Nietzsche is significant, for we have seen that within the logical parameters of this field of discourse, the loss of transcendental authority referred to here by Carroll is a consequence of the way in which the relation to the human and natural world was originally imagined. To paraphrase Berger, with nothing remaining in between a radically transcendent God and a radically immanent world except the concept of God's saving Word, it takes only the sinking of the latter into implausibility [something achieved by other aspects of

the secularization process] to leave us with an empirical reality in which God is dead (1973, 188). At this point, differences held in check by the overarching moral framework provided by religion multiply, and continue to do so until, as Carroll puts it, "no authority is left" (Carroll: 2008, 131). The upshot of this kind of argument is that the crack that initially separated transcendence from us is also responsible for the gaping chasm through which our sense of individual autonomy, and the moral relativism that accompanies it, is finally declared supreme.

We will return to these arguments in a moment, for although Carroll's cultural conservatism is not necessarily representative of the field, it intersects with Weber's own criticisms of modern Western rationalism in interesting ways.

Secular Modernity: Weber's Critique of Disenchantment

Obviously the versions of the disenchantment narrative outlined above are more detailed than my summary has allowed for. In Gauchet's account, for instance, the consequences of the introduction of transcendence into the religious universe of the Near East are tracked through a vast range of social, political and religious developments. He discusses the rise of the state in Egypt and Mesopotamia, and the subsequent development of politics based on divine authority thereafter. He follows the disrupting effects of transcendence into the emergence of Christianity and the part it played in the development of the *Ancien Regime*, and even the secularist politics of the French Revolution. Taylor, on the other hand, sees the introduction of dualisms as only *one side* of an historical dialectic that can be traced from the Near East into European modernity via the development of theological nominalism in the Middle Ages; and from there through key cultural, philosophical and scientific developments in

the 19th and 20th century into our present age. At this point, so he argues, the dualism of Old Testament faith comes together with the monism of the sacred cosmos to form a dynamic religious system that integrates elements of both religious traditions.[38]

Nevertheless, despite notable differences in emphasis, each of these iterations of Weber's foundational account share a common presumption that the secularization of the West could not have occurred without the emergence of Old Testament traditions and their dualistic view of the world. Berger gives a succinct summary of this view of secularization when he says,

> [r]eligious developments originating in the Biblical traditions may be seen as causal factors in the formation of the modern secularized world. Once formed, however, this world precisely precludes the continuing efficacy of religion as a formative force. We would contend that here lies the great historical irony in the relation between religion and secularization, an irony that can be graphically put by saying that, historically speaking, Christianity has been its own gravedigger. (1973, 132)

With this basic understanding of its historical genesis, we are now able to turn to Weber's assessment of the impact of disenchantment upon the culture of the modern world. As mentioned earlier, it is widely thought that Weber's attitude towards the disenchanted culture of his own times was ambivalent (Fenn: 1969; Gane: 2002; Jenkins: 2000; Kalberg: 2005; Sayer: 1991). On the one hand, Weber applauded the autonomy and

[38] Taylor's theory of religion will be examined in Chapter Five.

freedom afforded to those living in "the age of the 'Rights of Man'" (cited in Kalberg: 2005, 4). He embraced the dynamism of the capitalist market, and was deeply skeptical of romantic, anti-rationalist, anti-intellectualist, and often anti-modernist movements popular at the time (SAV, 142). He regarded their desire to return to a more ideal past as delusional (Kalberg: 2005, 36).

However, in key texts like the SAV and RRW essays, Weber offers powerful diagnoses of modern, Western rationalism. He describes a culture where, as a direct result of disenchantment, the ethical basis of social action has been replaced by considerations of function, operation and utility. The rise of the scientific world-view and the triumph of formal rationality as a way of life have eroded the substantive and purely "irrational" basis of religious beliefs (RRW, 351)[39]. Unconstrained by "ultimate values" formal practical and theoretical types of rationality have developed more and more unhindered (Kalberg: 2005, 28), and increasingly along a course directed by their own, purely immanent laws of development. As Weber sees it, this process has resulted in a world characterized by the proliferation of semi-autonomous social-spheres, competing against one another to meet immanently defined, and thus, for Weber, purely senseless ends. As he puts it in RRW, cultural progress "seems to

[39] In RRW Weber points out that the estrangement of religion from modern society is not simply imposed from without. Salvation religions, he argues, defend themselves from the "attack of the self-sufficient intellect" by claiming that religious knowledge moves in a different sphere, and approaches entirely different forms of knowledge, from that of the intellectual spheres (of which science is exemplary) (RRW, 352). In this case, it is natural for salvation religions to try to carve out an independent sphere of existence outside what it perceives to be the meaninglessness of scientific knowledge.

become a senseless hustle in the service of worthless, self-contradictory and mutually antagonistic ends" (RRW, 357).

In these texts Weber paints an image of a culture in crisis, where social action is conducted with little sense of its purpose, or even its meaning. Little wonder then that Ira Cohen would assert that "it is impossible to deny Weber's passionate objection to the erosion of ethical meaning from Western modernity at large" (in Kalberg: 2005, xiii), or that Carroll would summarize his attitude to modernity as ultimately "pessimistic" (2008, 3).

While I do not want to deny that these assessments of Weber are faithful to his extensive and often insightful criticism of modern rationalism, a careful reading of the SAV text will demonstrate that his concerns about the effects of disenchantment forms part of a notion of moral maturity that is achievable *only* within the conditions of disenchantment. To be truly ethical, as we shall see, is to be disenchanted. In this sense, Weber's thinking is more closely aligned to a notion of historical progress than most commentators allow. Let us turn now to the SAV to see why this is the case.

Science as Vocation: Differentiation as a Condition of Dignity

On the surface of things the SAV lecture, given to a group of students in Munich in 1917, seems to explore a topic with little relevance for our own discussion. It opens by asking the question "What are the conditions of science as a vocation in the material sense of the term?" (SAV, 129): meaning, what material conditions affect the "prospect of a graduate student who is resolved to dedicate himself professionally to science in university life" (SAV,

129). To this end Weber lists the difficulties of habilitation in the German university system, the problems arising from funding arrangements, the pressures of teaching and so on. However, these considerations lead to a more general question about the inward calling for science, and the limitations that the scientific view of the world faces under the conditions of modernity.

The true scientist, Weber says, wants to dedicate himself wholly to a vocation as to a task that is imbued with ultimate meaning (SAV, 135). However, in the disenchanted modern world, the very notion of an ultimate meaning, of a task with an intrinsic value, is called into question (SAV, 139-144). Weber argues that the calculative mastery of scientific rationalism has given us a greater understanding of the world and its natural processes. Further, it has supplied us with the ability to utilize and control these natural processes for our own means. However, as we have seen, this accomplishment has had the effect of undermining the traditional (religious) basis of our claims to "ultimate" or transcendent meanings. This radically diminishes the terms upon which a concept of the scientific *vocation* rests. As Weber notes, science is unable to answer the question of life's meaning, it can merely show us how to master and maintain it (SAV, 144). Medicine, for instance, has the "task of maintaining life and of diminishing suffering", but it cannot determine whether or not a life is worth saving, or if it makes sense to do so (SAV, 144). In this sense, it cannot even answer the question of its own value or meaning.

It is at this point, where the question of the limits of scientific knowledge intersect with the desire of the scientist to dedicate himself wholly to a life's calling, that Weber begins to address his broader concerns about modern culture's capacity to cultivate and sustain noble

and binding values, values that can command loyalty and upon which a person can stake their honour (see Kalberg: 2005, 28). The problem that faces us, as Weber sees it, is not only that scientific knowledge is limited (and must operate within those limitations), but rather, that *all* forms of intellectual or rational knowledge are contingent and thus necessarily relative. To re-iterate the logic of this contention, to Weber's mind, modernity is a plurality of differentiated social spheres, each with its own, immanently organized, ideas, rules of regulations and values. They are, in other words, quite distinct. Expressing the depth of their distinction, Weber describes them as "warring gods" (SAV 153) who stand in irreconcilable tension within one another (SAV, 152).

In such a context ultimate values become relative. Claims made about any one value-sphere are necessarily contingent to the terms of reference that have developed from within that sphere. For this reason, those claims cannot speak with any certainty about, or on behalf of, any other "discursive universe", as we might put it today. As Weber laments, it is impossible to say with any certainty whether French culture is more valuable than German, or if the ethical vision offered by the Sermon on the Mount is morally more valid than the ethic of retribution preached by the "dignity of manly conduct" (SAV, 148).

According to Weber, cultural relativism presents modern men and women with a serious moral challenge.[40] If, as a consequence of being unhinged from any overarching moral

[40] Weber's concern about the consequences of disenchantment for modern forms of morality is framed by Nietzsche's argument about modern nihilism. As Nietzsche remarks in *Will to* Power (1968), nihilism involves the devaluation of the highest values and an ensuing crisis in morality where, as he puts it, "the aim is lacking: 'why?' finds no answer" (Nietzsche: 1968, 9). Of course, for Nietzsche, the death of the transcendent Christian God

framework, life-worlds remain immanent and must be interpreted in their own terms (SAV, 152), and if science has replaced belief in "mysterious incalculable forces" (SAV, 139) without being able to replace their function to provide meaning (SAV, 152), then life's greatest decisions become tremendously difficult. As Weber puts it, no one can decide for you – either scientifically, objectively, or ultimately - if you should serve one god[41] or another. This decision can only ever be subjective (SAV, 151).

However, and this is critical to Weber's scholarly concerns, one must choose: "it is necessary to make a decisive choice" (SAV, 152). Values must be cultivated and defended. For it is only by doing so that our lives obtain dignity, meaning and honour. As Weber argues, our human dignity lies in our capacity to take a "deliberate stand towards the world and to lend it meaning" (cited in Kalberg: 2005, 1).[42] That this will require us to serve "this god" and "offend

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gives rise of a state of moral groundlessness which actually founds the possibility of a new notion of maturity. This is an active form of nihilism that pursues the willful destruction of old values in order to construct something new (Nietzsche: 1968). This Dionysian act of self-creation moves beyond the polarities of good and evil which have traditionally anchored values, and embraces the creative process itself as the meaning and purpose of life (1968: 36). As David Owen has argued, although Weber's concept of disenchantment draws on the logic of nihilism the concept of maturity which develops out of it is oriented by the vocational ideals of Protestantism (1994, 127). And, Owen points out, this orientation entails posting ultimate values of some kind (1994, 129; see also Fenn: 1969). As we shall see, the concept of maturity that Weber attaches to this response to the devaluation of values is reminiscent of Kant's discussion of autonomy and maturity in "What is Enlightenment?" (1963).

[41] Weber is being euphemistic here. He uses the word god to refer to the different value-spheres created by rationalization.

[42] Sociologist Richard K. Fenn argues that Weber betrays a religious existentialism here that is reminiscent of Kierkegaard's contention that "[m]an … is truly human only when he decides" (1969, 164). Weber's reliance of religious ideals to articulate the inner logic of modernity's secularism should tell us that his relationship to the

the other" is inevitable and must therefore be embraced, rather than avoided (SAV, 151).[43] Returning to his earlier theme, Weber tells us that we should not expect social scientists to determine, *for us*, how we should live or to which constellation of values we should be loyal (SAV, 152). Nor should we turn to religious authority for assistance in such matters. As Weber says, nothing can be gained by veiling from the religiously musical man the fact that "he is destined to live in a godless and prophetless time" (SAV, 153). Decisions must be made autonomously, "pulling them out of one's own breast" (Weber 1909, cited in Kalberg, 2005, 13).

This brings Weber to the crux of the problematic he is investigating. How are we, within this seemingly impossible set of conflicting conditions, to "meet the demands of the day" with honesty and integrity (SAV, 156)? The answer to this question comes in the form of sober pragmatism, and is worded in terms of a compromise. Weber begins by telling us that we must give up the "fool's paradise" which seeks the leadership of prophets and seers (scientific or religious) and accept that "it is the stigma of our human dignity that the peace of our souls can never be as great as the peace of those who dream of such a paradise" (cited in Kalberg: 2005, 13).

What then does this stigma that Weber offers to us entail? To put it simply, it involves orienting action to a higher plane, asserting noble values, and cultivating an ethical stance

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religious is more complex than might be suggested by his comments here, a point we will return to in Chapter Five.

[43] Weber is scathing of those who avoid clarifying "one's own ultimate standpoint" by making "relative judgments". He describes them as "feeble" (SAV, 155).

towards the world of human relations. But doing so with the awareness that your knowledge of conditions is always limited. It means giving an "honest" account of oneself, something that can be achieved with the aid of science (SAV, 151). And finally, it encompasses a willingness to defend one's ultimate position in the context of open debate (Kalberg: 2005, 27-28).

We should pause here to consider precisely what Weber is arguing. Weber has put forward, as the only suitable way to "meet the demands of the day", a concept of human dignity that is *specific to modernity*; for it is one that can be achieved only by consciously embracing the reality of cultural disenchantment. Let us explore this further. Within a Weberian framework, open debate, an honest struggle between heterogeneous value-positions, an acceptance of the limitations of knowledge made in consultation with scientific knowledge, and a consciousness of the relative nature of all judgments, can occur only when value-spheres are differentiated, when values can no longer claim ultimate legitimacy, and where, as a result of the loss of any transcendent adjudicating power, truths are unstable and indeterminate. We have seen that these cultural conditions, as far as Weber is concerned, were specific to the consequences of cultural disenchantment. For example, his writing on Asian and Catholic religions strongly suggests that the separating, fracturing differences necessary to produce these testing conditions are absent in enchanted and pre-modern cultures (see Weber: 1963, 270; Habermas: 1984, 205).

That Weber believes the ethical qualities outlined above to be correlative to modern disenchantment is further demonstrated by his comparison of true ethical

responsibility with a certain kind of religiosity that is said to lack it; one that he associates with the "fool's paradise" mentioned above.

The Concept of Religion in the SAV

One of the most interesting aspects of the SAV is its use of religious imagery and example. Although the lecture is ostensibly concerned with the value, role and limitations of the social sciences in contemporary society, Weber spends a great deal of his time talking about religion. As we shall discuss in the final chapter of this thesis, there are constant references to religious tropes and images. He uses the image of the would-be prophet to poke fun at those academics who would pass themselves off as genuine leaders, refers to the vocation of science, a term that echoes his work on the Protestant ethic, as a form of exaltation, and ascribes the origin of scientific discovery to a gift of grace.[44] More pertinent to our discussion here are two references to religion, utilized by Weber to articulate the sacrifice that must be made in order to embrace the autonomy required of a truly modern sense of human dignity and moral responsibility.

At the very end of the lecture Weber remarks that, for those "who cannot bear the fate of the times like a man", the "arms of the old churches are opened widely and compassionately for him" (SAV, 155). Weber is quick to qualify that this return to the church is "ethically quite a different matter than the evasion of the plain duty of intellectual integrity" (SAV, 155). In other words, it stands ethically higher than the kind of self-deception that seeks to be lead by

[44] The function of religious image will be explored in Chapter Five. Our focus here is only Weber's use of religion as an alternative to his concept of modern ethical responsibility.

would-be academic prophets. Nonetheless, he is also clear about what such a return entails: the sacrifice of the intellect (SAV, 155). When read as an address to those who fail to bear the fate of the times like a man, Weber's assessment of religion as an intellectual sacrifice implies that religion functions as a comforting, but ultimately undesirable *alternative* to the kind of mature ethic that would take it upon itself to answer the challenging questions that arise when we must be responsible for clarifying the ultimate meaning of our conduct for ourselves (SAV, 152). [45]

Before proceeding with the analysis of the SAV, it is helpful to place Weber's concept of maturity within the context of Immanuel Kant's definition of enlightenment. In "What is Enlightenment?" Kant defines maturity as man's release from self-incurred tutelage (1963). For the German philosopher, maturation involves a shift from heteronomy (where moral law is imposed from without) to autonomy (defined by moral self-governance aided by the free

[45] Weber's assessment of religion here gives us some sense of how he felt about the possibilities for cultural re-enchantment. As we know, the SAV lecture was addressed to a group of students at the University of Munich. In many ways the aim of the lecture was to disabuse the German youth of what Weber saw as their search for romantic alternatives to modern rationalist culture. These youth, he says, seek experience in the spheres of life "that intellectualism has not yet touched", pursuing their anti-intellectualism (by which Weber means anti-science) into a form of "romantic irrationalism" (SAV, 143). This pursuit of Romantic ideals was understandable, he notes, but ultimately misguided (SAV, 155). Indeed, Weber felt that such attempts to re-enchant a world that was fundamentally dis-enchanted was potentially dangerous (SAV, 143). As Marianne Weber points out in her biography, although Weber as able "to empathize with these young people", he "was impatient with romantic notions that were an escape from the hard fights of everyday life to another world of atmosphere" (Weber: 1975, 598-599).

exercise of reason) (Kant: 1963). As he notes in a later essay, "It is so easy to be immature. If I have a book to serve as my understanding, a pastor to serve as my conscience, a physician to determine my diet for me, and so on, I need not exert myself at all" (Kant: 1983, 41). Kant's point is that through laziness and cowardice we too often forgo the capacity for rational self-reflection and moral autonomy that is intrinsic – as a potential at least – to the human condition. To develop the maturity characteristic of enlightenment thus requires that we give up external sources of guidance and take responsibility for our own thought and action. My must, in other word, be vigilant in our cultivation of moral *autonomy*.

Weber utilizes this logic again in a second reference to religion, immediately following the one above. In the closing paragraphs of the lecture Weber offers one last piece of sobering advice for "the many who today tarry for new prophets and saviours" (SAV, 156). It comes in the form of a brief commentary on the Edomite watchman's poem, from the book of Isaiah.

> He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye enquire, enquire ye: return, come (SAV, 156).

After citing this section of the poem Weber remarks that we are "shaken" when we realize the fate of the "people to whom this was said" (SAV, 156). The suggestion being that those who tarry for answers, for the deliverance of a "fool's paradise" to guide them in life, do so in vain. The religious desire for reunification with the transcendent, the ultimate, or the divine is, so it implies here, naïve.

I don't mean to suggest that Weber was dismissive of religion in the way that other 19th and early 20th century theorists of secularization were (Casanova: 1994, 17; Wilson: 1982, 1-3; 1979, 270). We know that Weber felt that the salvation doctrines of the numerous religions he studied offered psychological rewards to its believers for precisely the type of moral conduct he applauded: compassion, charity, a brotherhood ethic, and so on. Additionally, his studies of Protestantism in the United States suggested to him that something like a traditional religious ethic could supply modern, rational society with a coherent constellation of values that could hold in check the egoistic self-interest and homogenizing effects of formal rationality (see Kalberg: 2005, 27-28, 31-31). Moreover, as Richard K. Fenn has argued, Weber deeply admired the concept of the calling cultivated within Protestantism. He saw it as capable of summoning the inner devotion necessary to give life meaning and purpose (Fenn: 1969, 163; see also Swatos and Kivisto: 1991).

These examples of Weber's respect for the contributions of religion to modern society tell us that his critique in the SAV is not aimed at religion *as such*, but rather at a particular aspect of religiosity; or, to be more exact, at a particular religious-type. In other words, Weber's criticisms of religion are confined to something within religion, or within a specific form of religiosity, that allows us to evade the stigma necessary for a properly modern expression of human dignity; a religion, that is, in which meaning is simply *accepted* (from without), rather than actively created (within).[46]

[46] As Kalberg notes, "Weber wanted open and dynamic societies in which noble values, competing hard against each other, would force choices and command loyalties. Activity would then be oriented to a higher plane and firmly directed '*from within*'" (2005, 4, emphasis added).

It should be obvious from the comments above that the religious model called upon by Weber to highlight the superiority of disenchantment is none other than the primordial unity of enchanted religiosity. He associates this type with the ancient Near Eastern religions, Babylon, Egypt and Mesopotamia (Weber: 1952, 4; 1963, 55, 58; PE, 221), and, as we saw in the last chapter, with Asian religiosity generally. We also saw that Weber associated Catholicism and even certain traditions within Protestantism, (namely, Lutheranism), with the monism of religious enchantment. However, the enchanted, or "magical garden" as Weber sometimes calls it (Weber: 1963, 270), is more a type than it is a specific religious tradition.[47] Further exploration of Weber's theory will show us that its specificity derives solely from its comparison to what is said to intervene into it. It is the passive side of the binary, the point of departure against which the achievements or losses of the disenchanted can be measured.

The analysis here will proceed by opening with an examination of some exemplary re-articulations of Weber's story. The insights gathered there will then be used to address the way enchanted passivity is represented in Weber's own writing. As we shall see, the guiding theme of these narratives is the presumption that spiritual immanence – expressed either spatially or temporally – disables human agency, thus preventing the human subject from making the

[47] As Weber reminds us in RRW, ideal-types are theoretical constructions, used as a means for orienting analysis (RRW, 323). Although meant only as a "technical aid", they could be used to "determine the degree of approximation of the historical phenomenon to the theoretically constructed type" (RRW, 324). Thus, even if he concedes that in its pure form the ideal can never be found in reality (RRW, 324) it has a powerful determining role in Weber's work because concrete empirical examples are always measured against a theoretically constructed norm that (analytically speaking) precedes them.

decisions through which the "soul … chooses its *own* fate" (cited in Kalberg: 2005, 1, emphasis added).

The Fall from Unity

Literature about disenchantment often characterizes Near Eastern cosmology as a timeless plenitude – without history and indeed, incapable of change.[48] The reasoning is as follows. In the Biblical tradition the act of creation is a once-and-for-all-event which punctuates time by positing an *origin*. There was nothing, and then with the *fiat lux* something is born. Time moves forward from this point into a future that is not prescribed but, as Berger argues, must be created by the historical figures who populate the Bible and whose actions drive its narrative (Berger: 1973, 123). Critical events that mark the progression of that linear movement include the exodus from Egypt, the establishment of the covenant at Sinai, the destruction of the Temple and so forth.

In the Near Eastern cosmology however, creation is not a once-and-for-all event, but follows a cyclical structure that is repeated annually. Consequently, time itself is cyclical rather than linear, and creation is repetitive rather than novel. As Taylor explains, "[i]n the course of the year, the pristine order of the cosmos gradually drifts towards the edge of chaos until it reaches the tipping point, where it dissolves and must be restored …" (Taylor: 2007, 137). This restoration is achieved through ritual participation in the cosmogonic "event" for which both humans and gods are responsible. Berger gives an example of such an event. He tells us that

[48] Berger, for instance, tells us that the laws and ethics of the ancient Near East are "grounded in a timeless cosmic order" (1973, 125).

> in the great New Year festival of ancient Mesopotamia the creation of the world is not only represented … but once more realized, made a reality, as human life is brought back again to its divine source. Thus everything that happens 'here below' on the human plane has its analogue 'up above' on the plane of the gods, and everything that happens 'now' is linked with the cosmic events that occurred 'in the beginning'. (Berger: 1973, 119)

Reiterating Taylor's observation, Berger notes that these rituals function to reintegrate the human social order into a cosmic reality that "embraces the universe" (Berger: 1973, 119), and in doing so, maintain an ontological order that, as he puts it, "fails to make the sharp modern differentiation between the human and non-human …" (1973, 119).[49]

Both theorists infer that the temporal structure of this sacred cosmos makes it impossible for the human to see itself as a historical agent, responsible for change. As Taylor explains, religious action in the Near Eastern cosmology is "programmed in advance" by annually repeated natural cycles (2007, 137). In this sense, as he sees it, "creation is not creative

[49] We should note that although Berger wants to express the failure of this system to recognize the difference between humans and non-humans, his use of the term analogy, and his reference to the Renaissance hermetic concept of "as above, so below", actually functions to secure the very difference they seek to collapse. As Susanna Rizzo points out, in the Christian theological tradition "analogy establishes a proportional relation between two terms, which appear similar for some aspects and dissimilar for others" (2009, 11). Equally, the very fact that humans must annually renew their "contact" with divine forces suggests that their relationship is not one of unbroken immediacy. That it can be broken, as Berger acknowledges, surely implies the comprehension of some kind of distinction, difference or separation.

but is the eternal return of the same" (2007, 137). Consequently, the human agent does not create a future for itself but rather repeats a "future that is prefigured before the beginning" (Taylor: 2007, 137).

This last detail is important, for it suggests that the people who populate this sacred cosmos are stuck in a timeless plenitude that prevents them from perceiving the possibilities for a different future, or grasping their potential role in its creation. Consequently, within the terms of this argument, the dynamics of change must always derive from an *external* source. This sets up a relation of dependence between an origin that is both innocent (of its own potential) and passive, and the activity of an intervening force that is foreign.[50]

The dynamic of this relation can tell us much about why Weber associates moral maturity with modernity, and is thus worth exploring further. Let us turn to Taylor, Berger and Gauchet once more to shed light on this logic.

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[50] In this sense the disenchantment story mimics the Fall structure of colonialist narratives. For instance, Chinua Achebe's classic, *Things Fall Apart* (1958), follows the corrosive effect of colonial intervention in Umofia, Nigeria. In the story white men arrive into the village of Ibo armed with a new religion. The introduction of this novel cultural element immediately begins to tear the structural fabric of the society apart. Although Achebe is careful to acknowledge instances of dissent and disorder already present in the Ibo tribe, the truly destructive effects of division arrive with the colonialists. Claude Lévi-Strauss employs a similar logic in his account of the introduction of writing into the apparently oral-based culture of the Nambikwara, carefully analyzed by Derrida in *Of Grammatology* (1976). Lévi-Strauss presents writing as an evil that, when "introduced" into the culture (by the anthropologist himself), engenders a form of violent exploitation that changes the once-peaceful society forever. As Derrida points out, Lévi-Strauss' account presumes that change, disruption, and ultimately progress, *begin* with "a necessary or rather fatal degradation" introduced by him (1976, 134).

Temporality, Futurity and Agency

Taylor launches his account of the relation between the Near East and Judaism[51] with the contention that, "[t]he notion of the beginning has a beginning. Before the beginning nothing begins because everything returns eternally in cyclical rhythms that are both natural and divine" (Taylor: 2007, 134). The beginning of the beginning to which Taylor refers here is, of course, the "eruption" of the radically transcendent God – Yahweh. This eruption is said to "disrupt" natural cycles (Taylor: 2007, 134), and to "shatter" monism (Taylor: 2007, 133). Thus a certain form of violence already marks its incursion into the monistic plentitude of the origin. What is more, this is a disruption said to come from without.

In Taylor's account, as well as in Berger's and Weber's of course, difference *arrives* with the ancient Israelites, with a transcendent God who is said to "come from afar" (Berger: 1973, 121). As Berger reminds us, Yahweh "was not a local or tribal divinity" (1973, 122). He has no natural connection to Israel, or to the land in which their historical narrative is played out. In this sense, Yahweh represents something entirely *foreign* to the Near East, further suggesting that the difference He brings with Him, the capacity for differentiation that is, in fact, conditioned *by* His difference, is not indigenous to the Near East.

[51] We must keep in mind, when reading Taylor, that apparent oppositions will eventually be revealed as constitutively implicated. In this sense we should expect to find a more complicated account of these processes when we examine Taylor's work in more detail, in later chapters of this thesis. However, that is not to say that he doesn't reproduce the Fall logic under examination here. As the following account will show, his thinking is informed by it in important ways.

In this way, difference is construed as external to the enchanting plenitude that the Near East comes to represent in this narrative. This is significant because, as suggested above, it renders the primitive passive. In the broader context of secularization theory the notion of arrival put forward by these theorists functions to hold activity on the same side of a binary system with autonomy, maturity, independence, rationality, enlightenment and progress. On the other side of this binary we find passivity, dependence, immaturity, irrationality, innocence and stasis. The peculiar and "anti-historical" temporality used to defend this bifurcated schema can be seen even more clearly in Gauchet's retelling of the disenchantment story.

Gauchet's theory of the origins of secularization shares a common logic with the accounts we have examined above. He too locates the motor for historical change in a disruptive form of distinction that intervenes into a primordial unity that is said to lack it. Gauchet's theory does differ somewhat from Taylor's and Berger's in that he locates the emergence of this intervening transcendence in the rise of the state in ancient Babylon, Mesopotamia and Egypt.[52] However, his description of the dynamics of this transition are useful for they highlight the developmental structure of this narrative which we will clearly see transposed in Weber's writings about the child-like and innocent nature of Catholic Sicilians.

[52] The logic of this claim is complicated. Gauchet argues that the rise of the state disrupted primordial unity by incarnating the instaurating foundation in a human figure: ostensibly, the "god-king" (Gauchet: 1997, 14). This drew the divine governing principle into the worldly realm where it could be communicated with, interpreted, and ultimately challenged (Gauchet: 1997, 13). Gauchet argues that this begins a process of disenchantment that will eventually lead to the emergence of secular, humanist politics. It should be noted, however, that despite disagreement over the inaugurating terms of the disenchantment narrative, Gauchet still agrees with Weber that "the rational religion of one god", Christianity, "is precisely the one that allows the departure from religion" (Gauchet: 1997, 9).

Just as Taylor and Berger suggest with respect to the Near Eastern cosmos, Gauchet also claims that time in "primeval religion" is structured cyclically, and is thus anti-historical (1997, 7). He argues that this temporal structure cripples creativity by encouraging "a passive acceptance of things"[53] (1997, 7). As he explains, in primitive religion everything in daily life - social structures, laws and their meanings - derive from beings who are temporally other to us, established in an *absolute* past (Gauchet: 1997, 28). This claim is interesting for it would seem to acknowledge the existence of precisely the disjuncture between past and present that Taylor and Berger have argued is lacking in the Near Eastern cosmos. However, making a rather counter-intuitive claim, Gauchet argues that the sacred cosmos develops an anti-historical character *because* of this disarticulation.

Gauchet qualifies that because the time of origins has past, and with it the creative powers that coincide with creation, their inviolable legacy must be preserved, and sacred teachings repeated, through rituals designed to relive them (Gauchet: 1997, 13) – the rituals referred to by Berger and Taylor above. Using a logic similar to Taylor, Gauchet argues that, indebted to a meaning that is *already constituted*, religious activity in this system must take the form of compliance; a "filial piety" to the past (1997, 13). Thus "radical disjuncture from the originary moment" is combined with "co-presence of the origin" (Gauchet: 1997, 25).

[53] "Hidden in the depths of time is another humanity whose secret has been lost, and needs to be rediscovered, one that found a way to be at one with itself in its *accepted dependency* and its *passive relation* with the world" (Gauchet: 1997, 7, emphasis added).

This paradoxical logic contains a number of insights that are worth exploring in some detail before we proceed. Gauchet claims that primitive religion combines co-presence of the origin with radical disjuncture from the originary moment. Thus, as he puts it, it translates "distance into proximity, absence into presence, and division into coalescence" (Gauchet: 1997, 30). However, this Hegelian argument raises a number of questions. What guarantees the translation of absence into presence? What assures the fidelity of the repetition? If, as Gauchet claims, there is an *absolute* disconnection between the past and present then strictly speaking there can be no fidelity, no possible way of determining the accuracy of a repetition. Each moment would be radically singular, with no temporal thread connecting them.

On the other hand, if there is a filial piety, if the past is always and unchangingly renewed in the present, as both Gauchet and Taylor claim, then there can be no disjuncture to speak of. The present would act like a living thread to the past – a past which is, necessarily, not one. There would simply be the present, immutable and given. Whilst this seems to support Taylor and Berger's arguments about the timeless nature of enchanted religions, closer inspection shows that it only adds confusion to their claims. We will recall that in both of their accounts of Near Eastern cosmogonic rituals, the religious act of re-creation is said to represent a "failure" to differentiate the (human) present from its (sacral) origin. However, it is also said that this act of integration requires annual repetition, to prevent the established order from dissolving into chaos. This is a curious claim because it implies that the seemingly pre-determined and unchanging unity of the sacral order actually responds to the possibility of disconnection and disruption. How then can these theorists speak of stasis, or a failure of the human subject to grasp its role in the creation of its own future? We can turn to Gauchet once more for some illumination on this point.

Exploring the counter-intuitive relation between past and present in primitive religions Gauchet ends up conceding that absolute stasis is impossible. All societies, he says, must change. None can be without a certain element of dynamism. The difference between the primitive and the historical religions would thus seem to evaporate in this concession. For if the enchanted cosmos is capable of change then the division of the religious systems into active/passive, dynamic/static would no longer hold. However, Gauchet wants to insist on that difference. To do so he argues that although the primitive system, like all social systems, must change, it works actively to deny that change (Gauchet: 1997, 25). To this end, primeval religion is said to begin with a *repression* of history by "dispossessing" itself of that which could make it happen: its negative relation to the world (Gauchet: 1997, 26).

Once more, the attempt to clarify his logic only serves to deepen the confusion. One would want to ask why the primitive would deny or repress something that has yet to occur. Surely this indicates some foreknowledge, some anxiety or engagement with the difference it is supposed to have dispossessed itself of. Gauchet acknowledges this problematic, but has no answer for us. He simply suggests that primitive "man" found his potential for negativity so "unbearable that he had no choice but to repress it immediately" (Gauchet: 1997, 26).

This introduces a number of unsettling questions about the supposed unity of the primordial sacred cosmos. We will recall that Berger and Taylor insisted that difference arrived

with the transcendent God Yahweh; and that it came into the Near East from without.[54] The suggestion was that the absence of this differentiating transcendence from the Near East constituted a heterogeneity upon which typological distinctions between enchanted and disenchanted worlds could be based. And yet, in Gauchet's complex version of this same story, we find evidence of a kind of originary difference, a sort of dynamism at the origin, precisely where it is not supposed to be. Moreover, this primeval religious landscape also betrays evidence of some prescient awareness of a futurity and a negativity that is supposed to emerge only later. For, as we know, the active denial that underscores repression can often be the strongest form of affirmation.

