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The Importance of Protestantism in Max Weber's Theory of Secularisation

Abstract

In this article, I review my recent book *Protestant Modernity. Weber, Secularisation and Protestantism,* which reconstructs Weber's theory of secularisation and argues that this is formulated within a liberal Protestant framework. I argue that this theory is a part of his Protestant account of modernity. I also sketch some of the major issues involved in developing a Catholic account of modernity and provide some worked through examples of the sociological implications of this change of confessional presuppositions.

Keywords: Weber; Liberal; Protestantism; Secularisation; Catholic; Modernity.

Introduction

T H E O R I E S   O F   S E C U L A R I S A T I O N   about today. Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* argues the case for the replacement of so-called ''subtraction theories''[1] by a narrative of the emergence of our secular age which accounts for the complexity of both contemporary belief and unbelief. In his account, various reform movements within both Catholicism and Protestantism led the way towards Deism and eventually towards an exclusive humanism which denies any divine influence in human flourishing. These historical transitions have in turn led to our secular age in which both believers and unbelievers share a common horizon made up of alternatives which seem

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[1] That is, theories which consider religion to be an illusion of one sort or another which is gradually removed by the advance of reason and science. TAYLOR 2007, p. 22.

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reasonable and provide differing accounts of human flourishing and its transcendence. This constitutes a complex epistemic environment in which both believers and non-believers can no longer live naively as if their position is the only rational one available.

In *Protestant Modernity. Weber, Secularisation, and Protestantism*, I also hold that religion has played a major role in the creation of our secular age, but rather than a historical and systematic account of the modern secular age, I limit myself to answering one question and arguing one thesis. The question is: what is Weber's theory of secularisation? I posed this question because after many years of hearing it said that Weber's theory of secularisation is clearly outdated, or that it is confined to his theory of Protestantism and capitalism, or that it was simply empirically false, I had to admit I never really understood what the theory was. My intention in *Protestant Modernity* was thus to reconstruct the major works of Weber and to draw out the various entangled meanings of secularisation therein to gain a systematic understanding of Weber's theory of secularisation. Not unaware of the tortuous history of Weber interpretations, I have tried to make it clear that I was not claiming the final hermeneutical key to Weber's corpus nor the definitive account of his sociology of religion. I simply wanted to read Weber as a theorist of secularisation and one who has greatly influenced later social theorists in their accounts of secularisation, rationalisation, and modernisation.

The second objective of the work was to situate his theory of secularisation within its liberal Protestant heritage. Liberal Protestantism has been variously defined.[2] One may characterise it as that theological tradition which possessed an attitude detached from dogma and as tending to approach Christianity in a more historical than systematic way. A Romantic conception of the expressivist self inspired liberal theology to consider the desires and emotions of the human heart as the ways in which God works through us in history; the stage on which the gospel is performed and embodied through human morality.[3] It also adopted a scientific approach to the Bible and its scholarship and viewed it more as a cultural document than as a series of divine commands. Moreover, as Mark Lilla has noted, liberal theology, especially in Germany, evolved into a political theology that

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[2] See for example REARDON 1968. [3] TAYLOR 1989, pp. 368-390.

was at the service of the state.[4] Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889) its founder, together with his disciples Wilhelm Herrmann (1846-1922), Julius Kaftan (1848-1926), and Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930), claimed to be recovering an orthodox Protestantism after the accretions of centuries of Catholic dogma. Rather than being a unitary phenomenon, it embodied various types of Protestantism that tended to vary on a spectrum from moderate to radical. Arising in the nineteenth century it further intensified the shift within Protestantism away from the absolutism of dogma towards the relativism of history. This had been encouraged by the advance of the sciences, especially of nature, which had provided a framework for a theology rooted in the historical contingency of empirical reality. Following Kant, and his separation of the realms of freedom and necessity, Ritschl and his followers made faith in God a condition of the possibility for moral action since it is the awareness that the purpose of moral action is the realisation of the kingdom of God which provides the motivational basis required for moral action. It is God, for Ritschl, who is the one who finally justifies all moral action and confers meaning on the general moral law. Religious action in liberal Protestantism is removed from the transcendental realm of the Catholic sacraments and now shifts its locus from the metaphysical to the ethical. The Lutheran school of liberal Protestantism, led by Ritschl, was greatly influential on Weber and replaced Hegelianism in the nineteenth century as the dominant framework for progressive Protestant thought. Its intellectual dominance came to an end with the rise of Karl Barth's dialectical theology in the early-twentieth century which sought to recover the importance of Christian revelation over against what Barth considered to be an instrumentalisation of the gospel for cultural and political ends.[5]