These provocations, which ask us to question how truly heterogeneous enchantment and disenchantment are, take us beyond the immediate concerns of this chapter, although we will return to them again in future chapters. For now, let us resume the discussion of Gauchet, and examine his reasons for claiming that the temporal immanence of primordial religiosity dispossesses us of our capacity to cultivate a "secular" sense of human autonomy.

East to West and South to North: from Innocence to Experience

Once more recalling a Hegelian logic, Gauchet argues that humanity can basically be characterized by its negative relation to the world. This manifests in the human relation to

[54] Weber suggests the same absence of difference in the enchanted type when he refers to the "unbroken humanity" of believers in this religious system (SPWR, 291), and again, to the "unbroken faith" of Confucianism (CP, 229).

nature, “which they cannot leave alone”, to fellow beings, “who they view as potential objects of annihilation”, with culture, “which they can only relate to by changing” and their own inner reality, which must constantly be modified or denied (Gauchet: 1997, 22). Given free reign this attitude thrusts human activity into a future that has “yet to be given”, and must be actively created, and recreated. In turn, this furnishes us with the capacity to make decisions, to shape a world, and critically, to be conscious that such shaping derives from our own activity rather than from a pre-determined source. In other terms, a transformative “nonacceptance” of that which is given is necessary for the development of a strong concept of the historical, and an equally robust notion of our own human autonomy.

Gauchet’s comments here characterize the primitive as immature. These people possess an almost child-like inability to “face the demands of the day”, as Weber might say. Their passive acceptance of what is given, and their refusal to address that which is not, implies a lack of curiosity about the world that could signify either naivety or stupidity. This is a significant detail for it immediately brings to mind the quality in religion that Weber repudiates as a paradise for fools. Consequently, I want to finish now by returning once more to Weber, to a little cited source that draws together all of the themes discussed in this chapter. Our reference here is a trip taken by Weber to Sicily in 1906, accompanied by his wife Marianne and mother Helene. The details of the trip, including Weber’s attitudes to it, are recorded by Marianne and published in his biography (see Weber: 1975, 363-365).

Marianne begins her account of the trip by describing the impressions that a visit to a monastery in Girgenti had upon her husband and his mother. She tells us that whilst enjoying the “delicately turned marble columns” of the monasteries and the “oriental splendor of the

chapels", the German travelers come across some "glittering shrines" in which "priests in white brocade" perform "their age-old magic" (Weber: 1975, 363).

The reference to age-old magic immediately casts the Catholicism of these Sicilian priests as enchanted. Not only do they continue to practice "magic", but this magic can also claim an unbroken link to a primeval origin. This reference to religion thus quickly establishes the difference between the travelers and the natives. Indeed we are told that Helene's "Protestant soul shuddered" in protest at the "litanies and genuflections" she witnessed in the shrine (Weber: 1975, 362).

The sense of a division between the Germans and the Sicilians, established by this reference to religion, quickly gives way to a more general cultural distinction, one that seems to fascinate Weber. We are told that the Germans liked Sicily. They "enjoyed the tenderness which united the throngs of parents and children", the comradery, intimacy and joyful life of these "southerners" (Weber: 1975, 364). And yet, "the travelers could not really feel at home among these people who lived in the present, enjoyed their brief lives unquestioningly, and apparently desired only to be happy" (Weber: 1975, 364). As Weber elaborates, paraphrasing her husband, there is something amiss with these people. Their contentment is bought at the expense of a sense of the future and their stake in it. They do "not seem to struggle or to strive for higher things". They do not question the order of reality, but simply accept it as *given*. Furthermore, these are people without any real capacity for agency at all. Citing her husband

again, Weber says that even their works are "not a product of will but of compulsion, the products bestowed by nature" (Weber: 1975, 364).[55]

The Catholic south is painted here by Weber as a sort of lost Eden,[56] at once the object of nostalgia and repudiation. Sicily is a world of innocence and plenitude. Every need is met (by nature), every desire fulfilled (by the joyful sun). There is a unity between people, families, and the landscape into which they almost blend, that is enviable. However, precisely because of this, these people remain in a state of child-like dependence which Weber vehemently rejects. Having never been forced to "overcome obstacles", to make decisions about the

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[55] It should be noted that Weber perceived a similar threat to individualism in his own modern culture – specifically, in the modern bureaucracy. As Weber saw it, the modern bureaucracy, governed by calculable rules *without regard to persons*, sought to reduce individuals to mere cogs in a political machine (1948e, 215). In this sense, modernity contains a contradiction. On the one hand, it is driven by a differentiating imperative, constantly loosening the individual from the ties that bind them to communitarian and religious sources of identity and meaning. On the other hand, the formality of its rationalism, particularly in the political sphere, tries to homogenize persons, turning them into "cheerful robots" (Weber, cited in Owen: 1994, 122). As Owen has argued, this represents a point of disagreement between Weber and Kant, from whom the concepts of autonomy and maturity are borrowed. Kant, as Owen points out, was largely unconcerned about the constraints imposed upon the freedom of the civil servant (Owen: 1994, 119), locating the possibilities for cultural enlightenment in the exercise of practical reason by "scholars" engaged in public debate (Owen: 1994, 8). However, we should also note that despite his reservations about the homogenizing effects of modernization, Weber shared the general *telos* of Kant's developmental narrative. That is to say, in Weber's work the *potential* for enlightenment (or maturity) lies exclusively in Western modernity, where individuals have been forced (at certain times) to overcome their dependence on the external forces that are still uncritically accepted by the cultures of enchantment described above.

[56] Marianne describes it as "a children's *paradise*" (1975, 365, emphasis added).

ethical possibilities of action, the value or meaning of life and its direction, these Catholics have failed to mature. And, as the citation below makes apparent, for the Webers, this, and this alone, is the yardstick against which the progress of any civilization, any culture or religion, must be measured. As Weber asserts, "they could not imagine a *mature* life that did not involve exertion in the service of new tasks, and the overcoming of obstacles" (1975: 365, emphasis in original).

When read against the background of his call to "meet the demands of the day", Weber's diagnosis of the enchantment of the Sicilians in these terms betrays his deep commitment to the developmental structure of the narrative of disenchantment. Specifically, the Sicilian encounter tells us that, for Weber, it is only when we are violently expelled from the comforting, but ultimately disabling embrace of the pre-modern enchanted universe that we are able to exercise the creative autonomy necessary to cultivate human dignity and ethical responsibility. It is only then that, becoming adults, we can become truly modern.[57]

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[57] The function of the enchanted in Weber's understanding of modern maturity is structurally correlative to the place the feminine occupies in the classic developmental narratives of philosophy and psychoanalysis. In both Freud's and Lacan's theories of childhood development maturity is associated with autonomy. This autonomy can be won only through the (violent) separation of the (male) child from the body of his mother. This separation also represents the movement from a state of undifferentiation and utter dependence into a state of distinction and independence. This independence is never entirely successful and needs to be maintained through a constant repudiation of the body of the mother, and of the feminine in general (see Benjamin: 1988; Grosz: 1990; Kristeva: 1982). One could read Weber's attempts to contain the enchanted, to keep it analytically, historically and geographically distinct from the disenchanted, as an attempt to hold the undifferentiation of the feminine at bay. A number of textual references suggest this. As we have seen, Weber associates a specifically modern form of maturity with disenchantment. It is no accident that this disenchantment is, in turn, identified with Calvinism. As

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to establish that conventional notions of secularization are underpinned by a fracturing logic that, despite its inconsistencies, remains critical to how the modern is perceived. It was important to examine in some detail how this logic operates because it helps us understand why Weber finds it so attractive. Maintaining our distance from the divine allows for the development of what Weber would take to be the most important feature of modern life in the "West": the decisiveness characteristic of human moral autonomy.

> Every single important activity and ultimately life as a whole, if it is not permitted to run on as an event in nature but is instead to be consciously guided, is a series of ultimate decisions through which the soul … *chooses* its own destiny; i.e., the meaning of its activity and existence (Weber, cited in Kalberg: 2007, 135-137).

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we have seen, Calvinists are said to act as *tools* of God, in contradistinction to the more enchanted Lutherans who are its *vessel*. Like the womb which it calls to mind, the state of communion with the divine evoked by the mystical vessel prevents the development of cultural autonomy; the ability, that is, to meet the demands of the day "like a man". It is significant that Calvin himself referred to the womb as a kind of "watery tomb" (Zachmann: 2007, 58). Trying to elaborate the caring nature of the divine, Calvin asks us to think about the miracle of birth. "Have we not equal reason to marvel that the infant, shut up within its mother's womb, can live in such a condition as would suffocate the strongest man in half an hour" (Cited in Zachmann: 2007, 58)? As he goes on to argue, it is the infinite and mysterious power of God that keeps the infant "alive in its grave" (cited in Zachmann: 2007, 58). Calvin thus suggests that it is only the intervention of God, "our Father", that enables us to survive the murderous nature of the womb. In terms correlative to the discussion of disenchantment above, Calvin infers that the birth of our autonomy, our ejection from a primordial state of undifferentiation, depends on the intrusion of the masculine into an origin that is feminine.

Protestantism plays a vital role in the delivery of this potential for cultural maturation. As “heirs” to the Judaic ethic, it is the Protestant tradition that is responsible for bringing the fracturing effects of transcendence into the modern world. The significance of this inheritance is not confined to the part played by Protestantism in the production of a truly rational religious ethic, or its role in the genesis of capitalism. Ascetic Protestantism is important to Weber because it helps engender a modern secular culture capable of embracing the stigma of a human dignity won through its repudiation of the innocent splendour of religious enchantment.

This indicates why there is so much at stake for Weber in the claim that a disruption of primordial spiritual immanence “was the necessary condition of our world” (in Gauchet: 1997, x). Within a Weberian framework, maturity, autonomy, responsibility, all that enlightenment thought holds dear, comes to us only as a consequence of our Fall. Without that initial disruption there can be no disenchantment, no secularization, and thus no opportunity to “bear the fate of the times like a man”.

The chapter that follows will begin to question the nature of the break put forward here as the basis upon which distinctions between enchantment and disenchantment can be made. The necessity of this intervention derives not only from the need to question the ethnocentricism of Weber’s schema, nor the use to which it is put in allocating certain qualities (maturity, responsibility, activity) to one religious tradition, will denying their presence in others. The need to question the break, supposedly supplied and defended by divine transcendence, emerges from within the terms of this discourse itself. For, as we have seen in

Gauchet's paradox, *the fact* of a distinct rupture between the enchanted and disenchanted worlds, even between unity and difference as such, is far from straightforward.

Taking the culminating phase of the disenchantment narrative as our starting point, the next two chapters will explore what happens to Weber's moral schema when the religious tradition put forward as the most consistently disenchanted is shown to support an immanent, rather than (exclusively) transcendent God. What happens to the notion of a secular culture devoid of spirit, and independent of the supernatural, if we find in Calvinism, the disenchanting "heirs" of ancient Judaism, a contiguous, rather than instrumental, relationship to the divine? And finally, if we were to find evidence of divine immanence within disenchantment, would we still be able to use Weber's moral schema to defend distinctions between the primitive and the modern?

CHAPTER THREE: LIVING SIGNS OF GRACE

In the previous chapter we examined the break said to make possible the secularization of the modern Western world. This fracture, the schism between the human and divine, is presented as "a break with an entire universe" (Berger: 1973, 120). It is said to cleave the possibilities for religious conceptions of the god-world relation, allowing the disenchanted "type" to separate itself off from all those forms of magical and mystical practice Weber regards as "enchanted". In doing so, this foundational fracture allowed the differentiating and rationalizing impulse of the Judaic-Protestant religious traditions to develop until, in the period examined by Weber in the PE, it reaches "its logical conclusion" (PE, 105). The logical conclusion referred to here is, as we have just seen, the secularized culture of Weber's own time.

In the course of this exploration we also investigated what Talcott Parsons once called Weber's "tragic dilemma"; that is, "his sense of the precariousness of rationality ... in the western world" (cited in Fenn: 1969, 161). The specificity of my own approach to Weber, and to the theory of secularization that emerges from his work, also hinges on the acknowledgment of a certain ambiguity within his thinking. Consequently, it is necessary to return to the question of Weber's ambivalence again, this time approaching the issue from another direction.

As we have seen, commentators often assert that there is a deep ambivalence, indeed an unresolved conflict, in the way Weber thought about the cultural consequences of disenchantment. As Derek Sayer puts it, for Weber, the "[r]ational, scientific, intellectual 'disenchantment of the world' implies not only an emancipation from magic and superstition

[and thus a corresponding technical mastery over life] but also an irretrievable loss" of meaning (1991, 148). For many, this ambivalence is said to render Weber's attitude to his own times ambiguous. For instance, in an exemplary article on Weber's SAV, the eminent sociologist of religion, Richard K. Fenn, identifies two distinct and conflicting responses to disenchantment. On the one hand, Weber is said to employ a "radically secular orientation"[58] to the problems associated with modern disenchantment (Fenn: 1969, 166). In this register Weber recognizes that various conflicts and uncertainties that arise within modern culture as a result of disenchantment, but nevertheless, "renounces a nostalgia for a past in which beliefs and values cohered with institutions in an organic harmony" (Fenn: 1969, 167). This orientation feels that although choices need to be made, they are neither ultimate nor decisive (Fenn: 1969, 166). As Fenn sees it, Weber regards the adoption of a "relative, pragmatic view on life" as the only response appropriate "for those who have matured under the conditions of a disenchanted universe" (1969, 167).

Contradicting this secular view, Fenn identifies in Weber what he calls, a religious "existentialist protest" against the cultural relativism of the "modern condition" (1969, 164). This orientation sees man fulfilled only in his passionate devotion to a vocation (Fenn: 1969, 165). However, in the pluralized and conflicting culture of the modern world, the commitment to a vocation *will* require a decisive and binding choice; a choice that is made in the face, indeed in spite of, "objective uncertainty" (Fenn: 1969, 164). To Fenn's mind, Weber's existentialist protest is informed by "a relic from the religious past, particularly the Protestant era, when a man could justify himself before God in his work" (1969, 165).

[58] By orientation Fenn means the way actors relate beliefs and values to motivations for social action (1969, 160).

Fenn's intervention is telling, and in later chapters we too will explore the ways in which the religious past comes back to haunt Weber's supposedly secular present. However, our detailed examination of the SAV lecture should tell us that the secular and religious attitudes Fenn identifies in Weber's diagnosis of modern, western rationalism are not as distinct as he suggests. Indeed, we have seen that for Weber, true maturity is constituted by the coincidence of the pragmatic acceptance of the indeterminacy implicit in cultural relativism with a struggle to give life meaning and purpose within those conditions. In other words, it combines Fenn's secular and religious orientations.[59]

Nonetheless, Fenn's approach to the SAV is instructive for additional reasons to those examined above. Fenn is correct to call Weber's work ambiguous, if by that he means it can be interpreted in a number of contradictory ways. However, this present chapter will argue that this ambiguity does not lie in Weber's *opinion about* modern, Western rationalism, or in his evaluation of its cultural consequences, as so many commentators have suggested. Rather, it can be more properly located in Weber's account of the process responsible for it. Put differently, it is disenchantment *itself*, above and beyond what Weber thought about its effects, that contains the incongruity responsible for Weber's "tragic dilemma".

[59] It should be noted that Fenn comes close to acknowledging this when he says that the two orientations intersect and cannot be easily separated. "Though Weber progressed toward the radically secular, it appears he was in conflict to the end", asserting finally that "men continue to seek the ultimate legitimation for their activities" (Fenn: 1969, 167).

The Two Trajectories of the Capitalist Spirit

Let us return now to some of the questions raised at the end of Chapter One. Towards the end of our analysis of the PE we identified two conflicting explanations for the causes of secularization. One, the most explicit, emphasized the gradual detachment of mundane economic practices from their spiritual or otherworldly motivations. The other explanation, only implicit in the theological sources Weber used to defend his own argument, emphasized the coincidence of spiritual and worldly categories in the practices said to be responsible for the secularization of the Protestant ethic.

For those attentive to this tension, the broader implications of Weber's PE thesis become uncertain. If we are to let the second explanation of secularization guide us in our reading of the thesis we find a text that tracks the essential affinity, indeed kinship, between the spirit of religious asceticism and the worldliness of modern capitalism. We find a text that allows us to interpret the worldliness of Benjamin Franklin's supposedly secularized Protestantism as the *spirit* of a certain kind of religion – a religion that is open to a productive commerce with the world. However, if we are to take the first explanation as indicative of Weber's intentions, the PE, like the disenchantment narrative that informs it, functions to assert the underlying differences that distinguish religion from mundane economic activity even when they appear to coincide. This understanding insists that in Benjamin Franklin's capitalistic spirit we find a replication of the content of Puritanism, only *without* the religious basis, which had, "by Franklin's time" vanished away (PE, 180). The question for us then, is which trajectory to follow, which explanation to use to open up the secrets of Weber's PE text?

To fully appreciate the significance of this tension in Weber's argument about the relationship between Protestantism and modern capitalism we need to be aware that the divergence over a concept of secularization construed in terms of collapse *or* detachment, identity *or* difference, does not simply emerge at the end of Weber's text, in those places where he deals explicitly with the question of secularization. It pervades his entire thesis, and can be seen most clearly in the way he addresses the doctrine of predestination; the doctrine, he contends, that stands in metonymically for the Calvinist and Puritan traditions as a whole (PE, 98).

Iconoclasm and Idolatry in the Doctrine of Predestination

The doctrine of predestination, and its concomitant understanding of faith, is, as Weber says, the fundamental key to understanding Protestantism's relationship with worldly economic activity. As outlined in Chapter One, the doctrine of predestination capitalized on Luther's equivalence of secular and religious vocations by declaring that work in the world was the *only* means for achieving *certitudo salutis* – certainty of salvation. With this subtle shift in doctrinal interpretation, the meaning of worldly activity underwent a radical transformation. Instead of being understood as a field of profane action, or even a product of providence to be accepted unquestioningly, under Calvinism success in worldly activity was elevated to the status of *fides efficax*, effectual or effective faith – the only true sign of one's election to the invisible church of the *ecclesia pura*. Let us review once more the relevant passage that outlines this doctrine.

> Only one of the elect really has the *fides efficax*, only he is able by virtue of his rebirth and the resulting sanctification of his whole life, to augment the glory of God by real, and not merely apparent, good works. (PE, 114)

As we can see, the doctrine of effective faith invested *worldly* activity with a spiritual value. It transformed the fruits of rationalized, methodical and systematic labour into *signs* of grace. Thus it draws a line of equivalence between the purely spiritual, supra-sensible, eternal category of grace, and the fallen, contingent, createdness of the sensible signifier. From Weber's perspective this equivalence helped to collapse the conflict between other-worldliness and asceticism, and participation in capitalistic acquisition (PE, 42). And it was for this reason that Weber regarded the doctrine of predestination, of which the *fides efficax* was a part, as integral to the rise of a highly rational type of economic conduct, and in the end "acted as the most power conceivable lever for the expansion of … capitalism" (PE, 172). Put otherwise, the identification of grace with profane economic acquisition attributed a religious significance, and indeed a moral imperative, to the sober creation of wealth.

However, as Weber will tell us, this revolution in the way the world of work was perceived comes at a price. The doctrine of the *fides efficax* anchors religious concerns and ideals in profane action and mundane social space. In this sense, it extends the carefully prescribed categories of spirit, grace, divinity and transcendence – once thought of as entirely distinct from the worldly sphere – into a larger social field. Indeed, one could say that it even appropriates the profane, in the form of the products of worldly labour, as a sign of God's earthly presence. This puts the spirit to work in the world. And, in doing so, Weber claims it disrupts the natural economy separating spirit from flesh. The consequence of this

transgression is, as we saw in Chapter One, a transformation of a love of the spiritual into a love of the worldly.

As we will recall, this is a form of secularization that, as Weber puts it, citing the Methodist John Wesley, leads to the evacuation of the spirit from the world. Weber uses Wesley's famous lament ("that, although the form of religion remains, the spirit is swiftly vanishing away") to suggest that by placing the divine in a referential relationship with the profane (sensible signifier, mundane action, material wealth, "things of the flesh") it leaves its purity open to corruption. The secular-exterior, we are told, contaminates and secularizes the interiority of the spirit. This perspective invests wealth with an almost alchemic power. It has the ability to transform a love of God into a love of gold, to pervert the natural relationship of spirit to flesh, and submit the former to the latter. In the context of Weber's narrative, this corrupting power functions to explain how a religious concern for salvation could have been transformed into a concern for worldly goods. Thus Weber's passing reference to the secularizing influence of wealth purports to explain the elusive slide from a profoundly religious relationship with economic activity into the secularized culture of modernity.

At the end of Chapter One we saw that this notion of corruption underpins an explanation for the secularization of the Protestant economic ethic that is largely focused on the *detachment* of the spirit of religion from its worldly forms. However, in accepting the idea that the supposedly naturally secularizing effect of wealth can account for the increasing *autonomy* of material culture from its spiritual foundations, Weber passes over some of the more troubling aspects of ascetic Protestantism's relationship with material acquisition. Let us outline these further.

One of the crucial elements of the expansion of the spirit of capitalism was the Puritan culture of *frugality*. The PE is littered with references to the Puritan attitude towards "things of the flesh". In all cases the body, wealth, worldliness, and materiality generally, are regarded as essentially profane – separated from the spirit by "an unbridgeable gulf" (PE, 103). Money is valuable only in so far as it can be subordinated to a spiritual purpose, the world has meaning "only as means to the glory and majesty of god" (PE, 156-157), Christians are told to labour, but only for God, and not for the flesh (PE, 162), and are warned never to use their callings as engines for personal riches.

As Weber understands it, the Puritan doctrine tries to assert that even when the spirit is put to work in the world, and thus when ascetic Protestantism enters a commercial relationship with the flesh, as it does in the *fides efficax*, there remains an absolute bifurcation holding them apart. Puritan asceticism is, as Weber continues to insist, radically iconoclastic. Like all the truly iconoclastic religions ascetic Protestantism eschews corporeal existence as profane, and regards material expressions of the divine to be idolatrous.[60] Weber uses this metaphysics to explain why ascetic Protestantism encouraged frugality. Put simply, its engagement with the world didn't unsettle its commitment to the notion that the spirit was radically different to material or worldly forms. In this sense, Protestant frugality supports Weber's claim that it was a disenchanted religion. For, it is precisely because the divine is wholly different to the world that mundane things are treated with such distrust.

[60] The notion that Calvin was an iconoclast is contentious, as Calvin scholar Randall Zachmann has recently argued (Zachmann: 2007). Some of the issues involved in Calvin's complicated relationship to the image will be explored briefly in later sections of this chapter.

This brief meditation on Protestantism's inner-worldly asceticism returns us once more to the paradox surrounding Weber's concept of secularization. The summary above asks us to consider *how* a religion that subordinated worldly existence to otherworldly goals could end up engendering "a love of the world in all its branches" (PE, 175)? How can a religion that deems wealth to be utterly meaningless raise wealth to a penultimate status? Where does this love of the world come from? Finally, how can we even begin to imagine a *relationship* between the spirit and the flesh in a Puritan culture of frugality that maintains their strict separation?

This question becomes even more puzzling when we note that Weber attributes this corruption to the *internal* nature of the spirit itself. He says that Puritanism was "the power which ever seeks the good but ever creates the evil" (PE, 172). In this statement Weber implies that the secularizing impulse is born from within the spirit of asceticism itself. This is curious. As we have seen in previous chapters, the *telos* of corruption usually tries to locate the cause and origin of a given degradation in a source outside the presumably pure identity of the first term. Eden, for instance, exists as an idyllic plenitude, in which Adam and Eve enjoy a relationship of innocent immediacy with God and with each other, prior to the Fall. The location of the corruption then, can, at least nominally,[61] be isolated to a moment outside/after the origin – the moment the snake offers the apple to Eve.

[61] Of course, this conventional understanding of the temporal location of sin is internally inconsistent. The desire to disobey God's injunction against eating from the Tree of Knowledge precedes the act which breaks the law, sundering the humans from their supposedly innocent and immediate relationship with God. This suggests an estrangement prior to the sinful act. Furthermore, that Eve and Adam could disobey *at all* is evidence of a certain independence from God. In more familiar terms, this suggests that the Fall has always already taken place.

The coherence of Weber's narrative requires that he assert that the spiritual practice of ascetic Protestantism had an integrity that preceded its secularization. It *was* iconoclastic, it *did* eschew the world and *then* it became corrupted. At this point its adherents began to love the world above their spiritual concerns. This temporalizing narrative maps onto Weber's schematic distinction between Puritan spirituality and Franklin's utilitarian worldliness. That is, between the properly religious and the secularized versions of the Protestant work ethic. And yet, in Weber's summary explanation above we find that the corruption is somehow already present to spiritual asceticism *before* its fall. It is the spirit itself which engenders the very evil that will go on to corrupt it (supposedly from without). This curious inversion of a conventional causal temporality recalls the paradox uncovered in Gauchet's account of disenchantment. Like Gauchet, Weber locates the cause of the Fall in a fracture that is internal to the supposedly original "purity" of the spirit.

How are we to make sense of this in the context of Weber's narrative? Examining this tension more closely we will see that confusion about the causes of secularization, which does, as so many have argued, render Weber's work ambiguous, reflects a paradox in the religious doctrine nominated as a generative force in the disenchantment, rationalization and subsequent secularization of modern, capitalistic culture. Consequently, it will be argued that any tensions within Weber's account of secularization derive from a (perhaps unconscious) fidelity to a paradox, deep at the heart of Calvinist disenchantment, that the great German sociologist "saw

without seeing, knew without being able to take into account", as Derrida said of Saussure in another context[62] (Derrida: 1976, 43).

The analysis to follow will proceed by examining a tense struggle, which develops out of the Puritan's search for visible *signs* of grace, between a "love of the world in all its branches" and a repudiation of that same world. This investigation requires an understanding of the semiotics of this quest. This means that, at times, we will have to depart from what we might take to be the strictly sociological frame of these questions, and explore insights offered to us by theological and philosophical discussions of language.

Predestination and the Desire for *Certitudo Salutis*

To re-iterate what was said above, Weber claims that the Calvinist doctrine of predestination played a formative role in the rationalization of economic activity "at the cradle of modern economic man" (PE, 174). Let us return for a moment to the doctrine of predestination, to see why it served as such a strong motivation for ascetic worldly activity for those Puritans who subscribed to it.

The doctrine of predestination, as it is outlined in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1648, hereafter WC), states that the fate of all humans has been decided by God from eternity.

[62] As Derrida did with his reading of Saussure, one must acknowledge that the "alternative" understanding of the relationship between Protestantism and capitalism to emerge from this thesis belongs neither strictly to me, nor to Weber. It emerges out of a deconstruction that is, though critical, nonetheless faithful to the very word of Weber's text.

It tells us that salvation has been fixed by God's will, and remains utterly independent of any good or bad works performed by the individual in his or her life. Those who He has chosen unto everlasting life have been chosen from before time, and will be called by God to the true church when it pleases Him (PE, 100). And those who He has chosen for everlasting damnation can do nothing to change this fate (PE, 109-101; see also WC, 12-17).

The doctrine confirms that God is transcendent, is alone and unto himself all-sufficient (WC, 10), and is thus wholly independent of any action undertaken by humans. Salvation is a *gift* that is given "out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith, or good works" (WC, 14). To emphasize this point Weber reminds us that, according to Calvinist doctrine, to assume that human "merit or guilt play a part in determining this destiny would be to think of God's absolutely free decrees… as subject to change by human influence, an impossible contradiction" (PE, 103).

We can see that the doctrine of predestination has very clear implications for human agency. The individual, because of his/her "fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation" (PE, 99). Any sense that individual choice or personal responsibility could account for "one's luck in life" is erased along with human agency itself. God is posited as the absolute origin and agent of all human activity. Thus the salvation that comes to the elect comes in the form of an absolute *donation*, something independent of the personhood, or personal activity of the individual.

If this "inhumane" doctrine, as Weber called it, seems a little incomprehensible to the contemporary reader, it does respond to a certain theo-logic. As Peter L. Berger points out, the

doctrine attempts to affirm the unconditional *independence of God* from human activity. He says, ascetic Protestantism "only threw man back into total 'fallenness' in order to make him open to the intervention of God's sovereign grace, the only true miracle in the Protestant universe" (Berger: 1969, 118). In other terms, by recognizing that we are sinners we can discover that God, or the "risen Christ", is the only source of our possible redemption. This shifts the locus of agency, responsibility, indeed potency, into the hands of the divine. In doing so, it liberates the "miracle" of God's gift (of mercy) from the reciprocal ties of debt, inheritance and gratitude that accompany the "mercenariness" of a doctrine of salvation by works (PE, 233).

Both Berger and Weber accept that the doctrine of predestination affirms God's independence and thus, we might assume, His absolute difference (or indeed indifference) to the human. Later we shall see why this distinction is so important to Weber's argument. And yet, even at this incipient stage of our exploration we might note a strange conundrum. By erasing the resistant particularity of the human (their sinful, and yet free will), does this doctrine not also elide the difference between God willed activity and human willed activity? Does it not problematize the difference between God and the human *as such*? For surely the divinely inspired actions of the human are in fact divine actions.[63]

[63] Although his analysis has a slightly different focus from my own, we find a similar reading of the implications of the Calvinistic doctrine of providence in Taylor's *After God* (2007). He remarks that, "the affirmation of human impotence and divine omnipotence leads to the unexpected identification of God with self and by extension world" (2007, 73). Taylor's contributions to these questions will be examined in more detail at the end of this chapter.

We will see this question reconfigured throughout our analysis of Weber, because, fundamentally it arises out of a tension within his own thought. That is, his desire to both affirm and deny the religious roots of profane capitalism. For the moment it is necessary only to acknowledge the existence of this tension wherein divine immanence imposes itself at the heart of divine transcendence. We shall see how Weber deals with it in due course.

Returning to our argument we can see that the negation of human agency implied by the doctrine of predestination strikes a deep cord with Weber's sociological concerns.[64] In the PE he is interested in understanding how a doctrine that displaces the human from what are normally considered to be the sources of their hope for betterment (i.e. their agency, free will, autonomy and so forth) actually engenders an active engagement with the world. As he rightly pointed out, one would think that the doctrine of predestination would lead to a culture of fatalism. Why try to act in accordance with God's plan, to be a better Christian, if one's fate is decided before they were even born? Why not just go out and enjoy life, indulge in sin, if indeed such actions cannot affect your chances of salvation?

[64] We are also beginning to see that questions about human agency raised by Weber's narrative of capitalism's genesis intersects with larger debates around the location of power and authority. As we saw in the Chapter Two, theories affirming the orthodox notion of secularization often rely on what Rizzo calls a "secular anthropology" (2009, 2); that is, a notion of the human as self-sufficient, an autonomous agent in control of their own historical destiny. In the previous chapter we found that many theorists locate the origins for this decisively modern concept of the human in the process of disenchantment described by Weber, and thus in the detachment between the divine and the human said to be indigenous to Judaism and ascetic Protestantism. In this chapter we will see that Weber's account of Calvinism, seemingly in support of this humanist claim, actually unsettles its conceptual basis.

Surprisingly, as Weber goes on to show, the doctrine had quite the opposite effect. The ascetic Protestants were most diligent in their worldly tasks. They were unfailingly committed to changing the world, to improving it, and themselves, in line with their hopes for salvation. The question for Weber then, was why.

Weber points out that in the adherence to the doctrine of predestination there is a shift from the question of what could be done to affect salvation, into what could be done to *recognise* its worldly effects. He notes that because salvation could not be won by a life-time of good works, by faithful devotion, or by strict observance of the sacraments, it became very important for the Puritan to ascertain the *already-determined* status of their grace (PE, 153).[65] As Weber explains, because nothing could be done to effect salvation, "the *certitudo salutis* in the sense of the recognizability of the state of grace necessarily became of absolutely dominant importance". (PE, 110)

[65] Hegel provides us with an interesting alternative to Weber. He states that the notion of a wholly transcendent God posits essence outside existence. Thus the essence, meaning, or agency of the human, is located in a transcendent beyond. The only thing connecting the human subject to this beyond is a set of ethical injunctions – the Ten Commandments, or Torah. This impels the human towards a life of ethical action as an attempt to recover their displaced essence, becoming re-united with it through submission to the covenant. Thus the manifest notion of "pleasing" the divine, or determining one's state of grace, is actually, at heart, an attempt to re-unite the self with itself (see Taylor: 1982, 2-7).

One can certainly understand why the individual living under this doctrine would try to seek a means by which they could overcome the "unprecedented inner loneliness"[66] of this situation. They must have felt an urgent need to affirm their membership in God's "true church". For a believing Christian the alternative was almost too horrible to consider. However, the idea that an infallible criteria could be determined through which grace could be known positively is anything but straightforward for ascetic forms of Protestantism.

The twentieth century theologian, Paul Tillich, articulates exactly why *recognizing* grace can be problematic.

> It is obvious that a Protestant principle cannot admit any identification of grace with a *visible reality*, not even with the church on its visible side. But the negation of a visible 'Gestalt of grace' does not imply the negation of the concept as such. The church in its *spiritual quality*, as an object of faith, is a 'Gestalt of grace'. (Tillich: 1957, xvii, emphasis added)

Tillich's comments here alert us to the nature of the relationship ascetic Protestantism has with "the idolatrous letter". Grace, it is claimed, may very well have a recognizable side. It may be, at least theoretically, intelligible and thus knowable. However, this gestalt can only ever be spiritual. It is suprasensible. And so we might ask, how can a suprasensible "spiritual side",

[66] Weber tells us that the individual "was forced to follow his path alone to meet a destiny which had been decreed for him from eternity. No one could help him. No priest, for the chosen one can understand the word of God only in his own heart" (PE, 104).

something which is beyond the material, be seen? How does one identify a spirit? What does it look like, and in what language does it speak?

An Invisible Gestalt of Grace

In more immediate terms, the pressing question is how the Calvinist tradition responded to the understandable need to know whether one had been chosen for a life of salvation, or whether they were damned for eternity. The answer to this question is axiomatic to Weber's thesis. As we shall see, it takes a number of different forms throughout the text. At times the Calvinist answer to the question of grace's recognizability seems to support Weber's thesis that Protestantism remained thoroughly iconoclastic and disenchanted to the last. However, at other times their responses to this question appear to suggest quite the opposite, and we are left wondering if ascetic Protestantism has not supported an idolatrous relationship with the sensible sign.

As these two terms, idolatry/iconoclasm, provide the architectural support for much of my own intervention into Weber's argument, it is worth pausing briefly here to remind ourselves exactly what they mean, and what they imply for Protestantism's relationship to the sensible sign.

As many see it, Christian theology has always regarded God as outside language, and beyond representation. If God has a positive definition at all, it is simply that He is *the* Beyond

of all thought, all language, and all representation.[67] As the 18th century Danish theologian Soren Kierkegaard says, God is the absolute different (1962, 55-57). Thus He escapes any economy of the same, any structure of "making equivalent" that would claim to be able to re-present Him. For this reason it is untenable that God could be reduced to a material sign, for that would infer that we can know something of God's infinite and transcendent nature through the finite words used to represent it. In other words, as Calvin scholar, Alexandre Ganoczy, puts it, "[s]ince God is by nature spiritual and invisible, it is not only forbidden but absurd to express or represent him by material images" (1987, 198-199).

This reasoning is often invoked to explain Calvin's perceived iconoclasm. As we know, an iconoclastic movement swept across many parts of Europe in the wake of the Reformation. This movement saw to the removal (at times violent and by force) of images, statues, crucifixes, stained-glass and paintings from places of worship. Citing the section in Deuteronomy forbidding the worship of graven images, enthusiastic Reformers sought to purge the Christian religion of a paganistic idolatry they perceived to have been cultivated by the Roman Catholic Church. As many of the proponents of this movement claimed, Catholicism had replaced the only appropriate image of God - that which, according to Paul, is written on the heart by the Spirit – with false idols, inanimate images created by human hands. In doing so, they had "confused the things of this world with the things of the next" and had, therefore, committed the sin of idolatry (Dixon-Graham: 1996, 35).

[67] We see this particularly in apophatic discourse, or as many call it, "negative theology": see Derrida: 1987; Hart: 1989; Laclau: 1997.

Although he never advocated the violent destruction of what he called "dead images" of God, Calvin did endorse the orderly removal of all material images and icons from places of worship. However, as Zachmann points out, he did so to allow the faithful to attend to the "living images" of God: those which arise in our *spiritual* encounter with Christ (Zachmann: 2007, 8; see also *Institutes*: 1, 6, 96).[68] The distinction between material and spiritual images is important, and we shall return to it shortly. For the moment we need to see how this background of iconoclasm, which insisted on the radical heterogeneity of spiritual truth and

[68] Zachmann argues that although Calvin argued that God is as different from flesh as fire is from water (Zachmann: 2007, 5), he also believed that the invisible God could be made somewhat visible (2007, 1): in scripture, as well as in the important rituals of churchly life, such as the sacrament of communion. As Zachmann explains with respect to the communion, the sacramental bread consumed at the Lord's Supper is a true symbol of the divine. That is to say, it truly exhibits the thing it represents: the spiritual nourishment Christ's risen-body can offer us (Zachmann: 2007, 439).

However, and this is an important qualification, the revelation of God's nature in these encounters is of an essentially spiritual and non-material nature. It is conditioned by a movement of transcendence where the human momentarily leaves the fleshly, finite and material nature of worldly existence behind. As another Calvin scholar, the theologian Laura Smit, qualifies, the encounter between the human and the divine that takes place within the sacrament of the communion does not occur in the way that the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation (as she interprets it) presumes. That is, God is not drawn down into the material, or made flesh (Smit: 2009, 9). Rather, in our relationship to the symbol of Christ we are drawn "upwards", given a foretaste of the wedding feast that awaits us in our final union with Christ in heaven. As Smit puts it, humanity is ushered into the presence of the Godhead on the condition that we "are lifted into heaven with him" (Smit: 2009, 10). To pre-empt a discussion that will follow shortly, Calvin's semiology thus presumes that, before meeting with God through the earthly or created symbol, we must first discard the "outer shell" of materiality.

sensible representations of it, informed the way the Calvinist tradition thought about signs of grace or election.

In his discussion of the question of *certitudo salitus* Weber tells us that Calvin rejected "in principle the assumption that one can learn from the conduct of others whether they were chosen or damned" to be one of God's elect (PE, 110). He said, "[t]he elect differ externally in this life in no way from the damned; and even all the subjective experiences of the chosen are… possible for the damned with the single exception of that *finaliter* expectant, trusting faith. The elect are thus, and remain, God's *invisible* Church" (PE, 110, emphasis added for invisible).

Like Tillich, Calvin denies that sensible reality has the ability to properly signify grace. Calvin suggests that external forms are fundamentally inadequate as indicators of God's truth. He also suggests that this inadequacy lies in their deceptive character: the damned may appear to be one of the elect, and may even feel the same way as them, but this appearance of being chosen can be incommensurate with the *reality* of being chosen. In other words, external, sensible forms have a duplicitous quality in that they can appear to be what they are not.

What Calvin is saying here is that the exterior-sensible is capable of being *other to itself*. Its material form is not necessarily or immediately connected to its soul in the way that God's logos is. This is what makes it a wholly unreliable, even promiscuous, indicator of the truth. We should be careful to point out a subtle distinction at this point. Calvin does not deny, in any absolute sense, the possibility that grace may show itself in an "external" form. He merely suggests that amongst the true representations of grace, those who appear to be and really are

elect, there will also be false representations of grace, those who merely *appear* to be elect (see *Institutes*: 4, i.7; see also, McGrath: 1990, 170). Thus the sensible representation *may* be correct at times. The logic of Calvin's argument makes it clear that the veracity of any representation must be determined by comparing it to something other to it. That is to say, an interior, spiritual realm determines the ultimate truth of the sensible.

Weber himself, though for different reasons, makes a passing reference to this opposition between external and internal representations of the truth in the RRW essay. There he says that, "all sublimated religions of salvation [of which ascetic Protestantism is exemplary] have focused upon the *meaning alone*, not upon the form, of the things and actions relevant for salvation. Salvation religions have devalued form as contingent, as something creaturely and distracting from meaning" (RRW, 341, emphasis added).

In this tradition, sensible form, the carnal signifier, the written letter, the body of the sign, materiality in general, have been repudiated as "distracting from meaning". That is, they have been understood as being external to, or distanced from, the *source* of meaning. The logic of this bifurcation singles out faith as an exception to the repudiated externality of the sensible sign.

As we saw previously, Protestantism conceived of faith as a *direct* effect of the presence of grace. As Tillich puts it, "we are grasped by grace, and this is only another way of saying we have faith. Grace creates the faith through which it is received" (Tillich: 1948, xvii). Faith is thus linked in an immediate, unbroken sense, to the grace from which it proceeds. It is a tautological closed-circuit passing directly from God to the individual, from "sender" to

"receiver", without mediation or translation. Thus the subjective experience of faith *directly* translates an objective truth, a truth which is outside representation, and through which it is justified *as* true.

This tautology marries God, truth, mind and spirit in a single unity that claims to be able to take place without reference to, or dependence upon, material forms of mediation. In the doctrine of faith the truth thus remains an internal, non-sensible act of translation. It is an *invisible gestalt of grace*. This logic grants a privileged status to the interior (of the body) which is justified by the presumed unity that grace has with faith. In this passage the sensible sign, the mediated translation, and the body itself, where they cannot be dispensed with outright, are reduced to the status of supplements: they become *secondary* effects, dislocated in time and space from the unity of God, truth and faith.

The esoteric nature of this discussion may seem to fall far from the sociological questions with which we are dealing: the question of the exact nature of the relationship between mundane economics and religious practice, what the spiritual status of capitalism might be, and how well the secularization thesis addresses the strange paradoxes that seem to plague all attempts to differentiate the human milieu from the activity of the spirit. However, as we shall see, the Protestant problematic of how grace can be recognized has a register within all of these questions. This relationship can be made clearer through what is often referred to as "the language question". To understand why the ascetic Protestants, and the Western philosophical tradition generally, have understood the material form to be a distraction from meaning, we need to investigate the very ancient question of how language relates to the truth of the world (and indeed, to God's truth).

The Truth Behind the Sign

Calvin's understanding of language is exemplary of a particular tradition of Western metaphysics. This metaphysical tradition extends from the early Church Fathers right through to recent theological responses to "the language question". However, its roots lie in Greek metaphysics, particularly in the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle (see Derrida: 1976, Rutledge: 1994, Handelman: 1982).

> To this epoch belongs the difference between signified and signifier, or at least to the strange separation of their 'parallelism', and the exteriority, however extenuated, of the one to the other… the difference between signifier and signified belongs in a profound and implicit way to the totality of the great epoch covered by the history of metaphysics, and in a more explicit and more systematically articulated way to the narrower epoch of Christian creationism and infinitism when these appropriate the resources of Greek conceptuality. (Derrida: 1976, 13)

The Platonic conception of language is foundational to what Derrida identifies here as the history of the metaphysical opposition between signified/signifier, idea/body, essence/expression, concept/sensation. A clear outline of the "parallelism" of these bifurcated pairings can be found in Plato's *Cratylus* (1998), in the dialogue between Socrates, Hermogenes and Cratylus. In that discussion Socrates argues for what Susan Handelman calls a "silent ontology" in which the truth of things is sought in an ideal realm beyond language (1982, 4).

The question with which the *Cratylus* dialogue opens is whether or not language, or the names of things, is merely a system of conventional signs used to indicate things by common agreement, or if it actually reflects, in some non-arbitrary way, the truth about the things it names. Hermogenes contends that names are simply based on convention: "no name belongs to a particular thing by nature, but only because of the rules and usage of those who establish the usage and call it by that name" (1998, 2). Hermogenes' view is that language is conventional and connected to "the things named" only in an arbitrary way. "I call a thing by the name I gave it; you call it by the different name you gave it. In the same way, I see that each different city has different names for the same things – Greeks differing from other Greeks, and Greeks from foreigners" (1998, 3).

Cratylus' view is quite the opposite. He believes that "a name expresses a thing by being like it" (1998, 85). Names are able to signify the essence or nature of a thing because the elements from which they are composed are *naturally* like the elements of the natures of those things (1998, 85). He tells us that words or names are vocal *imitations* of things. Thus when they are assigned correctly, they reflect the true nature of the things they name. According to Cratylus the material surface of language can be used to access true being, in its essence.

In the context of our own discussion, Cratylus' position collapses the parallelism between the created sign and the reality is signifies. Or, at least, it contends that when "assigned correctly", one is accessible through the other. When pressed by Socrates as to how this representational relationship between names and the nature of the things themselves could have arisen, Cratylus presents us with a genesis story not unlike the Biblical story of Adam naming the animals. He says that the first name-giver would have truly known the nature of

things because he/she would have apprehended them *directly*. This nomothete would thus have named them according to their natures, preserving a connection between essence and its sensible representation. Cratylus' understanding of name (*onamata*, or word) capitalizes on the literal sense of representation as a re-presenting of the "thing itself". The word is capable of bringing forth the thing, in its self-presence, in the vocal utterance that is used to speak of it.[69]

Socrates seems to weave between these two positions contending that "I myself prefer the view that names should be as much like things as possible…. [but] we have to make use of this worthless thing, convention, in the correctness of names", such that we are understood according to usage (1998, 87). However, after agreeing with Cratylus that best way of speaking consists "in using names all (or most) of which are like the things they name" (1998, 87), Socrates begins to unravel a subtle logic that suggests that there is a discernable difference between names and the things that they name, and that, in fact, language is of an entirely different nature to that of things in themselves.

[69] This raises a number of puzzling questions. If the name and thing are alike in nature, if one stands directly in relation to the other, then why doesn't the name simply manifest the thing? And if there is a difference between the nature of things and a language that accurately reflects the nature of things, how could one determine the simulacra from the real? This question invites us to think about the nature of difference itself, and if one difference is the same as another. If the thing and its representation, no matter how "true to it" it may be, are of a different nature, one *being the thing*, the other simply being a vocal *imitation*, then what is the difference between a true reflection and a false one? Why differentiate and oppose different forms of expression, privileging some over others? For an insightful discussion of these questions see Derrida: 1981.

To illustrate this Socrates asks Cratylus what the function of names might be (1998, 87). Cratylus replies that names are designed to give instruction. “After all, the simple truth is that anyone who knows a thing’s name also knows the thing” (1998, 88). In response to this Socrates poses a perplexing question. If indeed names do reflect things, how can we know this? What measure can be used to determine the veracity of a name with respect to the reality it re-presents?

He asks us to imagine the originary moment of naming. If we know things through their names, as Cratylus suggests, how could the first nomothete have known things sufficiently in their nature to name them, considering that the names did not yet exist (1998, 88)? This leads Socrates to surmise that there must be a more primordial way of knowing things that precedes the naming and enables it to take place. He contends that you must begin with the things themselves, and only then can you determine if a name fits the reality it is designed to represent.

> [S]ince there’s a civil war among names, with some claiming that they are like the truth and others claiming that *they* are like the truth, how are we to judge between them, and what are we to start from?…. it’s clear we’ll have to look for something other than names, something that will make plain to us without using names which of these two kinds of names are the true ones – that is to say, the ones that express the truth about the things that are. (Plato: 1998, 92)

As Calvin did with respect to the duplicity of “external appearances”, Socrates holds up a self-present, primordial, immutable truth, as the measure against which the veracity of

sensible representations can be determined (1998, 93). In this model essence is posited outside and prior to language. And it is contended that even when language is “fitting”, and the names are “correct”, language as a whole is derivative of a truth that pre-exists and therefore establishes it, outside the vagaries of its multivalent nature. The aim of knowledge then, becomes a process of transcendence, moving beyond language in order to apprehend the nature of things in-themselves.

The exact nature of this movement of transcendence though, seems to leave Socrates at a loss.

> How to learn and make discoveries about the things that are is probably too large a topic for you and me. But we should be content to have agreed that it is far better to investigate them and learn about them through themselves than to do so through their names. (1998, 93)

This problematic is similar to that of how grace, something that has no register in the sensible world, can be known by sensible, finite and creaturely beings. It cuts straight to the heart of the existential question of what human knowledge is, and how it relates to the world. What chance can the finite creature have of certainty of salvation, indeed of self-certainty as such, in the face of this seemingly inviolable transcendence? In as much as the human is *not God*, that is, is on the other side of the Truth in its self-present self-relation, what happens to our notions of evidence, intuition and adjudication? Where can testimony find its supportive anchorage?

An answer to this question can be found with the help of Aristotle. Although differing from Plato's theory of language in appreciable ways, his understanding of essence can help to draw out the more subtle implications of Plato's theory. Aristotle also felt that the truth of being was located in a suprasensible realm. He employed a hierarchized system of representation to explain this. Aristotle thought that written signs were the representations of spoken words, and that spoken words were, in turn, representations of mental images. Mental experiences, although also a form of representation – being "images" of the things in their essence – were thought to reflect things by natural resemblance (Derrida: 1976, 11). For Aristotle, essence is the first present, the present before its re-presentation. And mental images are situated closest to this.

Thoughts, mental images, "affections of the soul" (Handelman: 1982, 9), concepts: in Aristotle's schema, the internal representation has a privileged access to the essence of things because they are *alike in nature*. Aristotle claims that this affinity is grounded in their common quality of constancy and immutability. He backs up this claim by pointing out that material representations, written or spoken, "are not the same for all men". They are contingent, culturally bound and variable across time and place. Concepts, on the other hand, are constant and universal. They remain the same for all men and women, irrespective of the cultural or temporal context in which they arise: "just as all men have not the same writing so all men have not the same speech sounds, but mental experiences… are the same for all, as also are those things of which our experiences are images" (cited in Derrida: 1976, 11).

The immutable, universal nature of the concept makes it a reliable translator of the truth of things because Aristotle (and Plato) also regarded being as universal, stable and

unchanging. Therefore, there is a natural affinity between mind/soul[70] and essence. A very similar conception of truth and the concept's privileged relationship to it emerges in the closing stages of Socrates' dialogue with Cratylus.

Throughout the dialogue Cratylus has based his understanding of the relationship between names and things on what might be called a Heraclitean ontology.[71] He has insisted that words have the ability to reflect the nature of being accurately, and that we can know this because they express motion, and the essence of things is also, "always moving and flowing" (1998, 93). The common factor of flux suggests to Cratylus that there must be a natural affinity between Being and language.

As the argument between Socrates and Cratylus comes to a close, Socrates raises an objection to Cratylus' Hericliteanism. He tells the younger man that "the name-givers themselves have fallen into a kind of vortex and are whirled around in it, dragging us with them" (1998, 93). The essence of things, Socrates interjects, is in fact of the opposite kind proposed by Cratylus. "[A]s it happens things aren't really that way at all" (1998, 93). Things as they really are – being in-itself – is immutable. Putting this differently, Socrates claims that the nature of being is to be unchanging and self-identical.

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[70] Aristotle uses the Greek word *psyche* (Handelman: 1982, 8). However *psyche* can mean both soul and mind (Plato: 1998, 30).

[71] As David Sedley notes in his commentary on the *Cratylus* dialogue (see Plato: 2003), Socrates attributes the following theory of "radical flux" to the ancient philosopher Heraclitus: "I think that 'all things are on the move and nothing remains', and in comparing the things there are to the flow of a river he says, 'You could not step in the same river twice'" (cited in Plato: 2003, 104).

To illustrate this point Socrates meditates on the nature of beauty, posing the question of the existence of "a beautiful in-itself" (1998, 93). Beauty, or indeed, the truth of beauty, Socrates suggests, can only be *such*, that is the absolute truth of "the beautiful", if it is unchanging. Socrates points out that the truth of Beauty-in-itself, as opposed to the ephemeral beauty of a human face, must remain constant, because "if it is always passing away, can we correctly say that it is *this*, and then that it is *such and such*" (1998, 94, emphasis in original)? Pushing the point further Socrates asks, "if it never stays the same, how can it *be* something" (94, emphasis added)?

Socrates anchors his argument in the original question of human knowledge of the truth of things. He points out that if, in this vertiginous flux, "at the very instant the knower-to-be approaches, what he is approaching is becoming a different thing, of a different character … [then] he can't yet come to know either what sort of thing it is or what it is like" (1998, 94). What Socrates is saying here is that truth is true only in so far as it is *true to itself*. Thus Plato poses identity as self-identity and presence or essence as a self-presence that is absolutely opposed to difference.

If we recall Aristotle's definition of the concept, we can see that although language is contingent, variable, conventional – sometimes correct, sometimes false – the mind retains its status as a direct indicator of truth, essence, identity and being. Furthermore, in so far as the products of the mind (that is, concepts) are immutable, universal and eternal, they become, in the Christianized version of this theory, divine-like. And it is within this context that the presumed exteriority of God to the human, and its knowledge of the world, begins to unravel.

The Road to Damascus: From Athens to England, via Jerusalem

As we have just seen, Greek metaphysics understands the concept to be a pure ideality. It exists prior to and independently of language. And in its transcendent, self-identical, immutable character it stands in direct relation to the truth. Significantly, as the work of Jacques Derrida, Susan Handleman and others have shown, at a certain historical moment this metaphysical conception of language also became the regulating ideal for Christian theology (see Derrida: 1976, 13; Handleman: 1982, 1-4; Rutledge: 1996, 59-60). Moreover, as Taylor and Hart argue, the insights of Greek metaphysics became almost interchangeable with broader aspects of the Western Christian tradition (see Taylor: 2007; Hart: 1989).[72]

This is particularly evident in the Christian ideal of God as the transcendent centre of truth. As David Rutledge points out, "this idea is an idea reproduced in the Pauline concept of a transcendent God in whom the absolute truth rests" (1996, 60). As we know, the nomenclature used to describe God's "holy and unrepresentable" nature carry the same connotations as the Platonic concept. God is said to be "infinite and infallible". He is

[72] Hart also argues that (largely post-structuralist) critics of the Greek/Christian metaphysical tradition have tended to focus only on the "onto-theological" elements within Christian theology; what he also calls "positive theology". Such critics, many of whom followed Derrida's deconstruction of the logocentricism implicit in this tradition, have neglected to attend to the more radical, deconstructive dimensions of Christian theology. Hart nominates the mystical tradition as this radical element. He argues that mystical theology is itself a mode of deconstruction (Hart: 1989, 61). Expanding on this claim, Hart analyses a series of works by negative theologians to demonstrate that "negative theology reveals a non-metaphysical theology at work in positive theology" (Hart: 1989, 104).

“eternal”, “without parts”, “most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute, working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will” (WC, 9). Like the Platonic concept, God is thought to be self-sufficient. His existence is wholly independent of all other beings. He precedes other beings, and in Him they find their cause. “His knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature, so as nothing is to him contingent, or uncertain” (WC, 11)

Nothing is more exemplary of this “auto-affectivity” of the concept (Derrida: 1976) than the biblical story of Genesis. In the first chapter of the Bible it says that God created the world *ex nihilo*, out of nothing. In contrast to other genesis stories popular in the region when the cultus of Yahweh began, the Jewish God acted alone to create (Berger: 1973, 122). No other subordinate gods, emissaries, or mates assisted. And in the act of creation, He used nothing more than His Word to create the heavens, the earth, the seas and mountains and all the creatures that would populate it. God did not have to perform a spell, combine immutable forms with material substance, or rely upon any external forms of technology. Indeed as Derrida puts it in a slightly different context, citing the eminent Egyptologist, Sauneron, “[t]he initial God had only to *speak* to create; and the beings and things evoked were born through his voice” (1981, 93).

In the initial, creative God, speaking and being are caught in a relation of pure immediacy. There is no break, no fissure, no moment of disarticulation or mediation in this auto-affective Logos. God needs no other tools, no technology and no assistance in creating with His voice *exactly* what he intends. Therefore, His creative Logos unites intention, word and effect, perfectly in a single undifferentiated act of generation.

This is what Derrida refers to as "a signified able to 'take place' in its intelligibility, before its 'fall', before any expulsion into the exteriority of the sensible here below" (1976, 13). By this Derrida means that the signified content of God's logos, his intention, is intelligible to God before it enters the (all too human) mediating technology of language. It does not need this technology, and thus can claim an *a priori* existence outside of the material texture of language.

Taking this further, Handleman points out that in the Bible the originating Word of God is translated by the Greek word *logos* – meaning spirit, breath, mind, and reason, as well as discourse or word. The Greek translation thus avoids the use of the word *onoma*, meaning word or name (1982, 3) when describing the logos. Thus unlike the name, God's word is not a material tag, a signifier attached to a concept. It is a nonmaterial, noncontingent concept: a spirit which speaks and engenders with the voice. Or as Derrida says, the logos is "pneumatological": "it is hieratic, very close to the interior holy voice … the voice one hears upon retreating into oneself" (Derrida: 1976, 17).

The pneumatological understanding of God's logos marginalizes materiality. It is a spiritual "content of its own". Like the Platonic concept, it idealizes a transcendental, self-present, spiritualized truth that can exist beyond the vagaries of mediation and interpretation, in short, *outside of language as such*. Thus the logos divides language internally, siphoning off the material parts of language from the conceptual or spiritual parts. In this way it produces language as a bipartite structure, privileging the conceptual aspect as the seat of truth, and

reducing the material texture of language to the status of a secondary, unnecessary element in the creative-communicative act.

This logic enables the Puritan moralist, Dowden, to declare that "[t]he deepest community (with God) is found not in institutions or corporations or churches, but in the secrets of a solitary heart" (cited in PE, 221). In other words, community with God takes place in the interior domain of the heart-soul where the voice of God can speak directly, by way of the Spirit and thus without words. Or, as Handleman remarks, "truth is achieved by discarding the outer shell (the materiality of language) for the inner thought" (1982, 14).

To clarify what has just been said. In the Greek metaphysical tradition adopted by Christian theology, God is posited as an absolute outside with respect to the materiality of language. His self-relation is such that one cannot even imagine any relationship arising between the ideality of the logos and materiality *that would not* compromise the transcendent and autonomous nature of God. To access the truth of which God is origin and author, one must, as Handleman points out, transcend the material. However, as we shall see, this transcendence of matter can only make sense if it is taken to the point of its erasure: an excision of difference that has curious consequences for the question of divine presence.

Seeking a Body for the Spirit

This pneumatological understanding of language is the ideal that informed Calvin's official doctrine of grace. As stated earlier, Calvin believed that trusting faith was the only truly acceptable form of envisioning *certitudo salutis*. However, as Weber tells us, this idealist-spiritualist determination of the *certitudo salutis* could not be maintained in its purity. "Quite

naturally this attitude was impossible for his followers as early as Beza, and, above all, for the broad mass of ordinary men" (PE, 110). The followers of Calvin wanted something more concrete than this invisible, interiorized category of faith to secure their confidence in salvation. They wanted infallible criteria that could be known positively, in its objectivity. Tracking what will undoubtedly sound like an unreasonable shift away from its own iconoclastic foundations, Weber tells us that although the official doctrine never abandoned the criteria of faith, pastoral advice in the Reformed Churches began to recommend another criteria by which grace could be known. In an apparently radical contradiction they decided that grace could be determined by "making fast one's own call" (PE, 111).

> The Calvinist also wanted to be saved *sola fides*. But since Calvin viewed all pure feelings and emotions, no matter how exalted they might seem to be, with suspicion, faith had to be proved by its objective results… It must be a *fides efficax*, the call to salvation an effectual calling (PE, 114) …. For [o]nly one of the elect really has the *fides efficax*, only he is able by virtue of his rebirth and the resulting sanctification of his whole life, to augment the glory of God by real, and not merely apparent, good works. (PE, 114)

Fides efficax: an effective faith, a faith that produces effects. The doctrine of the *fides efficax* indicates that grace may be identified through its *worldly* effects. Further, it claims that God's "invisible church" is able to reveal its grace through these effects. As the Savoy Declaration puts it, the members of the *ecclesia pura*… are saints by effectual calling, visibly manifested by their profession and their walking" (PE, 231).

In light of our previous discussion of Greek and Christian metaphysics, the logic of this doctrine must sound puzzling. We see here that grace is said to be recognizable by its worldly expression, in the success one has at their callings, and thus also, in the achievement of achieving material well-being. It goes so far as to suggest that one's state of grace can be determined simply by gauging their profession and their walking. In this way the *fides efficax* places the spirit in a referential relation to the worldly activity with which it can be identified – in short, with external appearances. This marks an equivalence between the spiritual category of grace and 'things of a worldly nature', where the presence of one is used to indicate the presence of the other. That is, rationalized labour and its fruits can act as an equivalent[73] to the presence of grace. Here, the exterior takes the place of, or enters a referential relationship with, the purity of the spirit.

The concept of a visibly effectual faith seems to utterly contradict Calvin's denial that grace could be ascertained in the external conduct of people. It seems to compromise the transcendence of the divine by claiming the truth of God's grace is knowable, and knowable through the sensible signifier. As we know, the Puritans rejected created signs as external to the truth. Even the sacraments of the Church were considered to be the *"externa subsidia"* of faith. The truth, especially God's truth, was transcendent, and thus utterly alien to material

[73]I am using the Marxian notion of the equivalent here. In his theory of economic value, Marx states that each commodity has both a use-value and an exchange-value. The exchange-value is a purely relative term, wherein one thing accrues its value by being exchangeable for another thing. This "other thing" is the equivalent. It acts as the exchange, and embodies the relative value of the commodity. That is, the equivalent gives the relative value, something that is nominally *without substance*, a body (in the use-value). "[E]very commodity is compelled to choose some other commodity for its equivalent, and to accept the use-value, that is to say, the bodily shape of that other commodity as the form of its own value" (Marx: 1954, 62).

forms. And yet, in the *fides efficax* the spiritual, non-visible, non-sensible experience of faith becomes translatable into visible, created, worldly signs. The profane itself is appropriated as a sign of God's presence. How can we make sense of this apparent inversion of the most basic tenet of Protestant theology? Is this the first symptom of the elusive secularization of which Weber will eventually speak? In short, can we interpret the identification of grace with its material effects as the beginning of a love of the world, and demotion of the spirit to a mere material thing?

Let us explore this hypothesis further. The *fides efficax* appear to invert the absolute bifurcation that ascetic Protestantism maintained between the spirit and the flesh. It attributes a body to the spirit, and claims that worldly activity is able to materialize God in/as the mundane. The becoming-capitalism of ascetic Protestantism would thus be explained by the *equivalence* of the labour of the spirit with worldly labour. It would acknowledge that the identification of God's gift with a material sign (worldly success) compromised the purity of divine alterity by re-formulating it as a part of the temporal order, comprehensible through the sensible signifier. In other words, the doctrine of effectual faith would have opened the ascetic spirit up to the contamination of the outside, and enabled a conflation between spirit and flesh to take place.

This reading would suggest that the elevation of worldly activity to the status of *certitudo salutis* put the incorporeal spirit to work for the flesh and, in the process, this making-equivalent of incommensurate categories confused the proper for the improper and caused people to mistake gold for God (Derrida: 1994, 52). This confusion of God and gold, where

one can be taken for the other, indeed, where one can *be* the other, would be the reason for Weber's contention that the *fides efficax* legitimated successful capitalist behaviour.

What we have described above is a kind of secularization of the spirit, where the spirit is transposed onto a material culture only to then be replaced by it. However, in acknowledging that the *fides efficax* lead to the corruption of the spirit, we would also have to acknowledge that some commerce between those apparently incommensurate categories exists. In order that grace could find itself articulated within the material register of worldly economic activity, indeed where it could be identified *as* that economic labour, suggests that spirit and flesh are translatable one into the other, and have some natural affinity. But wouldn't this suggest that there is some trace, some residual hint of the enchanted, the idolatrous, the fetishistic, in ascetic Protestantism?

Despite wanting to prove that capitalism was born out of a concern for salvation, and was, in fact, the spiritual child of ascetic Protestantism, Weber was not willing to acknowledge this commerce between the spirit and the flesh. He wanted the iron-cage of capitalism to be seen as a liberation from ascetic ideals, as an evacuation of its spirit, rather than a testimony to their commerce. Weber desired to maintain the other-worldliness of ascetic Protestant faith, and the corresponding worldliness of "its utilitarian successor" (PE, 176). To do this, it was important that God remained on the other-side, entirely separable from mundane economic action and material signs.

But how is Weber able to maintain this distinction in a doctrine that asserts the conflation of spirit and flesh, and the identification of worldly activity with its divine origin?

We have quoted only parts of Weber's explanation of the determination of *certitudo salutis* as a *fides efficax*. To understand how the *fides efficax*, as Weber reads it, maintains the radical bifurcation between the spirit and the flesh, we must now turn to its fullest expression.

Transcending the Flesh: The Labour of the Spirit

> Only one of the elect really has the *fides efficax*, only he is able by virtue of his rebirth and the resulting sanctification of his whole life, to augment the glory of God by real, and not merely apparent, good works. It was through the consciousness that his conduct, at least in its fundamental character and constant ideal, rested on *a power within himself* working for the glory of God; that it is not only willed of God but rather *done by God* that he attained the highest good towards which this religion strove, certainty of salvation. (PE, 114, emphasis added except *fides efficax*)

Like the other excerpts quoted from this passage, Weber confirms here that worldly works can be used to determine the presence or absence of grace. However, in this more complete citation, we can see the emergence of a new kind of logic that thoroughly complicates our previous interpretation that in the *fides efficax* grace was given a physical, worldly form.

Let us look closely at what Weber is saying here. He tells us that the *fides efficax* are only considered to be a sign of God's gift when a power is at work within the individual, guiding his/her actions from within. It is by virtue of this spiritual agent working within the individual that his/her actions are elevated from "merely apparent" to the status of "real works". That is

to say, the *fides efficax* are qualified to speak for God's truth only when it is God who speaks through them.

It is God, not the creaturely subject, who is agent of the *fides efficax*. As we will recall, the Protestant doctrine of faith states that the human plays no part in the reception of grace. Grace comes from God. It produces faith as its first and most immediate effect, and this faith produces effects in the world, (designed to bring glory to God). All of the agency played out in this "working relationship" is anchored in God. It owes nothing to the body of the human labourer through which it is performed.

The *fides efficax* then, are what Tillich refers to as "theonomous signs" (1948, xii). They are cultural artefacts in which the ultimate meaning of existence, that is, God, shines *through* their finitude. They are transparent "vessels of spiritual content" (1948, xii), whose worldliness is eclipsed by the divinity of their origin. And so, unlike the idol or the fetish object, and unlike the profane *sign of* grace, the spirit that animates this worldly thing does not remain "caught in the opaque and heavy things of the *hule*" (Derrida: 1994, 192). Rather, the worldliness of the economic action, its flesh and finitude, is transcended by the spirit labouring within it.

Thus the *fides efficax*, although seemingly worldly and human, are actually a form of spiritual labour. We might call it the labour of the spirit in the world. As Weber says, the *fides efficax* are not only willed of God, but are done by God. Indeed, in so far as grace, faith, and its effects, are linked immediately to God, without reference to the materiality of its mediation or the body of the human itself, one could even say that the human becomes God in their reception of His faith. Which is to say, this is the labour of the spirit *in* the world, but it is

labour that is not undertaken *for* the world, and it is certainly not *of* this world either. The distinction between God as the object, and God as the agent of this action is critical, and its complexity does not pass Weber by.