I did not start off with the intention of situating Weber's theory of secularisation within its liberal Protestant heritage but as I began to reconstruct his theory, I kept coming up against Protestant motifs structuring his account. I was taken by this because in the tradition of social theory there has commonly been a sense that social science is free of confessional influence and, hence, was scientific. Whilst many have noted theological influences in social theory, I found little if any systematic account of specifically confessional influences. Again, I was concerned to get the balance here. I did not want to claim that social

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[4] LILLA 2007, pp. 222-250.　　　　[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 251-295.

theory was merely a theology in disguise as suggested by John Milbank,[6] nor did I want to claim that all Weber's work could be reduced to its Protestant heritage; I simply wanted to draw out the confessional motifs which underlie his social theory. Just as tectonic plates beneath the earth shape the geography of a landscape, the confessional underpinnings of Weber's theory of secularisation have given it its particular shape. Weber's theory of secularisation bears a liberal Protestant architecture that structures his account of religion in the modern world.

A third objective of the work was to open up a pathway through modernity that made explicit just how confessional differences could make a difference in the construction of social theory. The welcome attitude of contemporary ecumenism that one finds in Charles Taylor's account can, however, make us insufficiently aware of the confessionalisation of scholarship in nineteenth century Germany. This was the context of Weber's work and such an ecumenical attitude is anachronistic when applied to this period. Whilst in *Protestant Modernity* I do not pursue this question beyond outlining the Protestant architecture of Weber's social theory, I will sketch some of the issues that present themselves when one begins to theorise a Catholic pathway through modernity in our present reality.

In a context of complexifying globalisation one might consider this analysis if not parochial then somewhat passé; I think this view is mistaken.[7] There are several reasons for this. Firstly, the account of Western modernisation has been limited by an overly dominant Protestant conception. Whilst scholars, particularly in the historical sciences, have done much to correct this view, within social theory this has had little influence. As a result, inherited Protestant positions have been implicitly carried forward in social theories without full awareness of the sociological consequences of this. Secondly, Western patterns of modernisation are not confined to Europe and North America rather they have also been taken up by other continents. Whilst each continent and country follows its own cultural pathway through modernity these are not taken in isolation from the dominant Western models of modernisation. Moreover, European connections to other parts of the world through imperialism, trade, and religious missionaries have had influence in both directions and have meant that European modernity itself has been shaped by the encounters with

[6] MILBANK 1990.
[7] For a study of secularisation in relation to Catholicism and Protestantism and the world religions, see for example JOAS and WIEGANDT 2007.

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these other parts of the world.[8] Consequently, a better understanding of the modernisation processes of the West allows us to see more clearly how differentiated but related processes of modernisation occur in other non-Western countries. Thirdly, as Bernard Yack has argued, the tendency for Western theories of modernity has been to present an overly integrated and coherent picture of Western modernisation such that the differences between national trajectories, confessional differences, and cultural particularities have been obscured in homogenised accounts of modernity and postmodernity.[9] In tracing Protestant and Catholic trajectories through modernity a more textured and less integrated account of modern development emerges that allows for alternative patterns of modernisation to become visible. Finally, the importance of confessional influences on early social theory has consequences for the study of later and contemporary social theory which draws upon Max Weber. As many of the concepts and categories of Weber have influenced these social theorists, uncovering the confessional architecture of Weber's social theory has implications for a better understanding of them as well. Often implicit Protestant hermeneutical options have been carried through into later social theories without being explicitly acknowledged.[10] Making explicit this confessional architecture in Weber's work allows us to trace the Protestant heritage in these social theorists and so to become aware of the continuing importance of this for social theory today.

At a time of global financial crisis this may be of more than theoretical interest as we seek ways to move beyond the Protestant modernity which has been embedded in the deregulation of the financial markets. Sociological investigation into an alternative Catholic modernity may well have something to contribute in solving our current global financial problems without naively presuming that it can solve them all.

In this article, I will provide an overview of *Protestant Modernity* in four parts. The first will consider the state of reflection on secularisation theory today. This will situate Weber's own theory of secularisation within a wider historical and systematic context. The second will look at Weber's writings themselves as yielding a theory of secularisation. The third will indicate how this theory can be said to be structured by Protestant motifs. The final will open up an avenue

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[8] See for example CHAKRABARTY 2007; MASUZAWA 2005; VEER 2001.

[9] See for example YACK 1997.

[10] See for example SKINNER 1982.

indicated but not developed in *Protestant Modernity* of an alternative Catholic modernity.

Historical and Systematic Aspects of Modern Secularisation

I begin with a consideration of some historical and systematic aspects of the processes of secularisation from the French Revolution onwards. This is not to suggest that Western secularisation begins with the events of the French Revolution, in fact, for Max Weber, Western secularisation may be said to have originated in ancient Judaism.[11] Rather, the French Revolution represents the most important event of modern secularisation initiating the process of the separation of creed and citizenship and so ending a tradition of identifying the state with a particular religion. It is thus a reasonable place to situate modern theories of secularisation like Weber's. Separation of the political sphere from the religious sphere is the first sense of modern secularisation. This separation of creed and citizenship took a further turn when the Constituent Assembly passed measures in February 1790 against religious orders in France. The vows taken by religious men and women were declared invalid and banned, monastic orders were forced to disperse, and priestly celibacy was abolished. This control of secular power over the religious domain asserted the supremacy of secular jurisdiction over the ecclesiastical and led to an undermining of the religious basis of social life in France. Divorce was legalised and gradually the state took over from the church the rights of passage associated with birth, marriage, and death.

Closely tied to these socio-historical changes were the intellectual transformations associated with the move away from the Augustinian "two cities" approach towards the nineteenth century theories of world history. Rather than conceiving history as penetrated and transcended by the eschatological fulfilment of time, thinkers such as Hegel and Marx reduced time to an immanent category shorn of its transcendental heritage. This secularisation of time corresponds to the secularisation of space as territories such as France were governed according to secular political principles. In 1803 this led to Napoleon's secularisation of the Germanic ecclesiastical states and the confiscation of church property.

[11] In a forthcoming book, I trace the origins of secularisation from biblical times until the present day. Carroll 2010. For an excellent study of Weber on ancient Judaism, see Otto 2002.

This historical and systematic background to secularisation finishes with a sketch of secularisation debates of the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries. After a period in which the secularisation paradigm was taken for granted in the social sciences the second-half of the twentieth century saw an explosion of debates regarding the nature, extent, and even existence of contemporary secularisation. Weber's theory of secularisation lives on in these debates in various forms and is thus not simply of historical interest. In Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self* and *A Secular Age*, for example, the importance of reform and the "affirmation of the ordinary" in bringing on modern secularisation are clearly influenced by Weber.[12] Thus a study of Weber's theory of secularisation and its Protestant heritage is one which not only speaks to the importance of the historical reconstruction of Weber's ideas; it also contributes to a better understanding of present theories of secularisation in which former ideas such as those of Weber are sedimented.