> Christian asceticism… now strode into the market-place of life, slammed the door of the monastery behind it, and undertook to penetrate just that daily routine of life with its methodicalness, to fashion it into a life in the world, but *neither of nor for this world*. (PE, 154, emphasis added)

In Weber's own words the *fides efficax* are neither of, nor for, the world. They are of God, and they are undertaken for God. As they partake nothing of material existence there is something deeply tautological about this divine labour. It is self-relation where God unites His intention, objective and execution in a single, unbroken act of creation. It is the solo activity of the spirit illuminating, informing and building the Kingdom of God. And it does so *without reference to the human body* through which this transformative action takes place. The logic of this sentiment is conveyed by the letters of St. Paul when he say, "The word I spoke, the gospel I proclaimed, did not sway you with subtle arguments; it carried conviction by spiritual power, so that your faith might be built not upon human wisdom but upon the power of God" (1 COR 1, 2: 4-5). In this conception of spiritual labour the human body is an empty conduit through which an alien power passes. It is a passage without its own agency or, more importantly, its own presence.

Unlike the instrumental notion of the sign, where a signified is attached to an imperfect, but pragmatically necessary signifier, this spiritual monism doesn't strictly conform

to a bifurcated structure. It does not contain two individuated and antithetically opposed "parts". It is all God. And yet, with respect to the relationship between materiality and spirituality, the effect is the same. The body is erased and thus, with fidelity to the Platonic conception of the immutable truth of the concept, the *fides efficax* secures an independent existence for God outside of the material body of the human subject He is working through. What seemed to be idolatrous now once more becomes a profound form of iconoclasm.

Returning to the question of worldly labour, we have just seen that the doctrine of the *fides efficax*, as it is put to use by Weber, implies that God works in the world, and that his labour has real effects that are worldly. But because He labours without reference to, or reliance upon, a human body, then strictly speaking, He remains outside. Thus nothing *of the world* can be identified with that transcendent God. This is why Weber reminds us, again and again, that the Protestants were so frugal, and so dismissive of luxury – the only worthwhile activity was to labour for the glory of God. Nothing in the world other than that labour was important, because it was only the spiritual nature of that labour that connected you with the wholly distant God.

Transcendence turns into Immanence

We can see now that the logic governing the question of grace and its worldly effects, and the Calvinist identification of grace with those effects, is organized around a suppression of the technologies of mediation and the materiality of the human body through which God acts. This suppression transcends the material by erasing human agency, and affirming God as the sole agent of the *fides efficax*. This is a critical point and worth reiterating again.

As Roland Boer points out in his analysis of Calvin's theology of grace, Calvin's understanding of righteousness presumes nothing less than the annihilation of human agency (2009a, 45). To explain this, he tells us that in the conversion to righteousness the human subject is given a "heart of flesh" capable of goodness. This heart of flesh is good because it comes "from within God's very own being" (Boer: 2009a, 45). Significantly, the elevation to righteousness is possible only if what differentiates the human from God is "effaced" (Boer: 2009a, 47). "But what is to be annihilated? Nothing less than 'what is of ourselves' …" (Boer: 2009a, 45). In simple terms, God replaces the human's will with His own.

In the context of Weber's argument the blotting out of human agency is important because this act of erasure functions to keep the spirit safe from the corrupting taint of corporeality, and ascetic Protestantism from the accusation of idolatry. Fundamentally, by erasing the effective presence of the human, it maintains the spirit's absolute independence from it. But if this differentiation of the human body and the divine spirit seems to secure the absolute heterogeneity necessary for Weber to distinguish the spiritual labour of ascetic Protestantism from the earthly, human, mundane labour of capitalism, it does so only at the expense of more fundamental claims underpinning his broader sociological project. If God is the sole agent of the *fides efficax*, if God works alone in their production, then can we not also say that God is immanent within the world? If Calvinism denies the possibility of *any* human agency in this productive economic action, then are we to understand their origin as divine?

There are two implications of this insight that I would like to raise here before exploring them in greater detail in the following chapter. Firstly, let us return to the PE and see

how this insight alters Weber's characterization of modern capitalism as a religiously indifferent, utilitarian, worldly-oriented "cosmos".

As we know Weber's assessment of the spirit of capitalism as a secularized, spiritually evacuated version of the Protestant work ethic is based on the presumption that a corrupting force (wealth) intervened into the relationship between worldly action and its spiritual motivations, fracturing their intimacy and finally leading to their separation. Let us put aside the question of corruption for a moment and refamiliarize ourselves with the sociological basis of this claim.

As we have seen in previous chapters, Weber contends that all social-cultural systems are, or have been, informed by a moral universe in which the idea of the divine shapes their mundane form. The conception of the divine, whether it is transcendent, immanent, magical, singular or pantheonistic, informs moral-practical behaviours, which give rise to specific social and cultural practices. In the case of ascetic Protestantism the divine is a "morally demanding supra-mundane God" (Weber: 1948b, 291). God is an Other who does not just speak, but commands. And these commandments, to which salvation is tied, impel the community of believers towards rationalized ethical activity in accordance with His dictates (Weber: 1948b, 291). However, although this divine commandment adjoins the human, secular realm, opening up the secular to the influence of religious ideals, there is an essential difference between mundane economic activity and the conception of the divine that functions to inspire it. The commands come from afar. In Weber's understanding this means that the worldly and otherworldly are connected only instrumentally, and at a distance.

In such a relationship the individual is intimately connected to a *distanced* God. The will of God governs the individual's mundane actions, for everything he or she does is done with God's will in mind. However, there remains a critical difference, unsurpassable, and pure, between the "individual in need of salvation and the ethically demanding God" (Habermas: 1984, 212). Put simply, although a divine agent stands over and motivates mundane social and economic action, the world itself is dis-enchanted. God is absent.

As we know, Weber regarded the primary factor in ascetic Protestantism's rationalism, not to mention its role in the genesis of capitalism, to be a radicalization of this notion of the *transcendence* of God. It was by keeping God on the outside that Protestantism managed to help modern capitalism get started. And, in turn, it is this exteriority of the divine that also cleared the path for Weber to assert the consequent departure of capitalism from the influence of those former spiritual concerns. Moreover, to return to the discussion of modernity in the previous chapter, it is only our separation from God that allows us to develop a sense of autonomy and moral maturity appropriate to modern "man". To put it bluntly, secularization, rationalization, and finally modernization all find their explanation in some aspect of Protestant disenchantment.

This division is integral not only to Weber's work, as can be seen in his writings on religious rationalization, but also to many of those theorists informed by it. It is precisely this logic of mutual autonomy between the divine and the human that underpins the concept of a secular anthropology developed by theorists of secularization. We also see elements of this schema reconfigured in the notions of transposition and invisible secularization, employed by theorists like Bruce, Berger and Shiner, to explain how social institutions originally anchored in

spiritual beliefs and influenced by a strong concept of divine authority, could become independent of that root.

However, following the letter of Weber's own account of the doctrine of pre-destination we have found that it is difficult to locate a space of distance wherein divine presence could have been sufficiently disarticulated so as to free economic acquisition from its spiritualist ethos. Weber shows us that in the *fides efficax* spirit invades the human subject and, indeed, inhabits it. In this moment the believing Calvinist ceases to be an "instrument" of the divine, if we understand that to mean that their relationship respects a critical difference between the human and the divine. Rather, they become its *vessel*.

I'd like to pause for a moment and consider exactly what this means for Weber's analysis. In his elaboration of Calvin's doctrine of providence, Taylor notes the same paradox I have outlined in this chapter. He states that,

> [b]y pushing God's transcendence to the limit, Calvin unwittingly affirms divine immanence. If God is everything and I am nothing, then my deeds are never merely my own but are always also the expression of divine providence operating through me. (Taylor: 2007, 73)

Taylor goes on to conclude that this "implosion" of divine transcendence into its opposite "leads to the unexpected identification of God with self and by extension world" (2007, 73). The implications of this collapse of difference for Weber's PE argument are extraordinary, for it suggests that the material effects born out of the *fides efficax* – that is, the

rationalization of time, the strict adherence to a methodical, mindful and relentless work ethic, and the limitation on consumption and the enjoyment of the fruits of one' labour – can be *identified* with the divine spirit from which they originate. Within the terms of this logic, the "profane", "materialistic" "iron-cage" of capitalism would not constitute a *departure* from the spiritual ideals that initially motivated its creation. According to this reading, if indeed these manifestations of capitalism were the "natural" outcome of processes of rationalization born out of a deep sense of *contiguity* with the divine, born, in fact, out of the entry of the divine into the men and women who stood at the cradle of the modern political-economy, then, the modern world is nothing more or less than the expression of divine will.

This may strike the reader as a bizarre claim, for it would appear to discover the enchanted in the very heartland of the disenchanted, the religious in a culture frequently taken to be secular. However, in the next chapter we will investigate a "radical" reinterpretation of the secularization narrative which takes the involution described above as its starting point, in order to argue that the "purely human", "purely secular" culture of modernity testifies to nothing less than the total and immediate presence of the divine. Attending to the controversial work of "death of god" theologian, Thomas J. J. Altizer, we will be able to examine some of the sociological implications that the implosion of divine and human autonomy, uncovered in the PE essay, has for Weber's theory of disenchantment, and the wider question of modernity's secularization.

CHAPTER FOUR: INCARNATION, KENOSIS AND THE DEATH OF GOD

The analysis of Weber's account of Calvinist disenchantment in the previous chapter has uncovered an "unexpected identification of God with self and … world" (Taylor: 2007, 73). The present chapter enlarges the frame of this revelation, asking what the unanticipated intrusion of divine immanence into Calvinistic disenchantment means for the narrative of secularization? Does the active presence of the divine in the hustle and bustle of the early modern capitalist market infer that there is no evacuation of the supernatural from the world, and thus no disenchantment in the West? If Calvinist disenchantment incorporates a relationship between the human and divine realms that looks suspiciously like "enchantment" then can we even speak of the secularization of the Protestant ethic? What significance does a Protestant enchantment[74] have for our current understanding of the secular nature of the modern?

[74] Of course, Weber was aware that a form of spiritual emotionalism with monistic overtones developed in many of the radical Protestant sects. In the PE he notes that the Pietist and Methodist sects interpreted many of the Calvinistic doctrines "emotionally", at times cultivating something like the Lutheran *unio mystica* (PE, 130-131). He argues the spiritualist reading of Calvinist doctrine compromised the disenchanting effects of Calvinist theology. It weakened "the inhibitions which protected the rational personality of the Calvinist from his passions" (Weber, PE, 131). And, by compromising the "strict and temperate discipline" of the Puritans (Weber, PE, 131), this regression to monism "deadened" the "enterprise in worldly-activity" (PE, 131).

If Weber seems to make some concession here to the possibility of a Calvinistic re-enchantment we would be mistaken. Weber contends that the monism of Pietism and Methodism were not the result of "an immanent law of development" (PE, 138), but arose through extraneous influences: "the religious (and social) environments from which the leaders [of the movements] came" (PE, 138); and, especially, "Lutheran influences"

Throughout this thesis we have seen that conventional accounts of secularization view the evacuation of supernatural points of reference from worldly institutions as an almost inevitable consequence of the distance separating the transcendent God from an immanent or closed world (Berger: 1973, 117). However, closer inspection of the Calvinist doctrine of the *fides efficax* demonstrated that locating a space of disarticulation between these two realms is not as easy as Weber's theory of disenchantment might suggest.

We have just seen that far from maintaining the bifurcation of the human/worldly and divine, the Calvinist theology of grace testifies to a God who is an active agent in worldly affairs. In the economy of "faithful action" the divine acts in and through the human subject in order to realize its will in the world. In this relationship human agency is eclipsed by the omnipotent will of God. Indeed it is erased altogether, and with it the separating difference used to distinguish the human from the divine. Thus what we might take to be human action turns out to be "the expression of divine providence operating through me" (Taylor: 2007, 73). Through this inhabitation a God who was supposed to be utterly transcendent enters into the flesh of the world.

(PE, 135, 137, 140). By attributing the weakening of Calvinism's rationalism to Lutheranism Weber seeks to separate the spiritual monism of Pietism and Methodism from the "inherently" disenchanting character of Calvinism. In this way he attempts to preserve the purity, or in his own words, "iron consistency" (PE, 137) of Calvinistic disenchantment. However, we have just seen that the "fall" into enchantment is a direct result of tensions within Calvin's thought. Thus they testify to what Taylor calls the *altarnating* relation between monism and dualism (to be explored in detail in the chapter to follow).

This leaves us with a number of questions. Does the compromise uncovered here infer that there is no disenchantment as such, and thus no secularization? Or does the unexpected identification of God with the human world simply signal the need for a *different* concept of the secular; one that can comprehend the possibility of a worldly culture (modern capitalism) born out of spiritual immanence, rather than its detachment from that spirit?

These questions bring us back (once again) to the end of Weber's PE text where we unearthed two distinct explanations for the secularization of the Protestant work ethic. We found articulated at the forefront of Weber's argument the classical justification of secularization in terms of an emancipation of ascetic Protestant culture from its religious or spiritual root. However, there was an alternative rationalization for the "dying out of the religious root" which crept its way into Weber's text through his use of John Wesley and other Puritan writers. This version of the secularization narrative indicated that an act of coalescence might be responsible for the corruption of the religious spirit. In his commentary on Weber's thesis, Alister McGrath summarizes this view when he warns that, "latent within Calvinism is a purely profane approach to life, in that the failure to maintain a proper dialectic between God and the world leads to the collapse of the divine into the secular" (1990, 221).

Invoking a sense of commerce between the divine and the world, McGrath gestures to an almost *kenotic* understanding of secularization. Kenosis is a biblical term used by Paul in his letter to the Philippians. It means emptying, or self-emptying. In a discourse about humility Paul invokes the example set by Jesus Christ. He speaks of "Christ Jesus who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:5-8).

The kenotic act, associated with the Incarnation of God in Christ, has been interpreted in a number of ways (see Ward: 1998). For some, it is thought that God empties Himself of His divinity in order to be *near* humanity. Thus, as Calvin argues, in the Incarnation God puts aside His glory so that He can appear to us in a form that we will understand; that is, as the fleshly form of the servant. In Calvin's reckoning, although appearing in the *form* or body of the servant, Christ's divinity remains intact, paradoxically maintaining His unqualified difference to humanity (see Zachmann: 2007, 266). However, for others, like "death of god" theologian Thomas J. J. Altizer, kenosis entails a full negation of divine transcendence, a negation that allows Him to *become* flesh (see Altizer: 1966a).

We will explore the details of Altizer's highly influential understanding of kenosis later in this chapter. At this time it is only necessary to point out the potential significance of the concept of kenosis for a theory of secularization. The basic premise of the Incarnation is that in order to become flesh, God had to compromise His difference – His glory, sovereignty or transcendence. As philosopher Richard Kearney points out, in his discussion of Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of the kenotic act, it is the "emptying out of transcendence into the heart of the world's body, becoming a God beneath us rather than a God beyond" (2007, 6).[75] Equally important to note is Calvin's contention that this transubstantiation conceals the divine within the human, making the presence of divinity in the world difficult to see

[75] The reference is taken from "Sacramental Imagination: Eucharists of the Ordinary Universe", a paper delivered in Chicago at the 2007 annual conference for the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy. However, the paper now also exists in an extended form, and can be found in Kearney's *Anatheism: Returning to God after God* (2010); as well as under the same title in Kearney 2009.

(Zachmann: 2007, 263). Returning to McGrath's explanation for the secularization of the Protestant ethic, a kenotic understanding of secularization thus seems to argue that the religious (or spiritual) disappears when it passes *into* the world. Whether it is lost, or merely concealed, is not (yet) clear.

For those familiar with conventional accounts of secularization based on the disenchantment narrative this explanation may seem a little odd. Why would God vanish by entering into the world? Mark C. Taylor elucidates the logical basis for this reasoning when he notes that the divine can "disappear" in two contrasting ways. On the one hand, "God and the gods vanish by becoming so distant that they are inconsequential and thus disposable" (Taylor: 2007, 133), a view proposed by the disenchantment narrative. On the other hand, "God and the gods disappear by becoming indistinguishable from the world – when everything is sacred nothing is sacred" (Taylor: 2007, 133).

It is clear that these two modes of disappearance correspond to the two explanations for secularization found in Weber's PE text. Taylor refers to the first cited above as dualism, though it could just as easily be called disenchantment. The second, which Taylor calls monism, is roughly equivalent to what Weber would call enchantment. That is, it celebrates the unmediated presence of the divine in the self and the world. To understand these explanations more fully we need to begin by treating them as distinct theories of secularization. Towards the end of this chapter, by following the monistic explanation through to its logical conclusion, we will see that the "two" are, in fact, one; and kenosis, the movement through which the spirit enters the world, is the *intra*play between them.

The Sacred Function

The second understanding of secularization offered by Taylor above, where the divine disappears by becoming indistinguishable from the world, gains its purchase from the differentiating function of the sacred. As Taylor explains elsewhere, the sacred is that which is "set apart". The religious act of setting apart the sacred thus demarcates space and time, marking out a sphere of exception from the undifferentiated chaos of the profane[76] and the finitude of the worldly. In this sense,

> [w]hile eluding every oppositional structure, the sacred is nonetheless the condition of possibility of opposition as such. The sacred is, therefore, that which allows God to be God by enabling God to be other than everything that is not God. God, in other words, is an after effect or symptom of the sacred. (Taylor: 1994, 595)

Taylor's point is that without the sacred there can be no "God". Or, to make the same point in different terms, anything that compromises the ability of the sacred to set itself apart (from the world, the profane, even the human) similarly destabilizes the traditional metaphysics upon which the notion of God as a supernatural, transcendent divinity is grounded.[77]

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[76] Larry Shiner offers a similar account of the structural dependency of the sacred and profane. Drawing on the work of Mircea Eliade, Shiner states that "[t]he profane is chaos because it is the undifferentiated and therefore unreal; but it is experienced *as* profane only so long as the sacred manifests itself" (1965, 281, emphasis in original).

[77] Giorgio Agamben emphasizes the ritual act of setting apart in his theory of religion. He refers to the root word *relegare* to define religion as the "stance of scrupulousness and attention that must be adopted in relations with the gods, the uneasy hesitation … that must be observed in order to respect the separation between the sacred and the profane" (2007, 74-75). However, other theorists claim that religion derives from *religare*, which means to bind

This is a structuralist understanding of identity which links identity to difference.[78] We find a similar explanation for religious vitality in Peter L. Berger's theory of secular accommodation. In *Religion in a Revolutionary Society* Berger tries to take stock of "the place of religion in contemporary America" (1974, 1). He argues that despite an unexpected return to religion "among the college-age children of the most orthodox secularists" (1974, 14), this period was characterized by a "long-lasting and fairly even process" of secularization (Berger, 1974, 12). Evidence for the secular character of contemporary American society is drawn from a number of sources – the legal proscription of prayer in public schools, judicial support for secular issues, the down-sizing of churches and decline in attendance, particularly in the upper and middle classes (Berger, 1974, 10). However, of all the potential measures for secularization

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and rebind the human and divine (see Taylor: 2007, 5). The notion that religion binds, and in doing so, breaches the sense of separation invoked by Agamben, is explored Emile Durkheim in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1995). In that text Durkheim argues that religious rituals create and maintain social bonds that function to *produce* the sacred. The sacred emerges through a religious relation that undermines any metaphysical distinction between the divine and the human (see Durkheim: 1995; Nielsen: 2001).

[78] Although his unique approach to religion resists easy categorization, Taylor's understanding of the relation between the sacred and profane could, at this stage of his writing career, be more accurately described as post-structuralist rather than structuralist. In the article referred to above, for instance, Taylor demonstrates that the dividing function of the sacred is not strictly negative. Rather, he notes that because the sacred is "inscribed along the irrepressible margin of difference [between being and nonbeing] it neither exists nor does not exist" (Taylor: 1994, 604). The borders produced by the sacred are thus "nonreciprocal, nonoppositional" (Taylor: 1994, 595). By this he means that the differential relation responsible for the production of the sacred never returns to a simple identity that could be opposed to the profane. In this sense, he would claim that the oppositional schemata commonly associated with structuralism cannot comprehend the divisions created by the sacred. For a more detailed discussion of his relationship to structuralism and post-structuralism see Taylor: 2007, 297-312.

available to him Berger reserves most comment for changes taking place *within* religious institutions, especially in the Protestant churches and its theological traditions.

Berger's particular focus is a trend in liberal Protestant theology, popular in the middle decades of the twentieth century, in which different theological movements are said "to divest the churches of their traditional contents", replacing "these with a variety of secular gospels – existentialism, psychoanalysis, revolutionary liberation, or *avant-garde* sensitivity" (Berger, 1974, 11). In *The Social Reality of Religion* he cites the publication of Harvey Cox's *The Secular City* (1965), John Robinson's *Honest to God* (1963) and various works by Paul Tillich as examples of this theological reorientation to the secular.[79] Berger also names Altizer's "death of god theology" as the "grotesque climax of the theological self-disembowelment" (1974, 11), for reasons that will become clearer when we turn to the detail of Altizer's thinking.

As discussed below, Berger seeks an explanation for this curious Protestant love affair with the secular in socio-structural factors associated with secularization. Berger contends that secularizing processes at work in the twentieth century threw religion into a "crisis of credibility". Beginning as early as the 19th century, secular intellectuals became the arbiters of cognitive acceptability (Berger: 1973, 161). And by the 20th century, religious world-views anchored in supernatural explanations were, as Weber tries to show in the SAV lecture, socially marginalized. Berger argues that, faced with potential irrelevancy, religious institutions and

[79] For a more comprehensive overview of "theologies of secularization" from this period, including the work of Mircea Elidae, Paul Van Buren and Friedrich Gogarten, see Larry Shiner's, "Toward a Theology of Secularization" (1965). A more recent account of the relationship between modern and post-modern theology (and religious philosophy) and secular thought can be found in Carl Raschke's *The Next Reformation* (2004).

academic theologians sought to reassert their legitimacy by redefining the content of their faith. As he sees it, this attempt at redefinition took two basic forms.

On the one hand, faith-based traditions tried to re-establish their difference from secular thinking and practice, setting themselves up as alternatives to the (wicked, corrupt, meaningless) secular world. As an example of this "resisting" trend Berger cites the neo-orthodox theology of Karl Barth (1886 – 1968), who famously said "*Nein!*" to the secular world (in the wake of the second world war), reasserting the "externality and non-subjectivity of the Christian message" (Berger: 1973, 164).

Accommodation strategies, on the other hand, are characterized by a general openness to the secular, even to the point of deference. As Berger explains, because the secular world was regarded as the only legitimate source of (objective or scientific) knowledge, religious institutions began to translate their own legitimating structures into the language of secular consciousness (Berger: 1973, 149). In the 1960's this translation process included justifying the religious institution in terms of its therapeutic value for individual psychological needs, but also

> [in] extreme cases (as in liberal Protestantism and Judaism) … [led] to the deliberate excision of all or nearly all 'supernatural' elements from the religious tradition. (Berger, 1973, 150)

As this citation suggests, the accommodating gesture can result in a complete "surrender" of all that sets the religious world-view apart from its secular "equivalents" (Berger: 1992, 42-43). The religious tradition lets go of the more supernatural or transcendent

aspects of the faith, including the reference to an otherworldly reality beyond the human condition, as well as the essentially religious meaning of the Christian message (Berger: 1992, 41-43).

As mentioned above, Berger sees the accommodating gesture as an attempt to shore up the vitality of the Protestant tradition by embracing what seems to challenge it – the secular culture "out there". However, Berger argues that this approach fails because it ultimately undermines the "very existence of the religious institutions they are intended to legitimate" (Berger: 1973, 170). Clarifying how it does so, Berger notes that,

> As was to be expected, all these efforts 'to make the church more relevant to modern society' had the effect of aggravating rather than alleviating the religious recession. Those church members who still felt loyalty to the traditional content of their faith were bewildered if not repelled… and those whose membership was motivated by secular considerations to begin with often felt that such commodities as 'personal growth' or 'raised consciousness' could be obtained just as well ….outside the churches. (1974, 11)

Berger's assessment returns us to Taylor's observation about the sacred. Accommodation is ultimately self-defeating in its intention to alleviate the effects of secularization on religion because it undermines the very basis for faith. The crux of Berger's argument then, is that the more worldly religion becomes the less it can distinguish itself from the secular (see also Bruce: 2001). Giving up this essential point of difference threatens the vitality of religious identity. Bruce and Wallis make the same point in their theory of

secularization. They argue that religion is only "specifically religious" when it remains oriented to the supernatural (1992, 21). Diagnosing a perceived evacuation of supernaturalism from liberal Protestant churches in America, they say that "[b]eing church members distinguishes them relatively little in belief and behaviour from those who are not" (Bruce and Wallis: 1992, 20). Thus like McGrath, both Berger and Bruce and Wallis suggest that without the supernatural to provide it with some distinction from the world religion becomes a "purely profane" approach to life.

In these theories of secularization religion is constituted by its difference from the secular. Without the "specific" difference supplied by the sacred or the otherworldly, there can be no religious identity as such. This logic implies a contingent relation between the secular and the religious that may unsettle the very distinction it is intended to produce and defend. We will return to explore the implications of this structural dependency at the end of this chapter. At this point however, an important question presents itself. Why should the erasure of the difference separating the secular and the religious constitute a *loss* for religion, as Berger argues? If the spiritual is translated into the secular, and if, as McGrath argues, the divine collapses into the world, surely whatever defends the vitality of religion would become more accessible to us. Could the erasure of difference entail an *inflation* of the religious, an expansion engendered by the inclusion of what has traditionally limited its scope?

A Residual Difference

Berger's identification of the secularizing effects of the accommodating gesture charts the development of a cultural immanence in which differences between secularity and religion

are so reduced as to make traditional distinctions between them almost irrelevant. In doing so, Berger appears to work out the consequences of McGrath's warning about the maintenance of the proper, that is, differentiating, relation between the secular and the divine. However, we will note that the supposed "translation" of religious contents into secular equivalents is actually predicated on the *surrender* of the supernatural orientation of those contents (Berger: 1992, 42). Consequently, there is no translation to speak of. This tells us that Berger's vision of a modern cultural immanence in which spirituality has supposedly become so closely aligned to the secular as to compromise their distinction, actually attests to the *removal* of the supernatural from culture. According to this logic, there cannot be any collapse because there is no identification of God *with* the world.

One wonders then, what would happen to this structuralist economy if the residue of difference holding the religious apart from the secular was finally taken away? What if the divine really did pass into the worldly? Given the structural dependency between identity and difference alluded to above, we might question whether an implosion of this kind is even possible.

It is with these questions in mind that we turn now to controversial "death of god" theologian, Thomas J. J. Altizer. Like Berger, Altizer's "death of God" theology offers us a theory of secularization that charts the loss of the transcendent. However, unlike Berger, Altizer maintains that this loss is really a gain for the Christian religious tradition. Using the doctrine of the Incarnation as the basis for his claims, Altizer argues that the demise of the supernatural in modern culture makes way for a new form of faith: a "worldly faith that deems the secular sacred and the sacred secular" (Taylor: 2007, 201).

Altizer's "Christian atheism" suggests that the secularization responsible for the death of God is a process of *enchantment* in which the erasure of distinction between the human and divine facilitates a collapse of the divine into the secular, ushering in an era of spiritual immanence. His theory thus speaks directly to the "unexpected identification of God with self and … world" revealed in Calvinistic disenchantment (Taylor: 2007, 73).

The Good News of God's Death

In *Radical Theology and the Death of God* (1966b), a collection of essays written and edited by Altizer and fellow "death of god" theologian, William Hamilton, Altizer sets out the conditions for a new definition of Christian faith. This faith, he says, grows out of a crisis in theology "initiated by the collapse of Christendom" (Altizer: 1966b, 95). Thus it responds to the same socio-structural conditions outlined by Berger. Much like the examples of religious accommodation cited by Berger, Altizer's vision of modern faith aims to be meaningful in the context of "this world" (1966a, 16). Altizer attempts to achieve this dialogue with the world by teaching theology to speak to the cultural reality of his own time, which he defines as totally profane (1966a, 19). Following on from this, Altizer's new Christian faith (sometimes referred to as "radical Christianity", "radical theology", or "Christian atheism"), takes as its starting premise the historical fact that "God has died in *our* time, in *our* history, in *our* existence" (Altizer: 1966b, 95, emphasis in original).

As we can see, Altizer appropriates secularization as the point of departure for a radical form of atheistic Christianity. However, it is important to note that the death of god

characterized as “good news” by Altizer (1966a, 107) is not the outcome of a simple course of estrangement in which the divine gets more and more distant until it disappears altogether. Rather, recalling the second version of secularization offered by Taylor, Altizer claims that, “God dies in some sense wherever he is present or actual in the world” (1966a, 104). That is to say, according to Altizer, God “dies” when he enters into, and becomes *incarnate* in, the secular world.

This rather unconventional understanding of god’s death is based on a dialectical reading of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation and the process of *kenosis* said to underpin it. As the doctrine forms the basis of Altizer’s theory of secularization some familiarity of its basic premise is necessary at this point.

Doctrine of the Incarnation

The doctrine of the Incarnation is succinctly expressed in the opening lines of the gospel of St. John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us” (John: 1, 1). As St. John’s gospel implies, the doctrine of the Incarnation states that the transcendent God of the Jews has been reborn in the historical and fleshly figure of Jesus Christ. As Christians see it, this alters the nature of the relation between the divine and the human. For when Jesus Christ is revealed to be God, God is simultaneously shown to be Christ-like; that is, also human somehow (McGrath: 1994, 274).

The paradoxical chiasmus of divinity and humanity inferred by the Incarnation is perfectly expressed in the peculiar structure of Christian soteriology. Tracing the impact that the doctrine of Incarnation had on the development of the Christian theological tradition,

Taylor notes that as a consequence of the doctrine Christian salvation ceased to be tied to covenantal obligations, as Jewish soteriology requires, and became available through the personhood of Jesus Christ. He cites the Churchman Anathasius on this point.

> For he [God] was made man that we might be made God; and he manifested himself by a body that we might receive the idea of the unseen Father; and he endured the insolence of man that we might inherit immortality (cited in Taylor: 2007, 148)

Anathasius' argument is that in becoming human the incarnate God opens up the possibility that humankind is, or could become, divine. The Incarnation is thus an extraordinary doctrine because it relocates the otherworldly in the worldly, the eternal in the finite, and the spiritual within the flesh of the Son. It is for this reason that Kierkegaard referred to the doctrine as the "Absolute Paradox" (1962), (a point we shall return to later in this thesis).

We can probably see why the Incarnation is so critical to Altizer's atheology. Anchoring his analysis in the biblical passage of Philippians 2: 5-8, Altizer argues that God's entry into the world through Christ is enabled by the process of *kenosis* referred to earlier. As Altizer understands it, the kenotic act is a form of "self sacrifice" (Altizer: 1966a, 63) in which God forgoes His sovereignty so that He can become joined to the world.

> God has negated himself in becoming flesh, his Word is now the opposite or the intrinsic otherness of his primordial Being, and God himself has ceased to exist in his original mode as transcendent or disincarnate Spirit: God *is* Jesus. (Altizer: 1966a, 69)

According to Altizer's reading of the kenotic act the Incarnation "must be understood as effecting [sic] the death of god" (Altizer and Hamilton: 1966b, xii). However, the concept of "death" used here obviously requires some qualification. As we can see above, God is able to enter the world only by emptying himself of his transcendence. To be present as the incarnate or immanent Word therefore entails the negation of everything that has traditionally set God apart as sacred. That is why god "dies" wherever he is "present or actual in the world", for this presence is predicated on the erasure of all that makes God different, all that enables him to stand apart *as God*.

The realization of an immanent Word is therefore conditioned by the absence of the transcendent divine. Altizer is very clear about the mutual exclusivity of these two terms. He re-asserts this a number of times in key texts, telling us that "[a] truly contemporary Christ cannot become present to us until we ourselves have died to every shadow and fragment of his transcendent image" (Altizer: 1966a, 136), or alternatively, that the Word can be truly immanent only when it is "present in such a way as to be real and active [here] and nowhere else" (Altizer: 1966a, 17). In Altizer's writings immanence always arrives at the expense of the transcendent. Indeed, such is the redundancy of the transcendent in the process of Incarnation that Altizer can assert that the kenotic act dissolves "even the memory of God's original transcendent life" (Altizer: 1966a, 136).

This is an important qualification to which we will return shortly. Appreciating the significance that the bipolarity of immanence and transcendence has for Altizer's vision of an

enchanted secularity requires a more comprehensive understanding of the broader claims, as well as the critical reception of, his "death of god" theology.

End of Religion and the Beginning of the Secular Word

Altizer's "gospel" of Christian atheism is motivated by a desire to rethink the context of Christian faith. He maintains that a Christian witness committed to the image of the divine in Christ should abandon the notion that the Word lies outside the world, and that the church has some privileged access to it. As Altizer sees it, a true dialogue between religion and the world will take place only when the divine is unhinged from *all demarcations.* Institutionally, this means the kenotic movement can be completed only when "the priestly, legalistic and dogmatic norms of the churches" have been abolished (Altizer: 1966a, 26).

Guided by the philosophical engagements with Christianity developed by Nietzsche and Hegel, Altizer argues that historical Christianity, the Christianity of the church, reneged on the biblical vision of the Word as immediate and available to all by associating it with an otherworldly God. Simultaneously, it undermined Jesus' notion of an immanent Kingdom by placing the sacred in a sphere of exception – in the church (Altizer: 1966b, x-xi; 1966a, 59). These institutional and theological developments make a true dialogue between the Word of God and the human world impossible because,

> [w]hen the Church is known as the body of Christ, and the Church is further conceived as a distinct and particular institution or organism existing within but

nevertheless apart from the world, then the body of Christ must inevitably be distinguished from and even opposed to the body of humanity". (Altizer: 1966a, 132)

Altizer argues that in order to overcome this opposition and return to Jesus' original vision Christianity must give up the concept of a church and begin to seek evidence of the Word beyond its confines. This is where the secular reality of the modern world becomes critical to Altizer's atheological project. Although he sometimes claims that the erasure of all differentiating boundaries can never be complete, implying that the kenotic movement is "never final" (1966a, 104), Altizer is more consistent in his appropriation of the profanity of twentieth century Western society as a sign of the final achievement of the immanence of the Word. In *The Gospel of Christian Atheism* he states that "a radically profane history is the inevitable consummation of an actual movement of the sacred into the profane" (Altizer: 1966a, 109). The identification of the secular culture of the modern West as the "end" of the kenotic process is further suggested by Altizer's assertion that the "Word can be and indeed is present, even though it is not possible to discern any traditional signs of its activity" (Altizer: 1966a, 19).