Weber's Theory of Secularisation

In his study of the concept of secularisation, Hermann Lübbe finds Weber's occasional use of the term sufficient to categorise his whole sociology of religion as a theory of secularisation.[13] Essentially, what I have tried to do in *Protestant Modernity* has been to systematically reconstruct the secularisation theory in Weber's major works and to point out the extent to which this is shaped by a liberal Protestant worldview.[14] Moreover, I have not confined this reconstruction to Weber's sociology of religion but have also sought to uncover the importance of this theory of secularisation in his political, methodological, and personal writings.

[12] See for example TAYLOR 1989, pp. 211-302.

[13] LÜBBE [1965] 2003, p. 69.

[14] For previous attempts to explicate Weber's theory of secularisation, see HUGHEY 1979; TORRÓ 1989.

Hughey's article sketches the general outlines of a systematic theory of secularisation in Weber based on the three conditions of ethical rationalisation, ethical absolutism and the ethic of universal brotherhood which create tensions between the prophetic and redemptory religions and the secular world. He also holds that his theory acts as a heuristic question for historical and empirical research. I, on the other hand, consider Weber's theory of secularisation to be an a priori liberal Protestant reading of texts and historic-sociological realities.

Lluis Oviedo Torró's work is a theological assessment of the significance of secularization for the Christian faith and compares Weber's thought with a number of modern theological positions on the question.

In both Hughey and Torró's works there are no references to the liberal Protestant metanarrative governing Weber's theory of secularisation that I outline in CARROLL 2007.

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I begin by a consideration of his most famous work, *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism*. The two major Protestant principles: Luther's understanding of universal calling and Calvin's doctrine of predestination are used by Weber to form the link category between Protestantism and capitalism, that is to say, the concept of ''inner-worldly'' asceticism (innerweltliche Askese). It is the secularisation of this Protestant understanding of asceticism by the gradual elimination of its religious roots that provides the particularity of Western rationality and propels forward the engine of capitalism. Secularisation here means both the shifting of asceticism from the confines of the monastery to the world and in this sense corresponds to the German *Verweltlichung* or the making worldly of an originally religious person or property and also the eventual transformation of the objective of this asceticism from a religious purpose to purely the pursuit of profit without any transcendental rationale.[15] These two senses of secularisation are present within the narrative of the *Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism* and embody a liberal Protestant architecture structuring his work at the typological level of distinguishing between the models of ascetic Protestantism. Weber's reading of asceticism here rests to a large degree on his use of the work of the liberal Protestant theologian Matthias Schneckenburger in distinguishing between active Calivinism and passive Lutheranism.[16] This use of such liberal Protestant theological sources to provide Weber with central concepts and categories in the construction of his sociological typology is an example that repeats itself throughout his work and illustrates how his theory is deeply marked by this tradition.[17]

No less important a dimension of Weber's theory of secularisation that is connected to a liberal Protestant worldview is introduced in the 1920 version of his *Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism* through his use of the concept of disenchantment (Entzauberung).[18] The

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[15] See WEBER [1920] 1988a, pp. 200-201, n. 4, LICHTBLAU and WEISS [1904-1905] [1920] 2000, p. 201, n. 434; WEBER [1920] 1988a, p. 203, LICHTBLAU and WEISS [1904-1905] [1920] 2000, p. 153; WEBER [1920] 1988a, p. 204, LICHTBLAU and WEISS [1904-1905] [1920] 2000, pp. 153-154.

[16] See WEBER [1920] 1988a, p. 75, n. 2, p. 112, n. 1; LICHTBLAU and WEISS [1904-1905] [1920] 2000, p. 43, n. 50, p. 76, n. 115.

For further discussion of the importance of this liberal Protestant heritiage, see Tyrell 1992, p. 188.

[17] For an in depth study of the concept of asceticism in Weber's work that explicates the influence of the liberal Protestant theologians of the nineteenth century, see TREIBER 1999.