The hermeneutical dilemma of this situation implies that God has "disappeared" by entering into, and becoming fully continuous with, the world. Of course, although the incarnate divine "vanishes" here in the implosion of the sacred and profane, it is not lost, as it is in Berger's account. Indeed, according to Altizer, the world itself, including the hustle and bustle of the capitalist market, bears witness to its immediate and "total" presence.

This argument has extraordinary implications for the way we view the modern, secular world. Altizer's theory argues that the possibilities for communion with the divine remain even after "religion" has been jettisoned from modern society. His appropriation of the secular to signal the presence of this immanent divine thus prompts us to question the comprehensiveness of conventional indexes of secularization that only seek evidence of the spiritual in the institutions of religion.[80]

More importantly, by reworking the oppositional understanding of the spirit/flesh relation, Altizer seems to take seriously the provocation, outlined in the introduction, that religion and secularity, or to be more accurate, spirit and world, are deeply implicated. Embracing this logic, Altizer is able to draw the scandal of the collapse of the divine into the secular uncovered in 17th century Calvinism into the present, employing it to outline an "enchanted" understanding of the socio-cultural conditions that define life in the secular West.

[80] Scholarship on religion has shifted its focus in recent years from traditional, church-based forms of participation to non-institutional, non-traditional, and sometimes seemingly secular forms of spiritual practice. As mentioned in introduction, many critics of the secularization thesis have pointed out that although attendance in institutional forms of religion has fallen considerably throughout the period of modernity, attitudinal surveys show that belief in God did not (see Davie: 1994; Sointu and Woodhead: 2008). This seeming anomaly has inspired a new approach to religion in which signs of spirituality are sought outside the church in practices as diverse as para-ecclesial forms of religion, meditational practices, the new-age movement, internet-based communities, and the use of holistic medicine (see Heelas and Woodhead: 2005; Hume and McPhillips: 2006).

Critical Reception

Not surprisingly Altizer's proclamation of the "good news" of god's death soon found itself at the centre of controversy in the United States. Altizer's theological views were featured, alongside those of theologians Paul Van Buren and William Hamilton, in two articles in *Time* magazine, published in 1965 and 1966. The latter bore a cover in which the words "Is God dead?" were "emblazoned" in large red letters (Taylor: 2007, 1). Finding its way out of the university and into the mainstream media, Altizer's gospel of Christian atheism drew a great deal of attention, most of it critical.

Many theologians and religious thinkers were affronted by popularized versions of his theory that equated Altizer's understanding of the death of god with classical atheism.[81] More astute readers of his work identified problems with the philosophical and theological basis of Altizer's claims. Some dismissed his appropriation of the "death of God" slogan from thinkers like Nietzsche and Hegel as provocative but "ingeniously unchallenging" (Raschke: 2004, 89). While others criticized Altizer's idiosyncratic and "unbiblical" use of theological terminology

[81] Altizer and Hamilton carefully outline the points of difference between their *Christian* atheism and classical atheism in the preface to *Radical Theology and the Death of God* (1966b). As they see it, classical atheism posits that "there is no God and there has never been" (1966b, x). Whereas their Christian experience of the death of God is defined by a desire to "overhaul" theological language and concepts, and to does so in order to comprehend the Word that comes in the wake of God's death (Altizer and Hamilton: 1966b, x-xi). Additionally, for Hamilton at least, the Christian atheist continues to "wait" for God, and this waiting sets him or her apart from the classical atheist. "Our waiting for God, our godlessness, is partly a search for a language and a style by which we might be enabled to stand before him once again, delighting in his presence" (Hamilton: 1966b, 41). The concept of waiting for God's return obviously contradicts Altizer's claim that He has died once and for all. Neither Hamilton nor Altizer addresses this tension in their co-authored work.

(Montgomery: 1970). There were also theologians, such as Theodore Runyon Jnr., who appreciated the "seminal" contribution made by Altizer to contemporary Christian theology, but remained unconvinced by his interpretation of the Incarnation (Runyon: 1970). As will be discussed below, although he saw value in Altizer's monistic understanding of the divine, Runyon argues that his presumption that kenosis dissolves *all* distinctions between God and man fails to take into account the biblical insistence on their ultimate heterogeneity. Finally, there are theorists like Mark C. Taylor who, though similarly appreciative of the significance of Altizer's atheistic vision, raise questions about his reading of Hegel's dialectic (see Taylor: 1984).

The question of Altizer's relationship with Hegel is complex and will occupy us further on in the chapter. At this juncture I want to focus on two criticisms, using them to examine the logical basis of Altizer's vision of enchanted secularity in more detail. The first is Runyon's observation that Altizer's reading of the Incarnation is unfaithful to its biblical origins because it implies the elimination of the distinction between the Creator and creation (Runyon: 1970, 4). Further to this I want to explore Berger's claim, mentioned earlier, that by dissolving these distinctions Altizer disembowels theology.

It is Altizer's express intention to erase the difference between divinity and humanity. In *The Gospel of Christian Atheism* (1966a) he is quite specific about this, contending that Paul's epiphany of the God-in-Christ annihilates *all* "distance separating the creature from the Creator" (Altizer: 1966a, 106). The erasure of this distance is then said to enable a *total* union with the divine (Altizer: 1966a, 25). Indeed such is this unity, Altizer adopts William Blake's evocative term, "The Eternal Great Humanity Divine", to describe it (Altizer: 1966a, 72).

Moreover, as Berger's criticism suggests, Altizer actively sought to revolutionize the discipline of theology using these claims. He argues that seeking evidence of the Word in the world, that is, *outside the church*, requires that theology open itself up "to the logician and the philosopher, the psychiatrist and the psychoanalyst, the literary critic and the social scientist" (Altizer: 1966b, 17). Consequently, by removing the sacred from religion, indeed from the concept of the divine itself, theology (as the discourse dedicated to understanding the nature of the *theos*) is similarly evacuated of any specific content that would distinguish it from the scholarly work of the social scientist or the psychoanalyst. To study Altizer's divine *is* to take the human or the social as the "proper" object of theological discourse.[82]

It is clear then that the critical interventions of both Runyon and Berger perfectly describe Altizer's *intentions*. But does Altizer's argument match that intention? Has he eliminated the distinction between the divine and the human, or worldly? Or has he, like Berger, resurrected that distinction in another form, in a different set of polarized relations? Must the life of the (secular) spirit be conditioned by the *complete* demise of the transcendent God and the closure of religion? Do enchantment and disenchantment stand in such an oppositional relation?

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[82] Durkheim's sociology of religion offers us a similar confusion of disciplinary boundaries. In *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1995), Durkheim argues that the human encounter with the divine is a social experience, generated by emotionally intense forms of collective action (1995, 208-241). In this sense, theology – as the discourse concerned with describing the (worldly nature of the) divine – must also be a kind of sociology. Donald A. Nielsen has recently used Durkheim's sociology of religion to sketch out a "distinctive theology of social immanence" (1999, 2001). Furthermore, a rhetorical analysis of Durkheim's writing reveals numerous references to concepts like the incarnation and "the immanent transcendent" which could indicate that the social relation is, for Durkheim, organized by a specifically sacramental or kenotic logic (see Marlin: forthcoming).

The Spirit of Hegelianism

Altizer describes his atheistic gospel as an "encounter" between the Word and the world (1966a, 19). He nominates the kenotic process of the Incarnation as the primary inspiration for this "dialogue" (Altizer: 1966a, 19). Although the term kenosis is, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, biblical in its origins, Altizer's unique interpretation of it derives from the dialectical philosophy of G. W. F Hegel.[83] In a section of the *Gospel* dedicated to the question of kenosis he remarks that, "Hegel opened the very centre of his thinking to the Incarnate Word of faith, allowing its kenotic movement to be the archetype of what he conceived as the dialectical method of pure thinking" (Altizer: 1966a, 63).

Altizer demonstrates the centrality of the concept of kenosis to Hegel's dialectical method, citing a passage from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1977, hereafter *Phenomenology*) in which the German philosopher uses the term to describe a process where "the 'Word', the *Logos*,

[83]My analysis of Altizer's atheology is focused on his interpretation of Hegel's dialectical understanding of kenosis. The dialectical thinking of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, however, were also influential for Altizer. In "Theology and the Death of God" Altizer details his interpretation of Nietzsche's "atheistic vision" (1966b, 98). He cites Nietzsche's theory of Eternal Recurrence as an affirmation of the movement of the divine from transcendence into immanence. To this end Altizer celebrates the Dionysian destruction of the old, transcendent God as an important moment in the achievement of the *coincientia oppositorum* in which faith itself is born again (Altizer: 1966, 102). Altizer's engagement with Nietzsche stands in stark contrast to Weber's, which, as we have seen, remains focused on the moral crisis that follows in the wake of the death of God. Perhaps if Weber had of been able to take account of the enchantment that lies at the heart of his theory of disenchantment he might have also been able to embrace the more sanguine elements of Nietzsche's understanding of the possibilities inherent in the modern death of God.

which when spoken empties the speaker of himself, outwardizes him, and leaves him behind emptied" (cited in Altizer: 1966a, 68, emphasis in original). Altizer uses this reference to argue that kenosis is a process of *self-negation*.

> This forward movement of Spirit [whereby Spirit becomes incarnate in its own opposite] is made possible only by an actual process of self-negation: Spirit-in-itself negates itself and thus becomes Spirit-for-itself; and by the negation of negation Spirit-for-itself transcends itself and once more becomes Spirit-in-itself; yet this final form of Spirit is far richer and fuller than its initial beginning. (Altizer: 1966a, 65)

Abbreviated here is Hegel's famous understanding of Spirit as the "Being which is the process of retaining identity with itself in its otherness" (Hegel, cited in Altizer: 1966a, 66). Altizer uses this dialectical understanding of Spirit to argue that Spirit, or in his terms, the Incarnate Word, is the "eternal movement of absolute self-negation" (Altizer: 1966a, 69), which comes to know itself as Spirit only when it finally "exists as the world or as external 'otherness'" (Altizer: 1966a, 64). In other words, Spirit achieves its kenotic destiny when it incorporates its own difference and becomes flesh. At this point, according to Altizer, Spirit becomes immanent (here and nowhere else), emptying itself of its original being, leaving its transcendence "behind" in a "lifeless form" (Altizer: 1966a, 69).

Altizer claims that his interpretation of the kenotic destiny of Spirit as the realization of an immanence that negates all transcendence is based on the general principle underlying Hegel's dialectical method; namely, that Absolute Knowledge [Spirit's knowledge of itself in its own otherness] is achieved through the reconciliation of being in-itself and being for-itself

(Hegel: 1977, 14); or, as Taylor puts it, rendering this abstract formulation more legible, the "identity of identity and difference" (1984, 571).

It is very difficult to do justice to the complexity of Hegel's philosophy within the confines of a thesis such as this. As readers of his work will know, the German philosopher writes in a circular, seemingly abstract, and often esoteric style of prose. Additionally, commentators like George Bataille and Jacques Derrida have pointed out that individual Hegelian concepts are products of processes from which they cannot be separated, making the isolation of particular concepts or phases of the *Phenomenology's* narrative rather difficult (see Derrida: 1990, 319-20). Indeed, Hegel warned against a selected reading of his text when he stressed that,

> the length of this path [the movement through the whole dialectic] has to be endured, because, for the one thing, each moment is necessary; and further, each moment has to be lingered over, because each is itself a complete individual shape, and one is only viewed in absolute perspective when its determinateness is regarded as a concrete whole, or the whole is regarded as uniquely qualified by that determination. (Hegel: 1977, 17)

Nonetheless, the restricted parameters of this thesis argument mean that it is possible to explore only those aspects of Hegel's dialectic which illuminate problems in Altizer's characterization of kenosis. Thus, at the risk of truncating an exegesis that is undoubtedly enriched by patiently following the "labour of the negative" through all of its phases, the analysis here will attend to Hegel's dialectic only through Altizer's appropriation of it. The

dialectical relation between being in-itself and being for-itself will be elaborated below in very general terms. Later, we will engage a more specifically Hegelian language to examine the role of knowledge and negation in the dialectical progression of Spirit towards Absolute Knowledge.

The Identity of Identity and Difference

The dialectical relation between being in-itself and being for-itself can be expressed in terms of a relation between identity and difference. As Taylor points out in his commentary on Hegel's dialectical method, identity is "simple self-sameness" and is "usually regarded as exclusive of difference" (1984, 571). The self-relation, or as Hegel puts it in the *Phenomenology*, self "equality" of identity (1977, 10) presents itself as self-equality by marking itself out as different. Thus the comparative relation between identity and difference constitutes the distinction upon which identity rests. However, this implies a curious logic that simultaneously unsettles the distinction it produces. As Hegel argues, if its comparison to difference gives identity its identity as "self-sameness", then we must acknowledge that its relation to itself is mediated by difference. Therefore, identity *is* difference. Hegel summarizes this involution in *Science of Logic* (1969). He says,

> [i]t is thus the empty identity that is rigidly adhered to by those who … are given to saying that identity is not difference, but that identity and difference are different. They do not see that in this very assertion they are themselves saying that *identity is different*; for they are saying that *identity is different* from difference; since this must be at the same time admitted to be the nature of identity, their assertion implies that

identity, not externally, but in its own self, in its very nature, is this, to be different". (Hegel: 1969, 413, emphasis in original)

The same mediated relation applies to the identity of difference. In order to present itself as something other than identity, that is, as pure difference, difference must posit itself as a distinction. This means that it must stand in a negative relation to an identity that it is not. Thus, its distinction leans on, and indeed is constituted by, identity. To cite Hegel again, "Difference is, therefore, itself and identity" (1969, 417). Hegel recalls the structuralist logic outlined earlier when he argues that without identity there can be no difference, and without difference there can be no identity. However, he adds a new dimension to this insight, showing us that the reciprocal dependency between these terms breeches the borders that maintain their separation. As noted in *Science of Logic*, difference does not sit outside identity or next to it. It is "its own self": interior to its being.[84]

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[84] Hegel's dialectical philosophy suggests that identity necessarily inhabited. The logic of inhabitation will be explored in the next chapter through the work of linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and philosopher Jacques Derrida. When fully explicated, Saussure's contention that language is a system of "differences without positive terms" implies a synchronic inhabitation (in the sense that each sign is "engorged" with its neighbours), as well as a diachronic inhabitation. As Derrida explains, in his reading of Saussure's semiology, "[i]t is because of *différance* that the movement of signification is possible only if each so-called present element, each element appearing on the scene of presence, is related to something other than itself, *thereby keeping within itself* the mark of the past element, and already letting itself be vitiated by the mark of its relation to the future element … constituting what is called the present by means of this very relation to what it is not" (Derrida: 1991, 65-66, emphasis added). The diachronic congestion unsettles the distinction between past, present and future, and consequently pre-empts the direction that the analysis in this chapter will take.

In the *Phenomenology* Hegel tells us that the mediation of self-othering with itself is Spirit. "God is this, to differentiate himself from himself, to be an object to himself, but in this differentiation, to be absolutely self-identical with himself – this is Spirit" (Hegel: 1977, 14). Moreover, recalling the terms of reference used by Altizer in his appropriation of Hegel's dialectic of Spirit, the German philosopher notes that this Spirit is the God "who beholds himself in what is differentiated" (Hegel, cited in Taylor: 2007, 159); which is to say, God beholds himself in the Son, the human, the fleshly and finite body of the world.

The dialectical rotation by which Spirit "comes to know itself in its own otherness" is a theory of knowledge articulated in terms of self-discovery (Hegel: 1977, 15-16). Hegel charts this growing self-awareness of Spirit in *Phenomenology* through a number of concrete instances, or examples. These include sense-perception, cognition, creativity and art, religious representation, scientific knowledge, and finally, Absolute Knowledge. The focus below will be on the growth of self-awareness out of initial simplicity.

Although, strictly speaking, there is no beginning to the Hegelian dialectic – for both the end and process are already present at the beginning[85] – Hegel does designate a simple phase of Being. In the famous "Preface" to the *Phenomenology* he argues that Being is initially a unified or undifferentiated plenitude that is "equal-to-itself". It is an "untroubled equality… for which otherness and alienation … are not serious matters", (Hegel, 1977, 10). In more

[85] In the "Preface" Hegel notes that "all this", the entire history of the Spirit, which is nothing less that "the enormous labour of world-history", "has already been *implicitly* accomplished" (1977, 17, emphasis in original).

familiar terms, the Being of Spirit starts off as being "in-itself": a *seemingly* static and self-enclosed state.

In the elaboration of its movement towards Absolute Knowledge Spirit eventually incorporates this abstract unity as the ground of its own reflexive self-consciousness. However, at this incipient stage the in-itself is unaware, both of itself, and the world around it. Recalling the reciprocal dependency that constitutes identity through difference, Hegel argues that being in-itself cannot be conscious of itself *as a self* because it has nothing (else) to set its identity against. Being equal to everything it is simultaneously no*thing*; nothing set apart, nothing specific or particular. As he notes in the chapter on "Consciousness", "I have this certainty [only] *through* something else, viz. the thing; and it, similarly, is in sense-certainty *through* something else, viz. through the 'I'" (Hegel: 1977, 59). The in-itself thus needs an object, a thing beyond it, to bring it into relation with itself.[86]

As we move through Hegel's dialectic we see that the immediate unity of the in-itself is not wholly isolated from negativity as it would first appear. Rather, the simple unity of being contains within it the *potential* for "pure negativity". That is to say, it has the ability to become other to itself (Hegel: 1977, 13). In a move that makes little sense if we continue to think of the different entities that occupy Hegel's narrative as distinct,[87] Hegel argues that the negativity

[86] Hegel makes this point with surprising lucidity in *Science of Logic*. He points out that "[i]f everything is *identical* with itself, then it is not *different*, not *opposed*, and has no *ground*" (1969, 411, emphasis in original).

[87] As Vicki Kirby notes in her commentary on the *Phenomenology*, as we move through the "journey towards self-consciousness Hegel chronicles: we are increasingly unsure if the subject encountered along the way, a subject

inherent in Spirit agitates a primordially undifferentiated Being by setting up an opposition within in it, and in doing so, doubles it (Hegel: 1977, 12). Now doubled, Being produces itself as different to itself.

In this phase of the dialectic Being becomes determinate, and through this determination develops some self-awareness. Previously, Being had enveloped the whole world, and could thus have no sense of itself as some*thing*. But now Being stands outside and against the undifferentiated plenitude from which it came. Consequently, it has something other than it to set its identity against. In other words, it can know itself by knowing that "it is not that". With this small but fundamental piece of self-awareness Being becomes "for-itself".

This takes us into the third "phase" of the dialectical rotation. Through a series of complex involutions Hegel demonstrates that although the "for-itself" appears to be outside the original plenitude of being-in-itself, the two are in fact moments in the self-development of one, all-encompassing Subject or Spirit. Using a logic that is not always easy to follow, Hegel explains the relationship between these seemingly separate moments in this way. He points out that the for-itself becomes aware of itself by contrasting itself to the in-itself. In this sense, its self-awareness is mediated by its relation to the in-itself. Thus it *incorporates* the in-itself within it. "Opposed to an other, the 'I' is its own self, and at the same time it overarches this other which, for the 'I', is equally only the 'I' itself" (Hegel: 1977, 104). Similarly, the in-itself, having no sense of itself as anything as such, can be a simple unity *only for another*, for a for-itself who knows it *as such*. Thus Hegel argues that it is the consciousness of the for-itself that posits the

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who seems to be another quite separate individual from the main protagonist, is actually one and the same" (2006, 5).

in-itself as an in-itself. In this sense, the in-itself, which appeared to be wholly distinct from the consciousness of the for-itself, turns out to be mediated by it. Consequently, "being in-itself and being for-another are one and the same" (Hegel: 1977, 104). The identities that occupy this field are therefore not "different" so much as they are self-differences within a single, all-encompassing system or organism: "World-Spirit" (Hegel: 1977, 17).

Kenosis and Death

As we have seen, Altizer wants to use the dialectical reconciliation of identity and difference to argue that Spirit completes its destiny when it becomes incarnate as flesh (1966a, 65), for it is at this point that Spirit can claim to have returned to itself through its own otherness. This process is imagined diachronically, in three distinct moments: "Spirit-in-itself negates itself and thus becomes Spirit-for-itself; by the negation of negation Spirit-for-itself transcends and once more becomes Spirit-in-itself; yet this final form of Spirit is far richer and fuller than its initially beginning" (Altizer: 1966a, 65).

It is not always clear exactly how this tripartite schema works historically, but Altizer's writings often suggest that an original presence proclaimed by Christ's Incarnation is negated by the Christian Church, who posits God as an Other. In the "modern age" this negative image of the divine is negated once again, returning us to an immanence that is "fuller and richer" for having reincorporated its own externality (Altizer: 1966a). Paraphrasing the German mystic Meister Eckhart, Altizer argues that at this point Spirit becomes fully present here and nowhere else because it can deny of every other that it is anything except itself (Altizer: 1966a, 62).

So far Altizer's appropriation of Hegel's dialectic, used to present a concept of the Spirit that is flesh because it has ingested its own other, appears impeccable. However, things begin to go awry when we attend to the detail of these claims. Altizer argues that the truth of Spirit (as flesh) is achieved when God is emptied of His original form, leaving it "empty and lifeless" (1966a, 69). The dialectical passage from Spirit into flesh is read as an "absolute negation" (1966a, 69). When Spirit becomes kenotic Christ, "God himself has ceased to exist in his original mode as transcendent or disincarnate Spirit" (Altizer: 1966a, 69). As this citation suggests, the severance is total and the passage it enables, final. Furthermore, Altizer makes it clear that there is no possibility of return: "The dawning of the death of God throughout the totality of experience progressively annuls every human or actual possibility of returning to transcendence" (Altizer: 1966a, 136).

We will note here that Altizer equates the kenotic emptying with an absolute negation that ejects the old God from the system altogether. This is significant because, much like the conventional theory of secularization as a loss of religious integrity, it demands the mutual exclusivity of immanence and transcendence. The Word can appear as the Spirit that has returned to itself through its own otherness *only* when God is absent. To cite the relevant excerpt again, "[a] truly contemporary Christ cannot become present to us until we ourselves have died to every shadow and fragment of his transcendent image" (1966a, 136). The bipolarity of these two images of God might strike the reader as odd in the context of Altizer's reference to Eckhart, cited above, because this bifurcation actually infers that the immanence of the Word, an immanence that should deny of every other that it is anything except itself, is actually conditioned on the denial that it is the transcendent God.

This gives us pause to examine more closely the fidelity of Altizer's engagement with Hegel's dialectic. The sense of definitive transition between Spirit and flesh evoked by Altizer's reading of kenosis seems inconsistent with Hegel's insistence on the reciprocal and constitutive dependence between identity and difference, or, in Altizer's terms, Spirit and flesh. If, as Hegel's analysis suggests, the destiny of Spirit as "self-othering with itself" (Hegel: 1977, 10) depends on its relation to *both* itself and its other, or itself *as* other, then surely the Spirit that becomes flesh is the transcendent God it stands in negative relation to? Can a dialectical understanding of the relation between Spirit and flesh support the contention that in becoming flesh, Spirit becomes totally and absolutely other to what it once was: God?

Disabling Dialectics

From a certain perspective, the either/or economy of the relation between immanence and transcendence responds to a certain necessity in Altizer's interventionist project. He wants to use a Christian theological language to sketch the possibilities for a faith that speaks to the profanity of the secular culture of his own time. However, he feels that the metaphysical language of the church will not allow him to do this. As Altizer notes in the *Gospel*, the traditional scholastic notion of God as aseitic or self-derived – "the *causa sui* who is the sole cause of himself" – stands wholly apart from the world (Altizer: 1966a, 62). His absolute independence from the world makes a true dialogue with it impossible.

We saw this to be the case in the previous chapter. Our analysis of Calvinist theology demonstrated that divine commerce with the human world is often denied *precisely because* it is

thought to constitute an untenable compromise of God's self-enclosure.[88] It is for this reason that Altizer claims that a transcendent sovereign God "can never be known … as self-giving or self-negating" (1966a, 67). His assumption is that because this God is so full of himself he requires no others. Fundamentally anti-social, this God is closed to the world, for a God like this has no reason to go "outside itself", no reason to enter into a dialectical relation that will *by necessity* implicate Him in what He is not – in the flesh and finitude of the world.

In this sense, Altizer is quite right to argue that the metaphysical image of God is a stranger to the kenotic process of the Incarnation. The conventional theo-logic outlined above implies that God must give up his self-enclosure in order to enter into the world. And because He is defined by that self-relation, giving up this independence means that He is no longer (that) God. Given this, we can understand why Altizer would argue that the God that is Jesus "has fully and finally ceased to exist in his original and primordial form" (1966a, 67).

However, although the invocation of a definitive and final form of negation helps Altizer demonstrate how an utterly alien God could become incarnate, the eviction of transcendence from the kenotic process only disables the dialectic responsible for its inauguration. If the transcendent God cannot meet the immanent Christ, by what means can reconciliation between the Word and the world take place? If the presence of one is conditioned by the absence of the other, how can the divine pass *into* the body of Christ, and

[88] This comes out most clearly in the question of providence and the role of human agency in determining it. As Weber notes in the PE, "To assume human merit or guilt play a part in determining this destiny would be to think of God's absolutely free decrees, which have been settled from eternity, as subject to change by human influence, an impossible contradiction" (PE, 103).

through it, into the flesh of the world? Without that contact neither kenosis, nor incarnation, are possible.[89]

As we know, kenosis describes the self-negation necessary to allow for a passage between spirit and flesh, divinity and humanity, transcendent God and immanent Christ. To be specific, kenosis is the becoming-worldly of the Spirit. However, when these terms are regarded as *originally* heterogeneous, that is, as different prior to their combination in the paradoxical figure of Christ, the passage that describes the movement across their borders becomes impossible to imagine. Calvin's interpretation of kenosis for instance, argued that God had to give up something in order to take the form of the Son. To enter the world He must put His difference aside. In this sense, no passage as such takes place, for that which is supposed to pass "across" the threshold of this world, God's transcendence, actually remains on the "other side".

This leaves us with a fascinating quandary. Returning to the specific details of Altizer's argument, without the Incarnation there can be no collapse of the divine into the secular, no reconciliation of the sacred and profane, and thus no enchantment in the modern world.

[89] For reasons that will be become clear as we proceed, the terms "contact" and "inauguration" used above cannot do justice to the relationship we are trying to elaborate here. Inauguration presumes a linear temporality that posits a moment of origination, a point in time when the dialectic "begins". Implicit in this understanding of origination is the idea that there is a "before" dialectics, a more primordial state in which spirit was simply different to flesh, and where commerce between them had not yet taken place. Similarly, the concept of contact designates a time/place in which the meeting of previously separate terms takes place. As we shall see below, the temporality presumed by these concepts is confounded by Hegel's logic.

Secularization is, in this sense, dependent on a dialectical relation between immanence and transcendence. However, a kenotic relation cannot *begin* unless this intimacy is somehow *already* established prior to the kenotic act. In theological terms this means that God must not *become* Jesus so much as He must always already *be* Him. In other words, for kenosis to be possible at all, there must be an incarnation before the Incarnation, a secularizing corruption before the spirit makes its initial "turn to the world".

Coming at this same problematic from the other side of this temporal bind, if we are to take seriously Hegel's provocation that the Spirit is energized by a negative relation to its own outside, then a kenotic encounter implies that the immanent Christ who lives on the basis of God's death continues to be animated by the transcendence negated in Him. Put differently, if the kenotic passage is fuelled by a *self*-negation *within* Spirit then we have to consider the possibility that transcendence *endures* the process of negation that allows it to pass into the world. Perhaps even more radically, a kenotic understanding of secularization suggests that this transcendence *was always* the secularized Spirit that it will become.

Kenosis as Survival (through death)

What we are faced with here is a notion of negation capable of preserving that which it cancels, of resuscitating the life it kills off. This is, of course, precisely the understanding of negation offered to us by Hegel in the *Phenomenology*. In the chapter on Lordship and Bondage, Hegel describes the "negation coming from consciousness" as that which "supersedes in such a way as to preserve and maintain what is superseded, and consequently *survives* its own supersession" (1977, 115, emphasis added). To understand the dialectical relation between life

and death invoked by Hegel's clarification of the activity of negation we need to rethink the conventional sense of historical progress and the linear understanding of time it uses to demarcate the new from the old. Let us return once more to Hegel's dialectic of self-consciousness to see how his logic achieves this collocation of the past and present.

Earlier in this chapter we outlined the very basic principles of Hegel's dialectic of Spirit. This dialectic charts the growth of the self-awareness of Spirit through various stages of knowledge. According to Hegel the attainment of Absolute Knowledge (where Spirit knows itself in its own otherness) is fuelled by the labour of the negative. It moves towards Absolute Knowledge by sublating simpler phases of its being, replacing them with the fuller awareness that comes with each new phase. Commenting on this process of sublation Hegel notes that, "[i]n the previous modes of certainty what is true for self-consciousness is something other than itself. But the Notion of this truth *vanishes* in the experience of it" (1977, 104, emphasis added).

As suggested by Hegel, in each phase of the dialectic a more complete truth emerges revealing the older versions to be false or incomplete. For example, the truth of sense-certainty is replaced by consciousness, which, in turn, is replaced by a form of self-consciousness that comprehends a fuller understanding of the True (as the "meditation of its self-othering with itself") (Hegel: 1977, 10). At these critical junctures the truth of the more archaic phases of the Spirit's journey towards Absolute Knowledge is said to "vanish".

The characterization of older forms of knowledge as "moments" or as "vanishing essences" seems to confirm Altizer's interpretation of dialectical progression as a definitive

shift from one historical epoch to another, a transition which leaves the past behind. However, and this qualification is of critical importance, Hegel also argues that the previous modes of certainty do not disappear entirely. Although no longer "essences" grounded in an absolute truth, these "moments" in the life of the Spirit "have at the same time no less been preserved" (Hegel: 1977, 105). This unusual temporality raises a number of questions. What happens to these vanishing moments when they are superseded? If they have become redundant why are they preserved? What does the preservation of the old within the new tell us about the Hegelian concept of preservation and its relation to its opposite, negation?

We could interpret the kinship between negation and survival in a number of ways. On the one hand, Hegel could be saying that the older ways of knowing, or forms of being, are retained in the system as the less complex moments from which a sense of achievement or progress might be measured. Like a classical developmental tale, indeed like the disenchantment narrative, the vanishing essences would thus be stored in the vast archive of history, called upon from time to time to exemplify a past that has been improved upon.

In many ways the narrative structure of the *Phenomenology* does reflect this well-worn tale of self-development, charting the transition from immaturity into maturity, ignorance into enlightenment, and simplicity into complexity. Indeed, Hegel professes that his exposition of Spirit's journey through the various stages of the dialectic will lead both the individual, and the system as such, from an "uneducated standpoint to knowledge" (Hegel: 1977, 16). However, as Vicki Kirby explains, although sharing the generic conventions of classic narratives of

> self-recognition and moral development, stories such as John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* or Cervantes' *Don Quixote* … Hegel's narrative is an unusual one as it draws upon the conventions of story-telling while at the same time disrupting the linear structure that allows the tale to progress (2006, 5).

Unlike those classic stories of self-discovery the resolution of the *Phenomenology's* narrative does not involve the achievement of a state of enlightened autonomy unshackled from its less complex, more immature states.[90] Citing Kirby again, when reading Hegel it is always "as if we are moving forward while remaining in a place which is uncannily familiar" (2006, 5). Attending to the various stages of Hegel's text we find that the distinct moments preserved by the dialectical progression towards Absolute Knowledge are neither held precisely in the past, nor exactly differentiated from what comes "after" it. In the same way that the origin of the *Phenomenology* anticipates the end, Hegel's past similarly refuses to remain outside the present. This unsettles the sense of a historically demarcating negation used by Altizer to mark "the end of history" and the arrival of a "New Aeon of Grace" (1966b, 99). To understand this temporal congestion we need to appreciate the peculiar relationship between the dialectical *process* and the distinct *moments* that emerge throughout its unfolding in time.

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[90] Graham Ward makes a similar point about Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion.* He notes that Hegel's account of Christianity "is, like Schleiermacher's, developmental – towards Christianity as the absolute religion. But it is development not simply along a diachronic axis, but a synchronic axis" (Ward: 2003, 101): the synchronic axis being the triune structure of the dialectical rotation. Ward argues that the "double account of the historical evolution and the logical elevation" allows Hegel to appreciate the ways in which "Christianity as the consummate form of religion is found partially fulfilled in other forms of religious beliefs and practices" (Ward: 2003, 101). In this sense, although Christianity stands "higher" than other religions, Hegel's theory of religion is able (in a way that his contemporaries were not) to recognize "the integrity of other faith systems" (Ward: 2003, 102).

In the same section of the *Phenomenology* referred to above, Hegel speaks of the dialectic as a life process. He says it is "the *supersession* of all distinctions, the pure movement of axial rotation, its self-repose being an absolutely restless infinity" (Hegel: 1977, 106). This describes a system in constant agitation, a dynamic tapestry in which change is fuelled by the endless emergence and subsequent supersession of *all* its moments. However, it is important to note that the rhythm of the dialectic is not opposed to, nor understood outside of, the stability and self-identity that define the distinct "phases" that punctuate its narrative. Rather, Hegel suggests that the substantive character of each distinctive epoch of Spirit – in our terms, the primordial monism of Near Eastern enchantment, the rigid dualism of Judaic transcendence, the Church's original vision of the Kingdom, or the contemporary culture of secularism – is the movement of negation in its self-repose.

This is a difficult concept of historical identity to grasp. It directly intervenes into the Platonic opposition between being and flux, explored briefly in the previous chapter. We will recall that in the *Cratylus* dialogue, Socrates argues that identity cannot be any*thing*, has no stable set of characteristics by which it can be known, when it is in a state of transformation.[91] However, Hegel makes the radical claim that the activity of sublation, a negative movement that takes identity out of itself, allowing for a sense of change, departure, or historical progression, is the substance of identity. To demonstrate the rationale behind this seemingly

[91] "But if it is always passing away, can we correctly say of it first that it is *this*, and then that it is *such and such*? Or, at the very instant we are speaking, isn't it inevitably and immediately becoming a different thing, altering and no longer being as it was (Plato: 1998, 94, emphasis in original)?

illogical proposition Hegel separates (for heuristic purposes) the two fully implicated aspects of this ever-changing fabric of self-relation.

He argues that in certain moments the axial rotation takes the form of a flux, a "simple substance of pure movement within itself" (Hegel, 1977, 107). However, at others, the process moves in the form of independent, determinate shapes, "distinct members or parts existing on their own account" (Hegel, 1977, 106). Elaborating the qualities of these "distinct members", Hegel explains when the dynamic relations of the movements are resolved they forge determinate shapes. At this juncture, Hegel proposes that Time (or movement) becomes equal to itself and takes on the stable shape of Space (Hegel: 1977, 106). These stable moments correspond to the phases of Spirit referred to above, those distinct epochs that mark progress in the dialectic progression towards Absolute Knowledge.

Hegel appears to perceive the system at rest in these stable moments, setting up a kind of Platonic opposition between time (which is dynamic and transformative) and space (which is determinate and static). However, as he goes on to explain, the stable shape of any given moment in the dialectic is the outcome of a negative relation *within* the flux of the process. They emerge when the flux opposes *itself* to *itself*, producing itself as a determinate difference within its own slippery, ever-shifting morphology (Hegel: 1977, 107). This insight is quite extraordinary because it means that the substance of the determinate shape is in fact the flux in its relation to its own dissolution: "[i]ts self-given unity with itself is just that *fluidity* of the differences or their *general dissolution*" (Hegel: 1977, 108, emphasis in original). Or, to say the same thing in more accessible terms, the supersession of dividedness which returns the flux to

itself, "is just as much *within* the shape itself, for it is just that flux that *is* the substance of the independent shapes" (1977, 107, emphasis added).

The crux of Hegel's qualification here is that the whole mess of the system is preserved in every "discrete" moment *as* the substance by which it is defined. Spirit, thus understood, is place as movement, location as flux, identity as constant transformation. Taking a broader view of what this means for a narrative of disenchantment or secularization, this implies that the stable shapes of the dialectical system – all those stages that would ordinarily fix the identity of a particular period of time, or demarcate one epoch from another – is the animation of all that came before (and, as we shall see, all that comes after) it. In the following chapter Hegel's concept of historical identity will be used to offer a kenotic version of the narrative of disenchantment. In this chapter, however, our immediate concern is with Altizer's (enchanted) theory of secularization.

Paradoxical Commitments

The congestion of all moments within every moment of the dialectic disrupts the notion of progress used by Altizer to mark the "end of history and the arrival of the Kingdom of God" (Taylor: 1984, 570). The dialectical relation between process and product, or between transformation and identity, suggests that each epoch arrives only to find itself haunted by that which it had to negate in order to stage its appearance. There are a number of lessons that can be drawn from this insight.

First, to the question of the relation between the Incarnate Word and the transcendent God, by Hegel's reckoning the Jesus who lives on the basis of God's death is, in so far as He is the "kenotic Word", never free of transcendence. For if the dynamic flux of constant self-negation constitutes the substance of the identities produced through it, then Jesus remains the transcendent God He once was – "once" and "was" no longer being understood in terms of a linear temporality that locates them in a past-time cut off from the present. In one of his most poetic descriptions of the life of the Spirit Hegel invokes the logic of a life that endures death. He says,

> the life of the Spirit is not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it … Spirit is this power only by looking the negative in the face, and tarrying with it. This tarrying with the negative is the magical power that converts it into being. (Hegel: 1977, 19)

Hegel maintains that tarrying with the negative converts the dismemberment of Spirit into being. However, a clarifying comment is necessary here. The being that is won by tarrying with the negative is not an immanent or static "flesh", as Altizer argues. It has not "arrived" through a triumphant mastery of the disruptive force of negation or *simple* dismemberment. The being of Spirit *finds* itself in death. Vitalized by disjuncture, Spirit remains forever open to that dismemberment.

The full implications of this concept of kenosis as survival within disjuncture become quite astonishing at this point. If life endures through death, and identity becomes itself through what it is not, then the notion of closure is itself thrown into crisis. This aspect of

Hegel's thought has often drawn criticism from post-structuralist commentators like Jacques Derrida and George Bataille.[92] In an early essay Derrida engages with Bataille's critique of the life and death struggle in the chapter on "Lordship and Bondage", arguing that Hegel's claim to have achieved Absolute Knowledge through the dialectic is "laughable" (1990, 324).

Summarizing a subtle and instructive argument, the crux of Derrida's criticism is that although the dialectic is fuelled by negation, and thus believes itself to have faced death, it "restricts itself to conservation, to circulation and self-reproduction as the production of

[92] The question of Hegel's "totalizing maneuvers" (Joy: 2000, 122) has drawn much wider criticism than this. As Kirby mentions in her commentary on the dialectic, "not everyone is comfortable with the spatial and temporal metaphorics of closure, finitude and constraint that Hegel seems to be offering" (2006, 3). Specifically, many critics, particularly those writing from a feminist or post-colonial perspective, have taken issue with the "heuristic principle" used by Hegel to justify certain (discriminating and oppressive) "social, ethical and religious determinations" (Joy: 2000, 123); the most unsettling of which was the justification for "wars and empires" (Kearney: 1999, 115). As Raschke summarizes: "The Hegelian solution to the problem of metaphysics left an impressive and disquieting legacy…. If God can be thought metaphysically in terms of the progressive self-revelation of thought to itself, then the greatest of thinkers or leaders can be respected as the self-embodiment of divine thinking in a political and social setting. Such an attitude lay behind Hitler's pronouncement of the "*Führer-Prinzip* (leader principle)" (2004, 41).

Without denying the importance of these objections to Hegel's philosophy, there is, as philosophers like Taylor argue, no reason why we can't also read Hegel "otherwise" (2007, 304). Following the seminal work of Jean Hyppolite, Taylor argues that "when pushed to its logical conclusion" Hegel's system "subverts itself" (2007, 302). Hegel's Spirit, as a totality that encompasses all contrivances, draws everything into itself. Logically speaking, this means that it also "thinks sense in relation to non-sense" (Hyppolite, cited in Taylor: 2007, 302). In this way, its totality includes "what cannot be comprehended". Or, to put the same point in terms that will be explored at the end of the following chapter, the fullness of Spirit incorporates a relation to the *absolutely different*.

meaning" (1990, 323). Nothing in the dialectic is ever fully expended, nothing is "definitely lost in death…" (Derrida: 1990, 324). In this sense, Absolute Knowledge is limited, having never truly experienced the pure negativity of death.

Derrida's intervention is insightful, however, a careful reading of his essay suggests that his criticism of Hegel's conservationism derives from an understanding of death as the obliteration of consciousness which makes the return to meaning impossible. This seems to miss the systemic logic of Hegel's dialectic. If one does not begin from the presumption that death is experienced by an *individual* consciousness then a different reading of negativity can emerge. If, as Hegel's dialectic suggests, the system is alive in all of its "parts" then the death of one "part" can conceivably return to "life" in the other, as, for instance, a piece of fruit left to rot on the ground can feed the soil beneath it.

The sense of infinitude and implication that is implied by the provocation of a life lived within and through its own death contains a critical lesson for theorists of secularization. A dialectical reading of the Incarnation must acknowledge that the kenotic passage from Spirit to flesh can never be complete, in the sense of coming to an end, achieving some final unity, and thus, forgoing the agitating flux that it is. In turn, if the process of Incarnation is never finished, then the "collapse" responsible for sinking the divinity into the secular is similarly never total. Although passing into, and becoming the world, the Spirit remains different to it; or, a difference within it. This undermines Altizer's hopes for the arrival of an immanent Kingdom, because it suggests that the enchantment that "arrives" with secularization continues to be the transcendence that holds God apart from the world. Enchantment is, in this sense, also always disenchantment.

Concurrently, the dialectical relation between life and death qualifies Berger's and McGrath's concerns about the loss of distinction between the religious and the secular. If the divine retains its super-naturalness even when it is brought into communication with the world, then neither religion, nor Spirit can finally disappear. The distinction upon which the integrity of religion rests remains safe even as it engages in (improper) commerce with secular life.

Of course, there is a double-bind in this logic that might compromise the "gain" won here by Berger. Our excursion through Hegelian dialectics should tell us that the difference retained in the passage of Spirit into the world does not necessarily return us to the stable footing of an unchanging distinction between the secular and the religious, or the sacred and profane. Far from it. As we have seen, the relations between divinity and world, spirit and flesh, transcendence and immanence are always implicated, always kenotic. The difference that fortifies the secular/religious distinction thus also breaches it *absolutely*.

Conclusion

We are catching sight of a concept of secularity that, as Taylor suggests, remains haunted by the religious even "when it seems to be absent" (2007, 132), and of a spiritual immanence that lingers in spatio-temporalities outside its own present/presence. This view of the secular places the narrative of secularization in an interesting position. What we have seen in our analysis of Hegelian dialectics tells us that if we are to retain the conventional form of historical narrative to explain changes taking place over time in the relationship between

religion and society, changes invoked by Weber, Berger, Taylor, Altizer and Gauchet, then it seems that we must abandon the organizational structure of a strictly linear temporality and the concepts of corruption, loss, or simple achievement – understood as completion – that draw energy from it.

When read within the context of our examination of the paradoxes underpinning Weber's theory of disenchantment our exploration of the concept of kenosis in this chapter demonstrates the need for a theory of secularization that can comprehend an historical epoch congested by both enchantment and disenchantment. This means that we need to take account of a modernity that remains primitive as well as a primordial plenitude that is already corrupted by the modern. In more structural terms, it tells us that we require a theory of secularization capable of seeing the conditions of possibility for the Fall *and* for the spiritual endurance that contradicts it, at every stage of the narrative: both at the beginning and at the end.

As strange as it might seem, we have already encountered this theory. We have been tracing it through Weber's PE, seeing its kenotic structure arise out of the intraplay between the notion of secularization as collapse and the seemingly contradictory account of secularization as disjuncture. We saw it in Weber's explanation for the corruption of the ascetic spirit, explored at the beginning of the previous chapter. We will recall that Weber's summary explanation for the corruption of Puritan asceticism suggested that it was the spirit *itself* that engendered the corrosive breech that would go on to corrupt it from without. By following that seeming paradox through his account of Calvinist theology we witnessed the unanticipated return of enchantment to disenchantment.

The same logic could also be observed in the paradox uncovered in Gauchet's account of the breech that conditioned the modern world; namely, in his admission that the unchanging unity of the primordial sacral cosmos was constituted as a response to a Fall that had yet "to come". The prescience implied by this paradox recognized the presence of the fractured "end" at work in the origin.

These comments exemplify how a theory of secularization as the survival of spirit within its own death has been slowly making its way to the surface throughout the development of this thesis argument. In the following chapter we will use Taylor's theory of secularization as a dialectical *altarnation* between monism and dualism to pull together the separate threads of this argument, elaborating the contours of a kenotic theory of secularization from the perspective of the modern, secular, "end" of this narrative. Turning back to the beginning, a deconstructive reading will demonstrate that Weber's PE and SAV texts testify to the enduring and active presence of Spirit within the modern world. This Spirit, which comes (back) in the form of a ghost, shows us that through the paradoxes and ambiguities in his thought, Weber was able to produce a kenotic theory of secularization that traces the survival of Spirit through disjuncture, death, and disenchantment.

CHAPTER FIVE: SURVIVAL AND RETURN IN THE SECULAR PRESENT

The theory of kenosis is a theory of secularization. As Altizer's "death of god" theology has shown theories of kenosis chart the becoming-worldly of Spirit. Conventionally read, kenosis explains how a transcendent, otherworldly God was able to enter into the world and adopt a fleshly, secular form. In the last chapter we saw that this process of incarnation is often understood in terms of an either/or economy. To become flesh God must give up what sets Him apart from the world – His transcendence. In this way kenosis recuperates an orthodox understanding of secularization, in that it entails a loss.

For many of the theorists examined in this thesis, the loss of transcendence described by this process is equated with the undoing of a *prior* religious integrity. As we have seen in earlier chapters, the purported transformation of religion from a more spirituality oriented practice into a concern for the world is thought to represent the corruption of a natural economy designed to hold God apart from the world, and religion apart from the secular. In Bruce and Wallis' words, when the *super*natural is removed from religion what makes it "specifically religious" is evacuated (1994, 21). For Altizer, on the other hand, the shift from otherworldliness to worldliness, a shift also predicated on an erasure of God's transcendence, is seen in terms of achievement. It represents the evolution of a more authentic kind of faith, a distinctly modern understanding of the divine that gives fuller expression to Christ's original vision of the Kingdom.

Despite differences between these interpretations of the kenotic passage, the terms of analysis used by Altizer, McGrath, Bruce and Wallis and the Puritan writers cited by Weber in support of his argument, remain exactly the same. The transition secularization records inevitably moves from an original spiritual plenitude, through religious otherworldliness, into the immanence of worldly (modern) culture. What is more, the shift from one epoch into another, from one system of belief into the next, is invariably seen as a *forward* movement. Irrespective of whether it is regarded as a positive or negative cultural achievement, something good or bad for religion, historical transformation always takes us from a more primitive or naïve understanding of god, self and world into a more complex or advanced one. This is true even for those who mourn the simplicity assured by the primitivism of the (lost) origin.

This is particularly evident in Weber's ambivalent attitude towards disenchantment. Like Peter L. Berger and sociologist John Carroll, Weber regarded the evacuation of transcendent and supernatural points of reference from modern culture as a rather painful liberation. It facilitated the fragmentation of religious, ethical, and semantic schemata generally, distancing us from our traditional sources of meaning. Nevertheless, Weber also felt that this process of rupturing was an essential part of the development of the moral maturity appropriate to "modern man". Seen as a consequence of secularization, the attributes thought to be necessary for the development of that maturity – cultural differentiation, a sense of the future, human agency, individual autonomy and self-consciousness, or self-conscious decision-making – are, by default, withheld from a past thought to be more religious.

This tells us that irrespective of how the displacement of transcendence and the subsequent turn to the worldly is theorized, the narrative used to frame the process of this loss

is constant. Maturity, complexity and insight are located in a present-time that can be delineated from a past it has left behind.

However, the analysis undertaken in the last two chapters of this thesis has given us reason to challenge this understanding of history as a narrative of progress. The focus of this critique has not been the question of whether or not the Enlightenment and its largely secularist program has achieved all that it promised: freedom from (religious) dogmatism, a more just and equal society, greater knowledge about the conditions under which we live, and the ability to intervene into, and improve, them (Jakobsen and Pellegrini: 2000, 1). For reasons that will be explained below, nor has this thesis called upon evidence of a so-called "return of the religious" or "de-secularization of the world" to question the veracity of a theory of history that states that as societies modernize they must also necessarily secularize, eventually leading to the "decline of religion, in both society and in the minds of individuals" (Berger: 1999, 2).

Although both of these approaches to the critique of secularization have yielded significant insights about the contradictions inherent in the theory, the direction this thesis has taken has been slightly different. The specific concern orienting discussion over the past few chapters has been the notion of progress as such, in so far as this concept has been conceived of in terms of *departure*: definitive breaks between epochs; the common place idea that as we move forward in time we take leave of the past (a past that can be repudiated or mourned, but is, nonetheless, lost to the present); even the simple idea that a future awaits us, a future that can offer us something that is currently unavailable to us. To better appreciate how this contention fits into the thesis argument as a whole, a brief reiteration of some of the terrain we have covered is necessary.

Modernity and Premodernity

In the second and third chapters we examined the relationship between the modern and its past. As we have seen, conventional accounts of secularization and disenchantment designate modernity as a special period in the history of the West. It is characterized as the time when God dies, when culture becomes wholly disenchanted, and when, as a result of this, the institutional practice of religion is marginalized from the main stream of society.

Importantly, the often taken-for-granted presumption that modernity can be defined wholly by its disenchantment has been used to justify the idea that it is more rational, calculating, scientific and self-aware than its past. As mentioned above, these attributes are not always regarded positively. Theorists like Martin E. Marty, for instance, see the instrumental rationality of modernity as well suited to meet the needs of "the 'operational' side of life" but unable to "satisfy the human heart" (2003, 46). Nevertheless, below we shall see that *both* critics *and* advocates of the disenchantment narrative accept the idea that the rationalized culture of modernity can be marked out as different from a premodern past that was more religious, enchanted and mystical than the socio-cultural and semantic systems that came to replace it (McPhillips: 2002, 180). It can also, again by virtue of its secularity, be distinguished from a postmodern present to which religion has returned, albeit transformed.

Chapter Three addressed the widely held belief that modernity was unequivocally disenchanted, and that this disenchantment separated it from the religious enchantments of its premodern past. Carefully tracing the logic of Calvin's doctrine of the *fides efficax* we

uncovered an implosion in which human agency was erased, making way for the complete immanence of the divine in the modern. This seemed to infer that the enchantment thought to have been lost to an earlier period was, in fact, alive and well in modern capitalism.

The aim of Chapter Four was to explore the implications of this insight for a theory of modern enchantment. We will return to discuss the significance of Altizer's theory for the broader argument of this thesis shortly. Firstly, it is important to note that the motivation for developing a theory of modern enchantment was not to demonstrate the "return to" a more magical, less rational or rationalizing way of being modern. It was rather, to extend the concept of the enchanted to include what has traditionally been opposed to it – the instrumental and rational.

As we saw, the sense of divine immanence implied by the *fides efficax* clearly indicated that something like enchantment was at work in Calvinism. However, the *fides efficax* are not irrational, world-negating, mystical practices, in the sense that Weber would define these terms. They are the highly methodical, calculated, rational forms of worldly conduct conducive to the development of the capitalist political economy. In this sense, the *fides efficax* dissolve the bifurcation of rational and mystical forms of religion by holding the enchanted and disenchanted together. The mutual implication of enchantment and disenchantment in Calvinism, which is also to say, in the modern, undermines the easy separation of these two apparently divergent religious "types" and the discrete historical periods with which they are associated.

Similarly, addressing the implosion of these antitheses at the other "end" of this narrative, Chapter Two examined the factors said to motivate historical change and religious corruption in the primordial sacred cosmos. This analysis demonstrated that the transcendence that is thought to have *disrupted* the apparent plenitude of the primordial sacred cosmos was able to take hold in enchantment, to interrupt its self-enclosure, only because it was already there. Much like the discovery of enchantment within Calvinism, the appearance of the fracturing logic of disenchantment in primordial monism confuses the linearity of a sequential understanding of history.

In more specific terms, these examples highlight the endurance of the (enchanted) past within the (modern) present, and the arrival, before its time, of the (disenchanted) future into the (seemingly timeless, self-enclosed) present (of the enchanted past). In turn, this infers that a complex weave of enchantment and disenchantment is at work in all stages of the narrative of secularization. Given this, one would think that an acknowledgment of this logic would necessarily *include the modern*.

Modernity and Postmodernity

As mentioned above, the first three chapters scrutinized the way theorists of secularization and disenchantment have compared the modern to the premodern and enchanted. The focus of this present chapter will shift to slightly different terrain, considering the way the relationship between the modern and postmodern has been conceived within contemporary discourse about secularization.

Many contemporary theorists of religion acknowledge that the conventional schema used to think about processes of secularization, and religious transformation generally, is inadequate (see Berger: 1999, Marty: 2003, C. Taylor: 2007, Taylor: 2007, Woodhead and Heelas: 2005; McPhillips: 2002). As mentioned in the introduction, the contention that secularization is a unilinear and universal process, one that will inevitably see the end of religion and the removal of magic, mystery and miracle from Western (modern) societies, has been criticized on a number of fronts. The most influential forms of critique have pointed out that, far from being a wholly disenchanted place, "[t]he world today … is as furiously religious as it ever was" (Berger: 1999, 2).

It is important to note that critics like Berger have not argued that the theory of secularization is wholly wrong, or that there has been no secularization to speak of. Rather they maintain that although "modernization has had some secularizing effects, more in some places than in others", it has also provoked "power movements of counter-secularization" (Berger: 1999, 3) that have lead to a re-enchantment of the world (Berger: 1993, 29).

As Berger explains it, modernization produces cultural conditions that are "cold and comfortless" (1993, 29). Recalling the discussion of disenchantment in Chapter Two, Berger argues that its tendency to pluralize and rationalize social spheres challenges our capacity to construct and maintain meaningful systems of belief (Berger: 1993, 45; see also McPhillips: 2002, 180). Put differently, the fracturing effects of modernization undermine our sense of "wholeness" in a way that many people living in postindustrial Western societies find unbearable (Berger: 1993, 45; see also Marty: 2003). The recent turn towards both new and old forms of religion is thus thought to reflect what Kathleen McPhillips describes as a "cultural

desire for re-enchantment" (2002, 177; see also Possamai: 2006, 54). We will return to some of these themes below.

Significantly, the so-called "return of religion" in the West is said to have resulted in an extraordinarily complex socio-cultural landscape. Many claim that the array of contradictory forces that define this landscape is too vast and diverse to be captured by the old binary schema: religious or secular; worldly or otherworldly; materialist or spiritual (Marty: 2003, 42). Indeed, theorists speak of a *postmodern* world characterized by the intertwining of elements of enchantment and disenchantment, spiritualism and rationalism, religion and secularity. McPhillips, for instance, argues that "forces of disenchantment and enchantment lie very close together … in … unresolved ways" in many aspects of contemporary Western culture (2002, 184). Similarly, Marty proposes that our world is best defined as "religio-secular" (Marty: 2003, 42). Returning to the introductory discussion where we were first acquainted with these arguments, the term religio-secular tries to accommodate the perplexing fact that "[i]ndividuals, cultures, nations, and societies … are really secular [and] … in another dimension and from another perspective [are] really religious" (Marty: 2003, 47). Caputo also gives eloquent expression to the confusing mix of forces that defines postmodernity when he notes that,

> [w]e live in a world where the most sophisticated scientific and high-tech achievements cohabit not only with traditional religion but also with the most literal-minded fundamentalisms, New-Age spiritualities, and belief in all sorts of bizarre, hocus-pocus phenomena. (Caputo: 2001, 70)

These theories of re-enchantment and religious return engage an almost kenotic understanding of the implication[93] between enchantment and disenchantment. In this way, they seem to express the same sense of confusion that a kenotic understanding of Spirit implies for the relationship between apparent opposites. However, although conceding to the cohabitation of religion and secularity within postmodernity, few theorists are willing to extend this communion of differences into the modern. In the discourse on re-enchantment and religious return the modern remains as straightforwardly secular as the premodern was religious. In this sense, the inauguration of an appreciation of the fluid nature of the religious (and the secular) is employed to mark a departure from a modern epoch closed to this confusion. Caputo exemplifies this attitude when he asserts that,

> [a]ll this talk about the impossible [by which he means the post-secular forms of religion mentioned above] has only recently become possible again. It has for too long been declared off limits – by 'modernity', by the 'Enlightenment', by the great 'masters of suspicion', Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche, who proposed to unmask it as so much displaced 'libidinal desire' or 'alienated consciousness'. But contemporary philosophers have grown increasingly weary with the 'old' Enlightenment. Their tendency has been more and more to unmask the modernist unmaskers, to criticize

[93] In the introduction we found that a strong sense of distinction remains within the attempt to conjoin religion and secularity. This compromises any sense that their relation could be conceived of in kenotic terms; that is, as an *intra*relation. The prefix "intra" is used here, instead of the more commonly deployed "inter", because, as we saw in the previous chapter, the relations implied by kenosis confound the sense of a "between". That is to say, the differential relation inhabits the terms it connects, rather than sitting between them.

> the modernist critiques … to question modernity's prejudice against prejudice. (Caputo: 2001, 37)

To do justice to the sophistication of Caputo's account, it is essential to note that he too expresses an "unease" about "easy periodization" that divides history into sacral, secular and post-secular ages (2001, 38). He also qualifies that the postmodern religious return is less a break with modernity's Enlightenment than it is a reiteration of the enlightenment "by other means" (Caputo: 2001, 60). Nevertheless, despite these qualifications Caputo is still confident enough in the distinction between the modern and the postmodern to suggest that the "restraints upon our thinking" imposed by "modernity and *its* Enlightenment" have only "recently" been repealed (Caputo and Scanlon: 1999, 2, emphasis in original).

This is a notion of history as progress and it realizes a moral schema not unlike that uncovered in Weber's work. The idea that it has only *recently* become possible to acknowledge the "impossible" suggests that the postmodern has achieved an openness towards the religious that is missing in the modern. It is flexible about the boundaries that carve up the world into either/or categories in a way that modernity was not. In this sense, and in exactly the same way that modernity, according to Caputo, looked back upon its past as less complex and more naïve, this view of the postmodern pictures modernity as a constraining cultural milieu that needed to be overcome. In sum, this logic suggests that to arrive in the *post*-modern, post-secular, de-secularized or re-enchanted world is to have affected a successful exodus from the secularism of the modern.

We will turn now to two contemporary theorists of religion whose interventions in this field of scholarship attempt to redress the problematic sense of epochal distinction outlined above. Richard Jenkins offers a theory of a distinctly *modern* dialectic of disenchantment and enchantment that sees "(re)enchantment … as an integral element of modernity. Not just as a consequence, or a reaction, but right at the heart of the matter" (2000, 22). This represents a significant improvement on conventional accounts of re-enchantment, extending the sense of internal divergence available to the postmodern into the modern.

Taking a broader historical perspective Taylor argues that the history of the West is written by the endless *altarnation* between monism and dualism. This *altarnation* (not to be confused with alternation) forms a complex religious system or network that is reminiscent of the concept of kenosis developed through our reading of Hegel. That is to say, Taylor's complex religious schema figures the divine as a "self-engendering and self-organizing creative process" (Taylor: 2007, 159). Furthermore, Taylor argues that the complex religious schemata is formed through, and is in turn, formative of, "the margin of difference constitutive of monism and dualism" (2007, 41). As the margin of difference responsible for the distinct characteristics of enchantment *and* disenchantment, as well as their coimplication, religious complexity can be seen as the condition of possibility for *all* manifestations of religion in the history of the West: within/as enchantment, disenchantment, secularization, de-secularization. This perspective also compromises some of the distinctions commonly used to demarcate epochs from one another, according certain characteristics to some, and withholding them from others.

However, although both Jenkins and Taylor offer provocative material for extending the analysis of kenosis into a more comprehensive theory of religious transformation, we will see that neither author is able to sustain the promise of their argument. In Jenkins it becomes impossible to see the enchanted as/in the modern because it points *beyond* the disenchanted rationalism that characterizes it. In Taylor, the promise of a complexity that is present in/as all time(s) is curtailed by a hesitation to extend the fullness of its activity to any period prior to postmodernity.

This discussion will show us that it is not enough to concede to the presence of enchantment within modernity as an *alternative* to its disenchantment; nor is it enough to assert that earlier stages of this narrative represent a *partial* expression of a complex entanglement of monism and dualism that is only fully deployed in postmodernity. A Spirit that is kenotic, a Spirit engendered by the *altarnating* play of enchantment and disenchantment, is present in all times.

The Enchanted Face of Disenchantment

The intention of Jenkins' "Disenchantment, Enchantment and Re-Enchantment: Max Weber at the Millennium" (2000) is to challenge "the classic Weberian account of disenchantment as a uni-directional and universalizing tendency of modernity" (Jenkins: 2000, 11). However, echoing the concerns about notions of religious return outlined above, Jenkins states that he does not want to critique this view by arguing that a sense of enchantment lost in modernity has returned to the West in postmodernity. As mentioned earlier, he maintains that

both disenchantment *and* enchantment should be located right at the heart of the modern (Jenkins: 2000, 22).

In addition to this, Jenkins asserts that notions of response or consequence, where enchantment is set up as an *alternative to* disenchantment, fail to capture the deeply entangled relationship between enchantment and disenchantment (2000, 22). Re-enchantment is not, so Jenkins insists, a "reaction" to disenchantment, but, as mentioned above, sits "right at the heart" of modernity's disenchantment (2000, 22).

Jenkins is making an oblique reference here to theorists like Peter L. Berger who propose that the world today is marked by an antagonistic inter-play between processes of secularization and counter-secularization (Berger: 1993; 1999). Berger argues that although these contradictory forces often push and pull against each other, movements of secularization and counter-secularization, or disenchantment and re-enchantment, cannot be understood as separate (1999, 7). He notes that "[i]n country after country … religious upsurges have a strongly populist character. Over and beyond the purely religious motives, these are movements of protest and resistance *against* a secular elite" (Berger: 1999, 11, emphasis in original). In this sense, Berger maintains that the expression of religious passion today "reflect[s] the presence of secularizing forces, since they must be understood as a reaction against those forces" (Berger: 1999, 7).

Berger's contention that secularization and counter-secularization cannot be understood separately is explained through an oppositional logic that views them as distinct. As he remarks in the citation above, religious resurgence in the contemporary world responds

to, and often self-consciously opposes, secularization (Berger: 1993, 43-45). This tells us that although Berger views contemporary attempts to re-enchant the world as relative to the forces of secularization they oppose, they are in no danger of being confused with them. The same logic of supplementarity can be seen in Marty's contention, discussed in the introduction, that religion will always accompany secularization because although the instrumental rationality of secular culture is successful in attending to the "operational" side of life, it "does little to satisfy the human heart" (Marty: 2003, 46). The contention that religion acts as a supplement to the barren "rationality of modern life" (Marty: 2003, 46) draws leverage from the presumption that religion and secularity are inherently different, and that this heterogeneity allows them to administer to different aspects of our lives (see Marty: 2003, 46).

In contradistinction to this view Jenkins proposes that disenchantment is a necessarily incomplete and internally contradictory process, and as such consistently "stimulates" *its own* processes of enchantment (2000, 28). Similarly, enchantment is said to generate its own disenchantments and re-enchantments, suggesting to Jenkins that "[t]he two are opposite sides of *one* coin" (2000, 11, emphasis added).

We might regard the analogy of the two sides of a coin as a somewhat inadequate expression of Jenkins intention because the enchanted and disenchanted faces of this coin remain distinct even in their conjunction. Indeed, it could be said that one is visible only when the other is invisible, suggesting that although they are bound together in an oscillating structure, they are mutually exclusive. We will hold off on further analysis of this problematic at this point and attend to the detail of Jenkins' argument.

Jenkins begins his critique of the "classical Weberian account of disenchantment" by pointing out that the formal-rational logics cultivated by modern science, bureaucracy, law, and policy making, the means-end rationalities that Weber identifies as drivers of disenchantment, are often "subverted" by "oppositional (re)enchantments" (Jenkins: 2000, 12). As an example of this subversion Jenkins calls our attention to the notions of luck and fate, and the traditional and new age spiritual beliefs that often undermine calculated, procedural, formal processes of decision-making in modern institutions (2000, 12).

> [E]ven within the most efficiently rationalized of bureaucracies, 'irrational' dimensions of social life – symbolism and myth, notions of fate or luck, sexuality, religious or other ideologies, ethnic sentiment, etc. – necessarily influence organizational behaviour (Jenkins: 2000, 14).

If this example also seems to return us to the bifurcating logic of opposition, Jenkins works hard to argue that the enchantment of which he speaks is fully implicated in disenchantment and vice versa. It is not only that these forms of enchantment contradict the pretensions of some idealized notion of formal-rationality, "formal-rational logics and processes can *themselves* be (re)enchanted from *within*, or become vehicles of (re)enchantment" (2000, 13, emphasis added).

Here Jenkins suggests that enchantment is internal to disenchantment, or indeed that disenchantment can become/is enchanted. To support this contention Jenkins argues that (re)-enchantment can adopt a disenchanted face, taking the form of rationally organized business (2000, 13). As an example of this he mentions the contemporary commodification of

Romanticism – which he defines as the "imagining of, and yearning for, a mythical pre-modern, unrationalized past (Jenkins: 2000, 19) – in the form of fantastic cinema blockbusters.[94] *Star Wars, Episode One: The Phantom Menace* is cited as a specific example of this (Jenkins: 2000, 19), but there is no doubt that if he were presenting the same argument today, Jenkins would add the commercial success of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, cinematic adaptations of Dan Brown's novels, and more recently, James Cameron's *Avatar*.

Pushing this insight further, Jenkins notes that Romanticism itself, including it's longing for numinosity, is as much a part of modernity's story as the rationalization associated with the Enlightenment (Jenkins: 2000, 19-22). To make this point, Jenkins argues that the Holocaust "was a product of modern bureaucratic rationality", but was no less "an exercise in re-enchantment rooted in German Romanticism" (2000, 22). Examples like this provoke Jenkins to speak of a "[d]isenchanted enchantment" (2000, 22), which, written without the hyphen, tries to express their inseparability.

Finding Fault in Weber

Jenkins uses the examples of enchantment's implication within disenchantment to ponder whether Weber did not underestimate "the capacity of humans to routinely resist or subvert … formal bureaucratic rationalities" (2000, 14). This comment is designed to suggest

[94] It is not clear why enchantment is necessarily rationalized by becoming commoditized, or why its commodification compromises the sense of Romanticism's enchantment. Surely one of Weber's most lasting contributions to the study of religion is that *all* religious systems, even enchanted or magical ones, contain the kernel of rationality. As we saw in the first and second chapters of this thesis, it is for this reason that Weber identifies the origins of modern processes of rationalization in the religious problem of theodicy.

an oversight in Weber's theory, a limitation created by his presumption that cultural disenchantment was a largely uniform and universal process. Similarly, Weber's steadfast belief that disenchantment would shatter the moral-cognitive worldview of premodern enchantment, leading to a decline of magic and an intolerance of mystery, is said to be a shortcoming in his theorization (Jenkins: 2000, 15). To highlight this lacuna and simultaneously offer a defense of it, Jenkins nominates "weird science"[95] (2000, 11), alternative medical practices such as acupuncture or homeopathy, and therapies "rooted in radically different cosmologies" as evidence that "the progressive banishment of mystery in the face of 'objective' knowledge is an idea which was more defensible in Weber's day than it is today" (Jenkins: 2000, 17).

The attempt to defend Weber's omission of these more enchanted variants of scientific rationality seems to recuperate the epochal distinction Jenkins wanted to overcome. Put differently, the suggestion that "weird" science and alternative medical practices entertain a sense of spiritual numinosity or mystery that the science of Weber's day, or to be more accurate, the science of Weber's writings cannot, resurrects the commonplace idea that modernity was more rational, more disenchanted, than the contemporary world. Additionally, although Jenkins' example of Romanticism tries to capture the provocative contention that enchantment belongs at the very heart of modernity, that it really is the disenchantment we too often oppose it to, the language of bifurcation inadvertently returns in Jenkins' account, suggesting that it is nothing more than an alternative to the rationalities of the Enlightenment.

[95] By weird science Jenkins means those scientific discoveries that break with the rationality of the "unified epistemological and explanatory framework" of Newtonian physics (Jenkins: 2000, 17).

> A definitively modern movement of (re)enchantment that … deserves mention in its own right, is the diverse portfolio of perspectives and practices that developed as a *response* to the rationalism of the Enlightenment, and which shelter … under the broad umbrella of Romanticism. (Jenkins: 2000, 19, emphasis added)

The sense that Jenkins views enchantment as an alternative to, and thus entirely distinct from, disenchantment is even clearer in his definition of enchantment. Jenkins argues that "(re)enchantment" involves

> two linked tendencies: one which insists that there are more things in the universe than are dreamed of by the rationalist epistemologies and ontologies of science, the other which rejects the notion that calculative, procedural, formal rationality is always the 'best way'. (2000, 12)

Jenkins' definition of enchantment as a looking *beyond* what can be dreamt of by "the rationalist epistemologies and ontologies of science" presupposes that the dream of something transcending "the material" (Jenkins: 2000, 29) does not belong to modern science itself. It implies that it is not disenchantment's dream, but rather a dream that must be added to it in order to subvert its (otherwise unproblematic) pretensions to rationalism. What Jenkins doesn't consider here is that the dream of something outside the rationalities of modern science may be sciences' dream itself, or, as we shall see, Weber's dream of science (which obviously questions its exteriority to the rationalities of disenchantment).

Moreover, when Jenkins argues that there are "good reasons for challenging Weber's diagnosis of these dimensions of disenchantment" (2000, 15) he passes over the more radical possibility that the dream of the numinous is not unveiled by challenging Weber's disenchantment with evidence of alternative forms of spirituality or reactionary modes of religious participation. Rather, this kenotic vision can be illuminated by opposing Weber *to himself*; seeing where the contradictions in his writings indicate that scientific disenchantment is conditioned by a spiritual force that it simultaneously seeks to preclude or explain away.

In a moment we will return to the SAV lecture, finding that the concept of religion that Fenn discovered in Weber's account of modernity, explored briefly in Chapter Three, incorporates more than an ethic of responsibility or a nostalgia for the religious *past*. An inter-textual dialogue between the PE and the SAV bears witness to the Romantic experience of enchantment that Jenkins finds so lacking in Weber's writings, attesting to the presence of kenosis within those texts. Presently, we must turn to Mark C. Taylor's *After God* (2007), where he elaborates a theory of religious transformation that would seem to realize the promise of Jenkins' desire to envision enchantment right at the heart of disenchantment.

Religious Complexity 'After God'

One of the primary arguments of *After God* is that religion "haunts society, self, and culture even – perhaps especially – when it seems to be absent" (Taylor: 2007, 132). According to Taylor even the "ostensibly secular culture" of many contemporary Western societies bears the trace of "the spectre of religion" (2007, 132). For this reason we could go so far as to say

that there is no truly "secular" society, if we understand that to mean a society bereft of spirit, closed to the religious and blind to enchantment.

This argument is made on two levels. A carefully elaborated and extensively researched history of the key developments that punctuate the cultural, scientific, economic and social history of the West are called upon to demonstrate that while "secularity is a *religious* phenomenon", "religion in the West has always harboured secularity" (Taylor: 2007, 132, emphasis in original). In other words, the two are not polar opposites, but are "coemergent and codependent" (Taylor: 2007, 132). The codependent relationship between religion and secularity is demonstrated with reference to the intimate relationship between Protestantism and the key institutions of modern (ostensibly) secular culture.

Although the historical frame of his book is much broader than this thesis, Taylor traces this relationship through some of the historical *topoi* examined here: the role played by Lutheranism and Calvinism in the development of capitalism (2007, 43-83); the ancient origins of disenchantment, which he also tracks back into the 8th century Near East (2007, 130-141); and the importance of (primarily Protestant) interpretations of the doctrine of Incarnation to a more radical understanding of secularization (2007, 141-164).

At a more theoretical level, Taylor's argument is supported by a concept of the religious that is flexible enough to embrace all dimensions of the conventional narrative of secularization used to demarcate the religious (society, institution, or epoch) from the secular and the enchanted from the disenchanted. He proposes that

> [r]eligion is an emergent, complex, adaptive network of symbols, myths, and ritual that, on the one hand, figure schemata of feeling, thinking, and acting in ways that lend life meaning and purpose and, on the other, disrupt, dislocate, and disfigure every stabilizing structure. (Taylor: 2007, 13)

Over the course of the book Taylor builds on this definition, arguing that as a complex adaptive network religion is an internally divergent, self-engendering, self-organizing creative *process* (2007, 137, 159, 164, 311). Its ability to structure meaning and simultaneously destabilize it gives religious expression identity, order, and definable characteristics, but also keeps it open to constant transformation and change (Taylor: 2007, 41). In other words, religion is capable of being identified with *certain* traditions, beliefs and practices, with "what occurs in churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples" (Taylor: 2007); but is also more than this. Driven by an *altarnating* rhythm between the immanence of monism and the transcendence of dualism, every particularized manifestation of religion is always, and at any moment, capable of becoming other to itself by becoming its other.

As there are a number of complicated claims being expressed here, further elaboration is necessary.

Alternatives and *Altarity*

Taylor's definition of religious complexity is underpinned by a "quasi-dialectical" theory of historical transformation. As Taylor sees it, the history of religion in the West "grows out of the repeated 'altarnation' between the monism and dualism" (2007, 133-134). That is to

say, it fluctuates between the development of belief systems that emphasize the immanence of the divine (or real), and others which see the divine (or real) as transcendent (Taylor: 2007, 37-41). As an example of this Taylor cites the seemingly dialectical shifts "between" Near Eastern enchantment and Judaic disenchantment, a shift replicated in Protestantism "between" its highly spiritualistic and deeply rationalistic forms (2007, 72-73); and "between" Barthian neo-orthodoxy and the radical immanence proposed by Altizer's death of God theology, examined in the previous chapter (Taylor: 2007, 200).

However, Taylor does not envision these conflicting ways of imaging the God, self, world relation as alternatives. As *altarnatives* they are constitutively implicated in each other in ways that undermine the sense of their distinction. Explaining what an *altarnative* is, Taylor notes that *altarity* "specifies the endless alternation[96] through which binary and dialectical differences are articulated in such a way that their oppositions are overcome" (Taylor: 2007, 127).

This explanation tells us that, like Hegel, Taylor views difference and identity as relational terms. To recall our analysis of Hegel, as relational terms, identity and difference are implicated within one another and, as Hegel puts, *contain* one another (Hegel, cited in Taylor: 1984). This is because "each is relative to the other, and thus each must inhabit and is inhabited by the other" (Taylor: 2007, 40). Adding more detail to this insight, Taylor maintains

[96] It is curious that Taylor would slip back into the language of alternation even as he tries to articulate the logic of *altarnation*. As we shall see, this reflects more than a semantic oversight, but gestures towards an unacknowledged commitment to the bifurcating logic his theory seeks to overturn.

that relational differences "draw" identities "out of themselves" in a way that confounds the very differences they create. This is a critical point and worth exploring in more detail.

Altarity and *différance*

A diverse range of intellectual traditions and thinkers inform Taylor's contention that differences inhabit the identities their friction creates. However, the French philosopher, Jacques Derrida, could be said to be one of the most important. Derrida's neologism *différance*, developed through his elaboration of Ferdinand de Saussure's insight that language is a system of differences without positive terms (Derrida: 1991, 63), inspired the "a" in altarity and, as we shall see, shares and explains a number of its critical claims (V. Taylor and Winquist: 2001, 8).

One of the most enduring contributions made by the "father of modern linguistics", at least as Derrida sees it, is Saussure's elaboration of the arbitrary nature of the sign. In the *Course in Linguistics* (1983, hereafter *Course*),[97] Saussure affects a radical departure from his predecessors[98] by arguing that the identity of the sign is forged through a "mysterious process"

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[97] As is well known, the *Course* was compiled posthumously from the notes of some of Saussure's students. The original edition of the *Course* was put together by Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, published in France in 1916, and translated into English by Wade Baskin in 1959. There currently exist a number of translations, the most authoritative being Roy Harris's 1983 edition. There are significant differences in these editions, and although I mostly refer to Harris' translation, at times I have used the Bally and Sechehaye where I feel their choice of terminology better expresses the spirit of Saussure's project.

[98] Saussure's relationship with the intellectual tradition preceding him is quite complicated. Vicki Kirby's skilful exegesis of the *Course* shows that Saussure was never able to entirely shake off the nomenclaturist understanding of language that he sought to overturn (1997, 39-40). She also notes that his recuperation of the "conceptual

(Saussure: 1983, 111) by which signifiers and signifieds come together to form distinct linguistic entities. Furthermore, in contradistinction to the Platonic conception of language outlined in Chapter Three, he argues that the parts of the sign are co-terminus (neither concept nor sound pattern precedes the other) and purely arbitrary. As Saussure states, no "inner relationship" governs the bond between the two parts of the sign. There is no rational reason why the concept sister, for instance, should be designated by the word "sister" (Saussure: 1983, 67). "The same idea might as well be represented by any other sequence of sounds" (Saussure: 1983, 68), without changing its meaning.

The first principle of linguistics, the arbitrary nature of the sign, is complex in its implications. Indeed Saussure himself notes that as "the organizing principle for the whole of linguistics", "the consequences which flow from" it "are innumerable" (Saussure: 1983, 68). Despite the potential insight might be gained from tracking these consequences our interest here must be confined to what this principle means for the differential character of linguistic identity, and through this, for the broader question of identity. As Saussure goes on to demonstrate, because the sign does not derive its identity from an essential relationship to an extra-linguistic reality – neither from the so-called referent, nor the concept so often thought to precede it - it necessarily draws its identity from *within* the language system; specifically, from relations of contrast between signs.

To demonstrate this deceptively simple "rule" Saussure outlines the way in which the particular identity of the sign is delimited by registrations of negatively defined differences

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regime" he wanted to reject, is "not simply mistaken" (Kirby: 1997, 40). It points to tensions within his thought that reveal the "relational in-habiting" between essentialism and anti-essentialism (Kirby: 1997, 40).

across both the phonic and conceptual planes (Saussure: 1983, 111-120). He shows that when we register a particular sign as intelligible, or significant, what we hear/read is not any positive property belonging to that phoneme. Rather what we hear/read is its difference to other sounds for which it could be mistaken.

In the case of the sign "judge" we could say that the term is made up of a sequence of phonemes, 'j', 'u', 'dg', and that, put together, these phonemes designate a concept, "to judge". But Saussure tells us that the phonemes that constitute the sign "judge" are not *themselves* significant. They are registered sensibly because of a sequence of differential relations running horizontally across its constituent phonemes. So that 'j', 'u', 'd'… are significant in the sense that they differentiate the whole sign "judge" from signs with entirely different significations, such as "budge" or "grudge", or "bugle" and so forth. In this sense, what we see/hear in the sign is its phonemic variance from other signifiers.

The same relation of contrast applies to the signified concept, as indeed to the sign as a "whole". The concept "attached"[99] to the phonemes 'j', 'u', 'dg' does not have a pre-given, or positive identity for much the same reasons outlined in regard to the material signifier. The idea of judging, or judgement or even *a* judge, must mark itself out from an infinite array of

[99] The word attached does not do justice to Saussure's provocative claim that the signified and signifier are actually co-terminus. That is to say, they emerge together through a reciprocally constitutive relation.

> What happens is neither a transformation of thoughts into matter, nor a transformation of sounds into ideas. What takes place, is a somewhat mysterious process by which 'thought-sound' evolves distinctions, and a language takes shape with its linguistic units in between those amorphous masses. (Saussure: 1983, 110-111)

similar terms. To utter the word "judge" and have it mean a *specific* thing, one must wrestle it away from terms like evaluation, discrimination, arbitrate which it may also call to mind.[100]

The lesson Saussure draws from this rule of comparison is that the most positive thing about the sign is its "non-coincidence" with other signs (1983, 119). Derrida takes up Saussure's understanding of the differential character of the sign to make a number of claims about identity and its relationship to presence. As he notes,

> [s]ince language, which Saussure says is a classification, has not fallen from the sky, its differences have been produced, are produced effects, but they are effects which do not find their cause in a subject or a substance, in a thing in general, a being that is somewhere present. (Derrida: 1991, 64)

As a pure differential, so Derrida suggests here, the sign cannot lay claim to a prior or anticipated presence that eludes the play of *différance*: which is his name for the "playing movement that 'produces' – by means of something that is not simply an activity – these difference, these effects of difference" (Derrida: 1991, 64). This is a generally accepted axiom

[100] This is what Saussure calls the vertical or associative axis (1983, 123-125). Although the sign is quite specific in its signification, Saussure contends that every sign is nevertheless crowded with an unlimited quantity of associations. In this sense, a linguistic idea "evokes not just one form but a whole latent system" (1983, 128). The fullness of the sign – that is, its inhabitation by relations of contrast to, and associations with, other signs – is suggestive of the concept of historical presence, or the pluri-potentiality of the present, being developed in this chapter.

of post-structuralist linguistics, however the subtly of its (radical) implications are such that it requires further elaboration.

Saussure's careful analysis of the language system tells us that the identity of the sign emerges through lateral relations between signs. In this sense, identity is always "beside itself". In other words, it needs to refer outside itself to other signs in order to be. Or, as Derrida puts it, identity is "the displaced and equivocal passage of one different thing to another" (1991, 70). Derrida's comment here might appear to suggest that identity is generated from a relation of difference *between* signs, and that if we were to follow the passage of difference-deferral that produces its identity we would eventually arrive at a stable set of oppositions from which it derives. However, the notions of passage, detour, reference and deferral that we might use to describe this productive play are tested by the fact that the differing-deferring relation responsible for the creation of the identity of any given sign is at work in all signs. That is to say, *every* sign in the system concurrently points beyond itself to another, forming a network of reciprocal relations without beginning or end. There is no reference *to*, no reappropriation *of*, a sign or meaning that, being present some*where*, would put the movement of *différance* to rest. Indeed the concept of difference used by Saussure is such that the enclosure of the language system, as a delimited entity with a determined border, is also placed under question. As Kirby notes,

> [i]f there is no unalienated origin before signifying production, no definite beginning that grounds the system, then it follows logically that there can be no limiting membrane that ends or encloses the system's identity, as language, either. (1997, 31)

In this way, the promise of a stable anchorage from which the sign originates and to which it might *finally* refer is confounded by Saussure's contention that in language there are only differences "without positive terms". It is for this reason that Derrida says that *différance* solicits the self-enclosure commonly accorded to notions of identity, presence, and substance.

However, the impossibility of presence is only one side of a general "law" that also puts into question "its simple symmetrical opposite, absence, or lack" (Derrida: 1991, 62). We have seen that nothing in this system can ever be present in and of itself. Whilst this infers that self-enclosure is impossible, it also implicates signs in relations that stretch identity across the space (of difference) that would determine them as discrete, where a sign is straight-forwardly absent whilst another is self-evidently present. Put differently, because the sign is "never sufficient to itself: it is always pregnant with otherness, full with expressing its peculiar 'indebtedness'" (Kirby: 1997, 46).

As Kirby points out here, the detour that takes identity outside itself, and makes its self-presence impossible, "returns" to the sign as the very "stuff" of its identity (Kirby: 1997, 46). We can put this another way and say that the sign *is* the "displaced and equivocal passage of one different thing to another". Its presentation as a sign, which is to say, its appearance on the "scene of presence" (Derrida: 1991, 65) is possible only because, as Derrida says, it bears the mark or trace of the other within it (1991, 65-66). What is nominally absent then, becomes part of the sign's identity, part of its linguistic presence. Thus we can see that the relations of difference that constitute the sign's identity as breached also inhabit it.

Becoming Other: Causality and Time

Taylor calls on this logic to argue that the divergent players that populate his story of religious transformation are *altarnatives*, or the *différance* of each other. We can see now why this would mean that they inhabit, and are inhabited by, one another. It is precisely for this reason that Taylor can also claim that the differences so often thought to barricade divergent religious traditions from each other actually sit within their "opposites", holding them open to one another (Taylor: 2007, 127).

At the end of Chapter Three we saw Taylor deploy this logic to make sense of the curious fact that Calvinism's disenchantment actually lead to the "unexpected identification of God with self and by extension world" (Taylor: 2007, 73). As we will recall, Taylor argues that Calvinism pushed divine transcendence to its limit, and in doing so "unwittingly" affirmed divine immanence (2007, 73). At this point, Taylor maintains that the logic of opposition characteristic of conventional accounts of Calvinism "reverses itself in a logic of identity and creates the implosion of the sacred and profane" (Taylor: 2007, 73). In turn, this collapse is said to usher in the "transformative spiritualities of the radical Reformation" (Taylor: 2007, 73); those sects that emphasize spiritual experience which "displaces the divine from the outside towards the interior world of intimate individual sensations" (Corten and Doran: 2007, 566).

Significantly, as Taylor sees it, the collapse responsible for the turn from disenchantment towards enchantment does not represent a corruption of Calvin's thought, nor the entry into an entirely distinct religious epoch. Taylor argues that the plasticity of Calvinism, its ability to inspire such conflicting interpretations of its doctrine, is the natural consequence

of the *altarnation* between monism and dualism that it contains, and indeed, that it is (Taylor: 2007, 73).

So what does this all mean for the concepts of history and historical change? Taylor has claimed that religion is a complex adaptive network. This "network", or system, is understood to be more a process, or activity, than a thing. Its movement in time is driven by the *altarnating* rhythm of monism's constitutive relationship to dualism and dualism's equally generative relationship to monism. This oscillating structure allows it to manifest as contrary systems of belief and practices, to take forms that are apparently heterogeneous.

Furthermore, the elaboration of the nature of the differential relation that underpins this structure suggests that complexity *is* this *altarnate* relation. As Taylor asserts, complexity is "the margin of difference that is constitutive of monism and dualism" (2007, 310). In this sense, it seems reasonable to infer that where we find monism and dualism we will also find complexity. Or, to use the terminology developed in the analysis of Hegel's dialectic, Taylor's logic suggests that the substance of any of the religious traditions explored in this narrative, Near Eastern enchantment, Judaic dualism, both Luther's and Calvin's articulations of Protestantism, or even the liberalism of Altizer and the Barthian neo-orthodoxy that vehemently opposes it, would, upon closer inspection, reveal itself to be the restless activity of complexity, forging itself as a difference to itself that it simultaneously is.

Given that Taylor seems to appreciate the temporal and typological congestion inferred by a kenotic understanding of secularization, it seems strange that he would also maintain that "complex adaptive systems are neither fully deployed nor conceptually grasped until the

coemergence of network society and postmodern art and philosophy" (2007, 310). This comment appears to localize the activity of complexity to a particular time and place (postmodernity, Western post-industrial or network culture), withholding its full deployment from the artists and philosophers whose work was produced prior to this time/place.

Admittedly, Taylor concedes that the relationship between these schemata bear a "complicated relationship to time" (2007, 41). He maintains that

> [o]n the one hand, there is a progressive ontogenetic and phylogenetic movement from monism, through dualism to complexity. In this logico-historical progression, complex adaptive systems are neither fully deployed nor conceptually grasped until the coemergence of network society and postmodern art and philosophy. Complexity, however, is not the synthesis of the two previous moments; to the contrary, the complex schema bends back on itself to form the margin of difference that is constitutive of monism and dualism. In this way, the third schema is both the result and presupposition, which is not to say the foundation, of the first and second stages. (Taylor: 2007, 310)

The reference to two concepts of time, one linear the other "nonlinear" (Taylor: 2007, 310), attempts to problematize what must seem like a recuperation of the developmental narrative examined earlier in this chapter. Taylor's qualifying remark, that complexity is both result and presupposition of the "logico-historical progression", promises a counter-intuitive sense of causality and temporality that should take us beyond the evolutionary presumptions of the linear dimension of this theory. Specifically, it suggests that although complexity only

emerges (in its full form) through the negative movement through monism and dualism, it is not simply the combination of their insights.[101] Rather, twisting the temporal frame of a traditional causal logic, Taylor maintains that complexity bends back on "itself" to forge the differences responsible for the generation of the "two previous moments" (Taylor: 2007, 310).

The endeavor to accommodate the linear and evolutionary component of his theory within a nonlinear notion of origination is provocative, but ultimately confusing. If complexity bends back on itself to create the differential relations responsible for the identity of monism and dualism, indeed for identity as such, then how could monism emerge in time and space without complexity? Wouldn't monism always already contain the (self) difference that would make it dualism? Moreover, if it is already inhabited by that difference, wouldn't this original plenitude be the immanent transcendence or identity-in-difference that Taylor associates with complexity?

[101] However, Taylor does suggest just this when he defines monism as immanence, dualism as transcendence, and complexity as an immanent transcendence (2007, 133-134). Although he argues that they mutually condition each other, the linear frame of his narrative implies that the "third" schema is a combination of the first two. This frame takes a form we will be familiar with by now. It begins in the Near East with religious monism (Taylor: 2007, 133). Like the disenchantment narratives examined in Chapter Two, Taylor argues that this primordial monism is interrupted by the introduction of difference, thus engendering the disenchantment characteristic of Judaism (2007, 137). These two "extremes" *are then* brought into relation in Christianity, in the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity which "try to negotiate, which is not to say integrate" the immanence of monism and the transcendence of dualism (Taylor: 2007, 133). In this understanding the doctrine of the Incarnation is a combination of monism and dualism.

Complexity in the Modern

In Chapter Two we saw that Taylor was committed to certain elements of the classical developmental narrative used to explain the disenchantment of the world. Like Berger and Weber, he maintains that difference arrives in the Near East only with the historical emergence of Judaism. In this sense, he suggests that it is a later development, and one that is foreign to the cosmogonic myths of Babylon, Egypt and Mesopotamia. Withholding transcendence from what is naturally available to the Near East, Taylor denies it the sense of interior differentiation necessary to "transform" its apparent monism into complexity.

The restriction of complexity's historical reach in this instance returns us to a conventional notion of progress. It implies that standing in the Near East, prior to the 8th century, indeed, occupying any "time" before the full deployment of complexity in postmodernism, one's world-view must lack something that will come only with the future. Importantly, and we will return to this shortly, if the implications of Taylor's logic are not conceptually grasped until our own time, by the thinkers and artists he designates as postmodern, then it becomes impossible to see Weber as a theorist of kenosis or complexity. Like Jenkins, this view of historical development implies that there are omissions in Weber's account of religion. In the terms given to us by Taylor, it suggests that his theorization fails to express a truth that (postmodern) theorists of creative self-emergence, autopoiesis and complex adaptive systems can only now articulate; that is, that "the true Infinite is neither dualistic nor monistic but is the creative interplay in which identity and difference are codependent and coevolve" (Taylor: 2007, 346).

We can understand why Taylor would want to revert to this notion of history as progress. As he states in the introduction to *After God*, the division of his "interrelated" schemata into distinct religious types and their correlative epochs can be used to "provide a taxonomic structure that makes it possible to compare and contrast different symbolic networks within and among religious traditions" (Taylor: 2007, 41-42). It "can also be deployed diachronically to interpret the historical development of different traditions" (Taylor: 2007, 42). In this sense, a notion of departure and its corresponding sense of improvement or evolution can be employed to fulfill what is, no doubt, an important heuristic function. It describes change, marks transition, and can also be used to evaluate what these changes mean.

However, as important as this sequential understanding of historical time is for this purpose, it also undermines the sense of implicated "fullness" necessary to overcome the progress narratives that presume lack and deficiency, demarcating history according to a moral schema.[102] It is Taylor's own concept of *altarity* that represents an explicit intervention into this way of thinking.

There are many ways we could extend the provocations of Taylor's theory of religious *altarity* into the past, and in doing so, open that past up to the complexities of the postmodern

[102] The argument presented in this chapter is specific to *this particular* field of discourse. Its concern is with the way enchantment and disenchantment have been construed, and the cultural and historical differences their opposition has been used to defend. By no means do I argue that that it is impossible to periodize history at all, or describe differences between epochs. Nor do I deny that other distinguishing features of social, political, economic or religious life can be used to do so. However, the investigation undertaken in this thesis does suggest that we need a notion of (historical, temporal, typological) difference that can accommodate the entanglements that problematize such demarcations.

present. However, the motivating concern of this thesis is the way a certain tradition of scholarship has interpreted Weber's work on secularization. Consequently, the following responds to Taylor's claim that it is only in "postmodern art and philosophy" that a full deployment of complexity is made.

Returning to Weber's description of modern culture, we will see a curious, if not always consciously elaborated, understanding of the kenotic implication between enchantment and disenchantment. This reading will be used to argue two related points. Firstly, in Weber's account of modern science there is clear evidence of the enduring and animating force of enchantment within/as disenchantment. This tells us that Weber's modernity is as "complex" as the postmodern world envisioned by contemporary scholars of secularization, from Caputo and McPhillips to Taylor.

This is significant to Taylor's argument about postmodern philosophy and art because Weber is so often regarded as an advocate of the orthodox theory of secularization – his picture of modernity is thought to chart the progressive detachment of the world from the divine. According to this orthodox interpretation of his work, Weber would exemplify the modernist "disenchanters" that Caputo evokes. Concurrently, his inability to see the modern as more than a disenchanted sphere would confirm Taylor's view that theorists preceding our own time have been unable to appreciate the nature of an Infinite that is neither enchanted nor disenchanted, but the play between them. However, if we can locate a kenotic understanding of Spirit in this work, see evidence of a Spirit that breathes through its own dismemberment and draws energy from forces that would seem to preclude it, then we will have learnt a

valuable lesson. We will have understood that Spirit is capable of speaking the full complexity of its truth at any time, in any place, and through the work of any theorist.

The Ghosts of Dead Religious Beliefs

To re-orient the discussion, let us think back to Jenkins' criticism of Weber. Our analysis of Jenkins earlier in this chapter reiterated that the discourse on contemporary religious resurgence and the postmodern return of the sacred neglects to consider the possibility that the religious spirit may reside within modernity, and that it may do so *as disenchantment*. Significantly, Jenkins cited Weber's commitment to the dominance of instrumental rationality and modern science as evidence of this omission.

In the second chapter of this thesis we examined Weber's essays, "Science as Vocation" and "Religious Rejections of the World and their Directions", locating within them, those aspects of Weber's thinking that do indeed support Jenkins criticisms. However, whilst bearing in mind the dualism Weber construes between empirical science and the religious in those essays, theorists of re-enchantment – many of whom would position themselves as critics of the secularization thesis attached to Weber's name, if not to the "founding father" of the theory himself – might be surprised to find that Weber gestures towards the possibility of a modernity animated by enchantment at the end of the PE in the very closing paragraphs of its argument. [103]

[103] It should be noted that although Weber's most explicit references to enchantment are largely confined to his analysis of magic and other "irrational" forms of religion, he evokes a similar notion of enchantment as that

As we know, just pages out from the end of his lengthy exploration of the "intimate" relation between religious beliefs and economic practices Weber hands down a seemingly definitive judgment on the future of religion in the modern world. He tells us that although Baxter cautioned that "care for external goods should only lie on the shoulders of the 'saint like a light cloak, which can be thrown aside at any moment' … material goods have gained an increasing and finally inexorable power over the lives of men", and "to-day" the spirit of religious asceticism "has escaped from the cage" (PE, 181). The fatality of religion is then re-affirmed by a comment, quoted earlier, that as a result of this secularization, "modern man is in general, even with the best will, unable to give religious ideas a significance for culture and national character which they deserve" (PE, 183).

In this passage Weber confirms that although there may have once been an influential relationship between the spiritual and the worldly, processes of modernization have now

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defined by Jenkins when discussing contemporary forms of Romanticism. Referring to the ineffability represented in Rainer Maria Rilke's poetry, for instance, Weber alludes to the idea of enchantment as something *beyond* what is rational and scientific (see for instance, Weber: 1976, 456). In RRW and SAV he also notes that in modernity the rise of empirical science has pushed religion even further into the sphere of the irrational. For this reason those "youth" who seek to oppose the scientism of modern culture have increasingly turned to the most mystical, otherworldly, or enchanted elements within religion (see RRW, 351 and SAV, 155). Weber would thus seem to offer an understanding of enchantment that is commensurate with Jenkins and the other theorists of re-enchantment examined earlier in this chapter. However, as will be demonstrated, there is also something within Weber's thinking that implies that the "going beyond" of enchantment resides *within* the calculative "spirit" of modernity. It will be argued that this suggests a far greater intimacy between enchantment and disenchantment than offered by contemporary theorists of re-enchantment.

sundered them apart. The fissure is definitive enough to render "contemporary man" religiously illiterate, unable to even grasp the role religion once played in our lives. This is the legacy that has been handed down through sociology for over a century now. As we have seen already, it still informs most popular conceptions of Weber's treatment of modernization and the concomitant process of secularization. *And yet*, what has gone largely unnoticed is that, situated between the two coronary reports on the death of religion, that is, at the very centre of Weber's most famous statement on secularization, lies a couple of strangely prophetic comments.

Just after declaring the liberation of religion and its banishment from the modern order, Weber says "the idea of duty in one's calling *prowls around in our lives like the ghost of dead religious beliefs*" (PE, 182, emphasis added).[104] Following this invocation of the ghost of religious beliefs, beliefs that are surely not "dead" as such, but are alarmingly *undead*, Weber muses about the future. "No one knows who will live in this cage in the future or whether… entirely new *prophets* will arise, or there will be a great *rebirth* of old ideas and ideals" (PE, 182, emphasis added).

[104] Baehr and Wells translate the same sentence as follows: "Even the optimistic mood of its laughing heir, the Enlightenment, seems destined to fade away, and the idea of the 'duty in a calling' haunts our lives like the ghost of once-held religious beliefs" (2002, 121). Kalberg, on the other hands, renders the same sentence in this way: "And the idea of an 'obligation to search for and then accept a vocational calling' now wanders around in our lives as the ghost of beliefs no longer anchored in the substance of religion" (2001, 124). Kalberg's comes closest to the Parsons translation, suggesting that a religious spectre is produced when ideas, or beliefs are disembodied, when they are liberated from their substantive anchorage in "this world".

This comment is striking. In a language reminiscent of Old Testament prophecy Weber invokes (conjures, *calls*) the dual images of a past that has not-yet-come-to-a-close (the ghost of dead religious beliefs), and a future that is-yet-to-arrive (the messianic future of prophecy), and links them to an iterating logic of return (a rebirth of old ideas and ideals). In short, at the precise moment that Weber wants to mark the end of religious influence, he introduces a religious spectre.

The trope of a ghost is significant. We have already seen that Taylor uses the image of a ghost to describe the subtle ways in which religion informs "ostensibly secular" culture even when it appears to be absent. In this sense, as Derrida argues in the text that inspired Taylor's employment of this trope, the spectre is a thoroughly destabilizing figure (1994). It disrupts the classical distinction between spirit and flesh, and past and present, and does so by inhabiting both sides of the opposition at the same time. It is a spiritual being, but one that does not quite rid itself of its corporeality: a phenomenal and carnal embodiment of the spirit (Derrida 1994: 157, 189).

It is dead, and yet is somehow gifted with the ability for animation or re-animation. It is a thing of the past, something death should have put away, but that has nevertheless, and against all odds, come back to invade the present (Derrida 1994: 10). In fact, according to Derrida's reading, the presence of the spectre in the present unsettles the very notions of *a* past, *a* present and *a* future, and asks us to think temporal disjuncture in other terms: "what happens when *time itself* gets 'out of joint', disjointed, disadjusted" such that a spirit can invade the present (Derrida: 1994, 26, emphasis in original)? To which Derrida responds, "[w]hat does *not* happen in this anachrony! Perhaps 'the time', time itself … the present as our

present", is the time of this disjuncture; "the very possibility of the other" (1994, 26). Derrida's notion of an ana-chronistic present in which everything happens adumbrates an understanding of the present-time as an *infinite present* in which the possibility of a certain happening is not limited in any way.

What does it mean for this discussion that the modern is this present-time? As we know, the modern is not just a discrete historical period, situated neatly between the two other epochs, the Middle Ages and the postmodern present. The English word modern derives from the Latin *modo*, meaning the present time, or just now. The word "secular" has a similar set of temporal connotations. In the introduction to this thesis we saw that secularity, and its more politically loaded correlative, secularism, derive from the Latin term *saeculum*. When George Holyoake brought the term into popular usage in the 19th century it was to designate a system of belief or code of duty that draws its terms purely from *this age* and in reference to *this world* (Holyoake: 1896, 60).

In addition to being radically humanist, secularism is wholly concerned with what is present. This presence is not only defined spatially, "this world" in contradistinction to a transcendent realm governed by an other-worldly God. As Roland Boer points out, Holyoake's secularism also refuses to frame its "purely human considerations" in terms of "a time in the future" (2008, 8). The distain secularism has for its own religious past, coupled with its disengagement from either utopian or dystopian thinking about the future (no doubt derived from an attempt to unhinge itself from Christian eschatology) makes it (at least ideally) oriented to the present. To be modern, to occupy the secular, is to be in a present-time haunted by a past and a future that sit within it.

The question then is why, at the very moment he wants to indicate a *definitive* break with the religious past, Weber would deploy a trope which undermines the distinction between past and present, or dead and alive? How are we to make sense of the appearance of a religious spectre in the midst of a culture where men and women are said to be unable to even imagine their own religious heritage, such is their alienation from religion? Is Weber trying to tell us something about the future of religion in modernity, about its ability to re-animate itself just when it seems in the greatest danger of disappearance? Or is he trying to warn us that religion is a wily thing, that it can take other forms, appear even in the form of that which seems to indicate its absence: the secular, the material?

In a sense Weber's reference to ghosts and prophets could be dismissed as mere rhetoric, as poetics or metaphor. Weber was, after all, a scholar of religion. He had spent much of his academic career tracing the formative influence of religion upon social and economic systems. Thus one could say that Weber's deferral to religious imagery was nothing more than a reflex of his linguistic frame of reference; the language he had developed through his studies of the *past* coming to invade his "scientific" evaluations of the *present*.

This would certainly coincide with the orthodoxy around Weber, and return us to the stable footing of secularization's developmental narrative. However, to dismiss Weber's deferral to the religious here would also be to pass over a fundamental aporia in his text. Even if we do concede that Weber was caught in a religious mode of thinking, a structure of logic that could be confined to something called "language" or "representation", we would still need

to answer the question of why he needed to call upon the religious *at this precise point* in order to speak about the secularity of the modern world?

We could interpret the reference to religious spirits haunting the iron cage of Weber's future, even prowling about in his secular present, in a number of ways. The most obvious would be to say that the ghost indicates that Weber wanted to avoid making "closed predictions" (Pierucci: 2000, 5). Suspicious of the evolutionary models of history offered by Marx, Hegel and Comte, with their claims to have discovered a "single guiding hand" which could explain a pre-determined trajectory of historical development, Kalberg notes that Weber was too cautious to stamp secularization with the label of inevitability (see Kalberg: 2005, 22). If this is the case, then the reference to ghosts is just a poetic way of saying that historical processes are never closed.

Another, perhaps more adventurous interpretation, would read the ghost as portent, a sign that Weber was anticipating the possibility of a *return* of the religious sometime in the future. On the other hand, the fact that this ghost of dead religious beliefs prowls around in "our lives", which is to say, in the secular present of Weber's life, could suggest that Weber wanted to make room in modernity for some kind of enchantment.[105]

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[105] William Swatos Jr. and Peter Kivisto have used a close textual analysis of Marianne Weber's biography of her husband to argue that Weber's sociological thinking is deeply informed by his religious upbringing. They suggest that many of the themes associated with his "stature as a hard-headed social scientist and analyst or power politics" (1991, 349), reflect religious commitments that are unconventional, non-institutional, but important nonetheless (Swatos and Kivisto: 1991). Their work offers a fruitful way of understanding Weber's constant textual references to religion. Although I have not relied on biographical information to illuminate the inner logic

The Prophet Spirit of Modernity

Let us return to Weber's assertion, explored in some detail in Chapter Two, that modernity is a "godless and prophetless time". As we shall see below, returning again to the Edomite's poem cited in the SAV, this assertion is based upon a perceived rupture between the *presumably transcendent horizon* of religious ideals of faith and hope, and the immanent realities of secular modernity.

Weber says that "integrity compels us to state that for the many who today tarry for new prophets and saviours the situation is the same as resounds in the beautiful Edomite Watchman's poem" (SAV, 156) (from the book of Isaiah). He then cites the passage: "He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye enquire, enquire ye: return, come" (SAV, 156). Weber interprets the profound faith in this passage as a misplaced one. One is shaken, he remarks, when we realise the fate of those people who enquired and tarried for more than two millennia (SAV, 156). For nothing, Weber soberly remarks, is gained by tarrying and yearning. "We shall act differently. We shall set to work to meet the 'demands of the day'" (SAV, 156): this day, the present day at hand.

The logic of Weber's assessment is based on what he perceives to be an unanswered expectation. Messianic expectation has been met with absence, prayer with silence. No future

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of Weber's arguments, both their work and the work of Australian sociologist Mervyn Bendle (2005) suggest potential insight in doing so. That said, although these theorists, like Fenn, have examined the way Weber's Protestantism influenced his notion of ethics, little attention has been paid to the function of enchantment in his work.

has arrived, no call has been received. The lack of an *arrivant* to which the "come, return" is addressed thus signals for Weber the rupture between religious faith, the desire for some transcendent sense of ultimate meaning, and the immanent reality of "the present day".

Weber's interpretation is, however, only half correct. The poem is written under the dual motifs of exile and prophecy. In the prophetic register it is about the hope for messianic arrival, a "to come" that will enable a "return" to the Promised Land. But in the exilic motif it is also about the political and indeed religious exigency to live now; to live in *the now* of Jewish exile. As the watchman says, the morning cometh, but so too does the night. The arrival is at hand, but so is the ongoing immanence of the present, a present-time in which our faithful enquiry takes place.

The passage thus speaks about the paradoxical chiasmus of temporal modalities that appear to be distinct, but are in fact inseparable: the secular time of the present (in which the Jews live in exile, apparently cut off from the *parousia* of religious faith, just like the modern man), and the messianic time of prophecy, (the transcendent time of the coming/return). Or, putting it more simply, it articulates the consanguinity of what biblical scholars sometimes refer to as the "now" and the "not-yet" (see Romans 8:18-25). In this way the Edomite's poem is a testimony to the crowding of the secular with the messianic, the immanent with the transcendent, and the worldly with the spiritual. Like the figure of the ghost, this logic frustrates any attempt to make clear-cut distinctions.

In the face of this complex prophetic (theo-)logic Weber does what any good social scientist would do. He corrects the paradox, smooths over the contradiction, and attempts to

bypass the chiasmic complexity of these conjoined opposites. For when Weber asks us to forgo the future and meet the demands of the day, he performs a kind of logical incision between the two temporal modalities. He cuts the secular present loose from its transcendent horizon. He excises the not-yet from the now. It is on the basis of this incision that Weber is able to soberly declare that modernity is (regrettably, but inevitably) a godless and prophetless time. And yet, as Weber goes on to outline what he calls the "inward conditions" of the scientific vocation, a term thus already tainted by the religious, (*vocare*, to call), we see the prophetic logic of the "not-yet" insist on its rightful place in the present.

The Spiritual Discourse of Science as Vocation

Throughout the SAV essay Weber maintains that there is an unbridgeable tension between the value spheres of science and the sphere of the 'holy'" (SAV, 154). Science, he recalls, "cannot know of the 'miracle' and the 'revelation'" (SAV, 147). It must provide empirical and particularized explanations of the world and its inner working without reference to supernatural interventions (SAV, 147). "It is not the gift of grace of seers and prophets dispensing sacred values and revelations" (SAV, 152). The appeal to a certain kind of empiricism here, as a default line across which the religious cannot cross, functions to hold the supernaturalism of the sacred at bay. It also seems to confirm Jenkins' assessment of the science of "Weber's day" as wholly closed to any thing beyond the "material, the visible or the explainable" (Jenkins: 2000, 29). Thus it comes as a surprise when we recall that in his musings about the scientific vocation Weber has already ascribed the origin of scientific discovery to "destinies that are hidden from us, and [to] 'gifts'" (SAV, 136).

Why, of all the possible ways of describing the labour of scientific work does Weber use the term "gift"? It is a significant reference because it calls out to his earlier work in the PE. From that text we know that 'the gift' is God's gift of grace. The Protestant meaning of this gift refers to the saving faith that is produced by the *presence* of spiritual grace. Thus it signifies the "reciprocal insertion and intertwining" of the human and the divine, the material and the spiritual.[106] Consequently, the association of scientific labour with the gift of grace

[106] The phrase "reciprocal insertion and intertwining" is Maurice Merleau-Ponty's. He uses it in "The Intertwinning: The Chiasm" (1968) to describe the communion of the sentient and the sensible or the visible and invisible that "lies in every visible" (Merleau-Ponty: 1968, 136). The chiasm is a crossing over of opposites, but it is not just "the union of contradictories" (1968, 147). It is a true *communion* that allows the seer to "emigrate" into the seen world such that "the seer and the visible reciprocate one another and we no longer know which sees and which is seen" (Merleau-Ponty: 1968, 139; see also Kearney: 2009). In terms highly reminiscent of Hegel, Merleau-Ponty speaks of a "visibility in general" (1968, 139), a "generality of the Sensible in itself" (1968, 139) that traverses myself and the world "out there". As the essay proceeds it becomes clear that this anonymous visibility is actually the sensible world seeing *itself through* the sentient subject.

> One can say that we perceive the things themselves, that we are the world that thinks itself – or that the world is at the heart of our flesh. In any case, once a body-world relationship is recognized, there is a ramification of my body and a ramification of the world and a correspondence between its inside and my outside, between my inside and its outside. (Merleau-Ponty: 1968, 136)

The world that sees itself through the eyes of the sentient-human subject, that beholds itself in its difference to itself, that passes between the seer and the seen, articulating a distinction that does not disrupt the communion that engulfs them, is the kenotic Spirit. It is, as Merleau-Ponty suggests of his own concept of the flesh, "a sort of incarnate principle that brings a style of being wherever there is a fragment of being" (1968, 139). In other words, the Spirit that thinks itself through the particularity of an individual's flesh, a certain mode of

associates this apparently mundane, rationalist activity with a force of spiritual illumination that itself points beyond the natural, the human, and the material. Or, to put this differently, the presence of grace within the scientific discovery suggests that the material, human and natural explanations of the world are of (rather than outside) the spirit.

One might dismiss this reference as incidental, an accident of rhetoric. Indeed Weber is quick to signal the difference between scientific intuition and the religious connotations of the gift by writing the word gift in scare quotes. Alongside an ironic reference on the following page to those who "pretend to have this gift of grace" (SAV, 137) the inverted commas function to distance the more pedestrian nature of scientific discovery from the logic of prophetic insight and spiritual exaltation. However, as we move through his description of scientific labour we begin to see that the religious imagery Weber uses is actually integral to the way he understands the scientific culture of modernity.

For scientific achievement to take place, Weber contends, "some idea has to occur in someone's mind". "A merchant or a big industrialist without 'business imagination' that is, without ideas or ideal intuitions, will for all his life remain a man who would have better remained a clerk or a technical official" (SAV, 136); and this is the case too in the laboratory (SAV, 136). Without this "intuition" the computations and calculations of the scientist will not

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religious practice, even a social institution built on secularist principles, stands testimony to a whole that is fully present in every *fragment* of its being.

yield a single result (SAV, 135). As Weber says, the 'idea' is necessary to direct computations (SAV, 135).

It is clear that for Weber the intuitive aspect of science has the capacity to lift one up out of the pedestrian and the mundane. It reveals a new world of *possibility* that remains hidden to ordinary, official, technocratic eyes. Intuition is thus a form of insight or indeed, imagination. And in its ability to lift up, to ascend, this insight also becomes a form of exaltation (lifting up). As Weber so enigmatically suggests, the personal experience of science is a "passionate devotion", a "strange intoxication ridiculed by every outsider" (SAV, 135).

The relationship between scientific intuition and exaltation is reinforced by Weber's deference to the value of conjecture in the scientific vocation. He says "whoever lacks the capacity to put on blinders… and come up with the idea that the *fate of his soul* depends upon whether or not he makes the correct conjecture at this passage… may as well stay away from science" (SAV, 135). Without this faith in the fate of your conjecture, "you have no calling for science"[107] (SAV, 135).

[107] Weber's discussion of the calling for politics in "Politics and Vocation" (hereafter PAV) is similarly informed by a religious language: specifically, the language of religious ethics. Describing the necessity of marrying an ethics of responsibility to an ethics of conviction Weber cites Luther's declaration at the Diet of Worms, "Here I stand; I can do no other" (PAV, 127). Weber' point in this essay is that notions of calculative responsibility must, at some point, give way to an ultimate (and in his terms transcendent) conviction upon which one's very life would be staked. This, Weber claims, is "genuinely human and moving" (PAV, 127). Moreover, he also argues that, "every one of us who is not spiritually dead must realize the possibility of finding himself at some time in that position" (PAV, 127). To have a calling for politics, and, as we will recall from our discussion in chapter two, to meet the demands of the day with a sense of decisiveness (even if cultivated through individual will, without

Aside from the obvious appeal to the heart and soul of the scientist, this passage betrays a very strong relationship with the prophetic ideals outlined earlier. Denotatively we know that a conjecture is a fact that is yet to be proven. Through the "gift of intuition" this future fact, a future given that has yet to come into being *as a fact*, can be perceived in the present. The conjecture thus crosses what we would ordinarily perceive as a temporal disjuncture between the future and the present. One could say that it presents the datum (or given) as a gift. Thus Weber inadvertently describes the mutual conditioning of the "now" and the "not-yet"; a *coincidentia oppositorium* in which the "not yet" becomes the "now".

Described above is the paradox of the Eternal (presence, or all time) made historical (or temporal and sequential), discussed in the previous chapter. According to Kierkegaard this paradox is the object of "that happy passion we call Faith" (1962, 76). Elsewhere Kierkegaard describes this paradox as the "thinker's passion", for the passion to think what "cannot be thought", or what defies logic, is "present in all thinking" (Kierkegaard: 1962, 46). For Kierkegaard then, passionate thinking is always engaged in the paradox that gives rise to faith, or is indeed itself a form of faith.[108]

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religious or scientific guidance) is, for Weber, to be spiritually alive. With such a strong sense of the social and ethical value of the vocation, so frequently expressed in specifically Protestant terms, one wonders why Weber describes himself as "unmusical religiously" (Weber: 1975, 324). It would seem that, as discussed in Chapter Two with relation to Fenn's reading of the SAV, the secular orientation in Weber is always bound to the religious in ways that make their distinction impossible.

[108] Kierkegaard argues that while faith is oriented to the paradox of the Eternal made historical, knowledge is not: "for all knowledge is either a knowledge of the Eternal, excluding the temporal and historical as indifferent, or it is pure historical knowledge. No knowledge can have for its object the absurdity that the Eternal is the historical"

Curiously Weber comes close to acknowledging this when he argues that a scientific vocation has "this passion, this 'thousands of years must pass before you enter into life and thousands more wait in silence" (SAV, 135). With references like this Weber succeeds in translating the temporal dimensions of scholarly patience, as well as the passionate commitment of the scientist to his or her practice, into the language of a religious patience, and a religious commitment.

This need to turn to the "old store" of religious concepts continues on the following page. "[I]nspiration", Weber says, "plays no less a role in science than it does in the realm of art" (SAV, 136). As we know, the connotations of inspiration are infused with religious motifs. To be inspired is to be lifted up, exalted – a concept we have already seen introduced through the intuitive aspect of scientific thought. It is to become animated by a divine spirit or a muse. Or as Weber concedes, it is like a "frenzy" or "mania", where the human body or psyche is opened up to the pneumatic world of spirits and gods (SAV, 136). Indeed through its

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(1962, 76). Although thinking *itself*, which is surely an aspect of knowledge, can be oriented to this paradox Kierkegaard notes that, "habit dulls our sensibilities, and prevents us from perceiving it" (1962, 46). Significant to our present discussion is the example given by Kierkegaard to demonstrate this. He says that habit dulls us to the miraculous insights, not only of religious revelation, but also of science. "So for example the scientists tell us that our walking is a constant falling. But a sedate and proper gentleman who walks to his office in the morning and back again at noon, probably thinks this to be an exaggeration, for his progress is clearly a case of mediation; how should it occur to him that he is constantly falling when he religiously follows his nose!" (Kierkegaard: 1962, 47). There is clearly a sense here that the paradox that gives rise to faith, and to thinking, is also articulated by modern science – but only for those who remain open to the mysteries it describes.

comparison to the artistic muse, this inspiration, a strange intoxication upon which one's very soul rests, suddenly appears more like a spiritual inhabitation!

We can see that instead of expelling the "ghost of religious beliefs" from the modern world the rhetorical script of Weber's text suggests that the spiritual categories of religious thought are necessary in order to properly think the nature of science. It is the mystery and spiritualism of religion that enables him to think the insight and intuition of science. And it is the motivating force of faith that renders the vocation of scientific practice intelligible. Rather than supporting his own contention that "the tension between the value-spheres of 'science' and the sphere of 'the holy' is unbridgeable" (SAV, 154), Weber's text invites the spiritualism and prophetic insight of religion into the very heart of scientific practice.

The Infinitude of the Kenotic Present

What then, has this discussion of Weber's SAV, read in light of Taylor's theory of complexity and Jenkins' attempt to think the disenchanted face of modern enchantment, told us about the Spirit, about where it is (and isn't)? Weber has just shown us that the kenotic Spirit does not respect the spatio-temporal signatures used to dislocate it from the present. The Spirit that animates the modern points to a view of the secular as inhabited by all that comes "after" and "before" it: by the enchantment it was, and the re-enchantment it is to become. This Spirit is not an alternative to the secularity of the modern, nor is it something temporally put off limits whose return we might anticipate. If it is a gift, as Weber suggests, then the revelation and inspiration at work in modern disenchantment is a gift that is given in/to the present.

This implies a strange sort of temporality, the significance of which can be drawn out by returning to the *coincidentia oppositorium* of the "now" and the "not yet". Throughout this chapter I have used the inseparability of enchantment and disenchantment to gesture towards an understanding of the modern as a present-time that encompasses the possibilities accorded to it's past and future. I have been using Weber's work to show that the archeology of the past is never entirely left behind, that it is alive in the present. Concurrently, the presence of this kenotic implication in Weber's descriptions of the modern, both in the SAV and PE essays, has been used to suggest that the complexity thinkers like Taylor locate in the post-modern is intrinsic to the way the modern thinks itself.

However, although these examples indicate the fullness of a present-time in which the future has, in a sense, always arrived, the coincidence of the transcendent horizon of the "not-yet" and the immanence of the "now" does not signal some final resolution of the questions to which faith and hope are addressed. It does not represent the end of transformative processes of growth and change, or the closure of history (evoked by Altizer, for instance). Rather, it suggests that the novelty we tend to expect from the future, indeed the self-difference associated with temporal disjuncture as such, is indigenous to the "now".

The sociologists Ann Game and Andrew Metcalfe evoke the self-difference of this concept of presence with their ontology of stillness. Stillness, they write, is "the quality of the nonlinear present 'where past and future are gathered'" (Game and Metcalfe: forthcoming, 17). It is an "eternal present" with "no future or past or elsewhere to redeem what is" (2008, 499). Described here is a concept of presence (*ousia*) in which "all is always now" (Game and

Metcalfe: forthcoming, 17). However, as if anticipating a post-structuralist objection to their evocation of the fullness of the present, Game and Metcalfe note that this eternal moment is not foreign to the dynamism we ordinarily associate with the forward movement of linear time. It is not fixed, static, or self-same. Indeed, the two authors point out that the common comprehension of fullness or presence with fixivity is itself a determination based on the assumption that openness is assured only by lack (Game and Metcalfe: forthcoming, 5).

We see this in Taylor's understanding of the virtual. Taylor argues that all presence is virtual: "[n]ever present as such, the gift of the present is present by that which arrives by not arriving" (Taylor: 2007, 310). Not entirely absent either, the virtual is an "immanent transcendence, which is an inside as an outside that *cannot be incorporated*" (Taylor: 2007, 41, emphasis added). Significantly, Taylor claims that it is the excessive qualities of this virtual presence (that is, the fact that it exceeds what can be represented or made present) that "keeps systems open and makes them subject to constant transformation" (2007, 41).

In this understanding creativity and transformation are stymied by the inclusiveness associated with presence or immanence. The same logic underlies Taylor's claim, explored in Chapter Two, that an appreciation of difference, and an awareness that "things can be otherwise", emerges only with the development of linear time and a concept of the future. Discussing the divergent ways time is imagined by Near Eastern cosmologies and the biblical traditions, Taylor maintains that real change is possible only when we have a sense of a future that *has yet to be given* (and which, as we have just seen, never fully arrives). However, when time is experienced cyclically, and "the future is prefigured before the beginning", difference is only

ever "superficial" (Taylor: 2007, 137). True change is thus dependent on an awareness that what could be is *not yet*.

In contradistinction to this view, Game and Metcalfe argue the "now" that "holds within it all time" (2008, 494) is not an undifferentiated or fixed plenitude. Nor is it closed to change. Referring to Roland Barthes notion of the *punctum*, they state that the completeness of the eternal "now" infers "an order that is given". But this givennness coheres with an understanding that things "might have been otherwise" (Game and Metcalfe: 2008, 494). To explain why the gratuity of the "now" can offer us "non-finite potential or difference" (2008, 494), they remind us of the simple truth, also seen in Saussure's concept of the sign, that the identity of the present includes difference *precisely because* it is "pregnant with the not-yet-now" (Loy, cited in Game and Metcalfe: forthcoming, 18). In other words, the present-time lacks nothing, yet it remains open to constant transformation because it is congested by the sense of potential commonly reserved for the future "to come".[109]

Game's and Metcalfe's discussion of the communion of the "now" and the "not-yet" reiterates the underlying point being made in this chapter. The modern world described by Weber in the SAV is a secular present haunted by the ghost of "dead" religious beliefs and inhabited by prophetic possibilities already visible on its (immanent transcendent) horizon. It is kenotic, and as such, is always changing, moving, disrupting itself. And yet, within the rhythm of a temporal movement that allows the kenotic Spirit to be identified as transcendent, celebrated as immanent, associated with Calvinism, Lutheranism, the cosmologies of the Near

[109] Richard K. Fenn suggests something similar when he speaks of a "radical openness to the past and the future for the sake of an immersion in time itself" (2001, 10).

East, or denied altogether, it is always completely itself: present even where and when, as Taylor might say, it seems to be absent.

CONCLUSION: LETTING THE SPIRIT SPEAK

What seems almost impossible is to speak always *of the* specter, to speak *to the* specter, to speak with it, therefore especially *to make or to let* a spirit *speak* (Derrida: 1994, 11, emphasis in original).

There was no longer any question of not speaking. Language has started without us, in us and before us. This is what theology calls God, and it is necessary, it will have been necessary to speak (Derrida: 1996, 29-30).

Ordinarily a conclusion functions to summarize the argument that has been made in the previous chapters and point towards possible directions for future consideration. Given that the last two chapters have done much of this work, I would like to conclude with a brief meditation on what Weber's contribution to this thesis argument means for the theory of secularization. How significant is it that our understanding of the kenotic structure of secularization has largely been drawn from his work?

As we have seen, it is common for theorists writing about disenchantment and secularization to pay special tribute to Max Weber. In the introduction to *After God* Mark C. Taylor, for instance, affirms the foundational status of his work, saying that "Max Weber did not know the extent to which he was right"; "the world as we know it today could not have come about without Protestantism" (2007, xiv). Extending the scope of Weber' own thesis, Taylor muses that if he were writing today, "the title of his book would have to be *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Globalization*" (2007, xiv).

Marcel Gauchet also cites Weber's theory of disenchantment as the inspiration for his own. He maintains that "[t]he current twilight of the gods" can be explained by Weber's

concept of disenchantment, albeit broadened to include "the impoverishment of the reign of the invisible" (1997, 3). Presenting us with an orthodox understanding of Weber's theory, Gauchet explains that the disenchantment of the world "reconstructed the human abode separate from the divine", thus making the eventual abandonment of religion possible (Gauchet: 1997, 3). Gauchet also notes his agreement with Weber's contention that Protestantism played an essential role in this process. However, he differentiates his own approach from Weber's, suggesting that "[t]he true significance of the link between Protestantism and capitalism lies not in the influence of spiritual norms on worldly behaviour, but in our interaction with the beyond and our investment in the here-below" (Gauchet: 1997, 3).

Even a superficial analysis of the essays that make up Weber's GARS series suggests that the particular object of Gauchet's scholarly concern – the reorientation of religion from the up-above to the here-below – also finds its precedent in Weber's theory of disenchantment. As we have seen, when read conventionally, the PE records the detachment of religiously-inspired worldly behaviours from their spiritual roots, and the subsequent transformation of the Protestant love of spirit into a love of the world. However, the analysis undertaken in this thesis has demonstrated that there is another way of comprehending this transformative secularization. With the strictest fidelity to the script of Weber's narrative we have found that the "here-below" described in his texts, the worldly sphere to which Protestantism turns, is not as foreign to the spiritual as Gauchet implies.

There is, as the philosopher Richard Kearney has recently argued, "a special sacredness at the heart of the profane" (2007, 44). Inspired by the "sacramental" philosophies of Maurice

Merleau-Ponty and Julia Kristeva, Kearney looks to the work of three modernist writers – Joyce, Woolf and Proust – to illuminate the way in which the flesh of the world can be transformed by the living presence of the sacred. He shows how the ordinary social acts that compose the routine of our daily (mundane) lives can give rise to a eucharistic encounter with the divine. Recalling our exploration of the concept of kenosis, Kearney insists that the divinity celebrated in these "eucharists of the ordinary universe" is not a god above us, but is rather, a god beneath, or even within, us (2007, 6). Utilizing the paradoxical language of the Incarnation Kearney calls it an immanent transcendence, the communion of the secular and the sacred (2007, 47): "[t]he word made *everyday* flesh" (2007, 51, emphasis added).

In essence this thesis has been an attempt to illuminate the communion of the spiritual and the worldly, and to insist that the religious spirit still has, *has always had*, a place within secular life, because, finally, it is a worldly spirit. Importantly, it has used Weber's work on secularization to do so. Elaborating a kenotic theory of secularization *through Weber's sociology* has meant challenging a number of presumptions still widely held by both critics and advocates of the secularization thesis. As we saw in Chapter Four, it is still common to locate the numinous, the holy, the transcendent or the divine outside the world. It is not only theologians, but also sociologists, who use this logic to defend the difference between the secular and the religious, or else, to treat the spiritual as an alternative to the "this-worldly" orientation of secular life. One of the logical consequences of this rather restricted understanding of the Spirit is the contention that an experience of enchantment *exceeds* what can be "dreamed of by the rationalist epistemologies and ontologies of science" and the formal means-ends rationalities of modern institutions (Jenkins: 2000, 12).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, this view goes hand in hand with the belief that an appreciation of the complex entanglements that define the relationship "between" religion and secularity that characterize the postmodern world means taking leave of the modern, and, importantly, of the "founding father" closely associated with its theorization. As sociologist Antônio Flávio Pierucci notes in his defense of the secularization thesis, critics of the "view that linked disenchantment, that is, secularization, to modernization" postulate "an explicit rupture with Weber. They wish upon a post-Weberian sociology of religion for a post-secular society" (2000, 3).

Pierucci's comments here tell us that the logic of the alternative, the desire to seek the truth of the spirit *elsewhere*, applies not only to the way we perceive the modern, but also the body of literature dealing with it. We see this in Altizer's contention that a traditional theological language is unable to describe the paradox of the immanent Word. Altizer argues that as a consequence of this presumed deficit, "the language of the radical profane" must be added to it, so that it can "give witness to the fullest advent of the Incarnation" (1966b, 20). Strangely, Altizer's logic implies that the Spirit, which has supposedly drawn "*all* things into itself" (1967b, 20, emphasis in original) – and should, therefore, be present in all things – is not present in a traditional theological language. It suggests that, although penetrating every other worldly sphere, it is somehow precluded from entering into the language of the church.

We find a similar rationale in Taylor's argument that the complexity and vitality of the *altarnating* relation (associated, in the context of these remarks, with Hegel's dialectical understanding of the Incarnation) "cannot be represented in the simple and static language of substance but must be grasped in terms of dynamic subjectivity" (2007, 161). Not only does

this suggest that dynamism *isn't* substance, or that it isn't in the very nature of Spirit to be still, simple, full of itself – a curious reading of Hegel – it implies that the kenotic Spirit is unable to speak the truth of itself in this language, or through those signs.

Taylor used the same argument to localize the articulation of religious complexity to postmodern theorists. As we saw in Chapter Five, withholding an appreciation of this understanding of religion from any discursive field preceding the postmodern implies that it is absent from Weber's (modernist) texts. Of course, when I began this thesis I also thought that I would be offering a critique of Weber. Knowing that he was commonly regarded as one of the founding fathers of the secularization thesis, I presumed that my argument would oppose his work to thinkers like Kearney, Taylor, Altizer and Fenn; theorists who describe the paradoxical nature of a spirit that is kenotic, incarnate, secular.

I was aware that the author of the theory of world-historical disenchantment was ambivalent about the processes he described, and, like many, I took this to be an indication that there was room for "play" within Weber's texts. However, the more closely I read Weber's texts the less clear the nature of this ambivalence became. As we saw in Chapter Two, most commentators concede to some ambiguity in Weber's theorization of disenchantment, but write it off as a symptom of his skepticism about the cultural and ethical *consequences* of disenchantment. That Weber's texts give a factual account of the loss of the spiritual, and the evacuation of the supernatural from modern life, is itself rarely questioned.

Following the contours of his incomplete and often confusing argumentation, it quickly became obvious that something else, something beyond Weber's ambivalence about

the ethical consequences associated with the loss of transcendentally anchored worldviews (Lechner: 1991, 1104), and something more than Weber's nostalgia for an ethic of responsibility built on Christian principles (Fenn: 1969; Swatos and Kivisto: 1991), was at work in his texts.

The first glimpse I had of this "something else" was presented in Weber's analysis of the Calvinist doctrine of the *fides efficax*. As we saw in Chapter Three, Weber wanted to use this doctrine to explain why ascetic Protestants, ordinarily so observant of the rule that states that the material world is profane, encouraged the creation and expansion of material wealth. Weber shows that Calvin's doctrine of grace maintains that the faith that accompanies grace produces worldly effects that can, as a result of this, be interpreted as signs of that grace. However, what Weber *writes into his text* but fails to take into account, is that this doctrine erases the human agency thought to be responsible for these worldly acts. In doing so, it attests to the active presence of the divine in the believer. Extraordinarily, Calvin's doctrine of grace elides the distinction between God willed and human willed activity, utterly confounding the possibility of differentiating God, self and world.

Of course, one might argue that the contradiction implied by this "implosion of the sacred and the profane" (Taylor: 2007, 73) belongs more properly to Calvin than it does to Weber. Nevertheless, our investigation of the larger discursive frame of this discussion has demonstrated that this paradox, smuggled into the heart of Weber's most famous text, actually unsettles the logical apparatus of the PE thesis, and through it, the broader claims made by sociologists of religion about the disenchanted character of the modern world.

Thinking about what the intrusion of enchantment into Calvinist disenchantment meant for the explanation for secularization offered at the end of the PE, a number of other ambiguities have come to light. The most important of these is the curious inclusion of two conflicting explanations for secularization: one, which suggested that the worldly culture of modernity was born out of a loss of spirit, a loss made possible by the detachment of the religious forms from their supernatural content. The other explanation implied the opposite; namely, that a love of spirit became a love of the world when the divine collapsed into the secular.

In other circumstances Weber's failure to account for this contradiction might be interpreted as an oversight. However, the preceding chapters have shown that the appearance of notions of corruption and collapse in the PE, along side those of distance and detachment, is fortuitous. The coherence of these explanations, demonstrated by further exegesis of Weber's work, in dialogue with Taylor, Berger, Gauchet and others, perfectly expresses the kenotic logic of secularization and the adventurous nature of the religious spirit. In this sense, Weber's "mistake" allows the logic of kenosis to speak itself through his texts – texts that, if we were to follow Taylor and Altizer in their search for an *alternative* language capable of expressing the paradox of a worldly spirit, or the theorists of post-secularism who advocate a rupture with Weber, we might not grant such insight.

This raises questions about the nature of authorship and how evidence of a particular understanding of the religious spirit can emerge in places where it seems to be absent. To be more specific, the argument presented here asks us to ponder who it is that is called to speak the Spirit, or to "let the spirit speak" (Derrida: 1994, 11)? Is it only the religiously "musical"

among us? Is it only those of us who seek to let the Spirit speak? Is the calling that elicits "god talk", that invites us to enter into the puzzle of the question, reserved for those with theological qualifications, for the confessional sociologist, for the believer? Is it reserved at all? Or does this Spirit, in the course of its adventures, inhabit the world in such as way as to make it impossible not to speak, as Derrida muses above, in a slightly different context?

These questions remind us that this thesis argument has not been solely concerned with the question of secularity: what it is, what it is capable of being. It has also been about the question of evidence. What counts as a sign of the Spirit? Where can evidence of it be found? And in whose texts? If, as this thesis has tried to show, the process of secularization is essentially kenotic, if it describes the passage of the Spirit into a world that it already is, a world it has never been external to; and if the vitality of this Spirit is animated by the fracturing processes of differentiation that seem to disjoin it from the world, then, like Eckhart's divine, it can truly deny of every other that it is other to itself. Given this, it would always have been impossible, for the author of the theory of disenchantment, and indeed for the thesis of secularization generally, not to speak.

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