[18] Weber uses the word *Entzauberung* four times in the 1920 edition but not at all in the 1904-1905 edition. See WEBER [1920] 1988a, pp. 94, 114, 156, 158; LICHTBLAU and WEISS [1904-1905] [1920] 2000, Anhang n. 163, n. 242, n. 331, n. 337.

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disenchantment of the world (Entzauberung der Welt) is the gradual elimination of magic from the world. This process, which begins in ancient Judaism and reaches its historical fulfilment in the ascetic Protestantism of Calvinism, replaces enchanted forms of action by rational action. Here Weber makes little distinction between ancient Egyptian, Babylonian, and modern Catholic ''magical practices'' as all are considered to be enchanted forms of action.[19] This anti-sacramental understanding of existence, typical of nineteenth century liberal Protestantism, represents a secularised theory of action. Action no longer plays any positive soteriological role in the realisation of salvation in the individual. *Sola Fide* and *Sola Gratia*, two basic Protestant principles animate Weber's understanding of the two possible means to salvation open to the religious virtuosos of Protestantism in both Lutheran and Calvinist varieties and are clear liberal Protestant hermeneutical options that structure his account of rational action in *The Protestant Ethic and the ''Spirit'' of Capitalism*.[20] This limitation of rational action to these possibilities excluding sacramental action as a rational possibility is a reasonable hermeneutic emerging out of the liberal Protestant framework from which Weber drew his theological sources and results in him being unable to thematise the possibility of a Catholic theory of rational sacramental action. Secularisation here means the elimination of grace from nature and so human nature no longer cooperates with the saving power of grace nor is nature permeated with God's grace. This profanation of the world represents secularisation in its ontological sense of the emptying out of grace from nature. Nature, or the world, is simply the world and grace will no longer be mediated to humanity through nature as it is in the Catholic tradition. Secularisation in this context portrays the world as not bathed in grace and so not allowing any encounter with God in and through it. From now on, God will be encountered in his word alone: *Sola Scriptura* as the Reformation had proclaimed it.[21]

A second sense in which Weber speaks of the disenchantment of the world is in terms of the consequences of the accumulation of property and wealth for the religious roots that gave rise to the spirit of capitalism. Weber discusses this in terms of religious orders that tend to become wealthy and so lose their desire to be poor.[22] This understanding of

[19] See CARROLL 2007, pp. 87-88.
[20] See WEBER [1920] 1988a, pp. 108-109.
[21] This framework of the relation between grace and nature that Weber depends upon here limits his sociological options for rational action and his understanding of asceticism and mysticism to those permitted within his liberal Protestant worldview. For an extended discussion of these points, see CARROLL 2007, pp. 167-176.
[22] This is something Weber calls the ''secularising effect of property.'' See WEBER [1920] 1988a, p. 196; LICHTBLAU and WEISS [1904-1905] [1920] 2000, p. 149.

secularisation recurs in *Die protestantischen Sekten und der Geist des Kapitalismus* published in 1906 a short time after the first edition of *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism*. From his experience of the United States during his journey prior to writing *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism*, he had discovered Protestant sects which at this time had tended to become secular institutions and so had lost their original religious inspiration.[23]

The transferral of religious values from the religious to the secular realm and the transformation of the notion of calling from religious life into calling in a secular activity characterise Weber's account of secularisation and its concomitant disenchantment in *The Protestant Ethic and The "Sprit" of Capitalism*. The liberal Protestant options considered by Weber in his narrative of secularisation delimit the sociological possibilities to one particular Protestant vision of modernity and situate his theory clearly within this framework.

Weber's understanding of secularisation in his *Einleitung* to *Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen* is worked out through addressing the religious need to answer the theodicy question. As rational conceptions of the world develop the need to find an ethical interpretation of the meaning of suffering and death and the distribution of good fortune intensifies as people realise that they can now understand the world and so want to know why it is so cruel. This gives rise to three rationally satisfactory answers to this question: the Indian notion of Karma, Zoroastrian dualism, and Protestant predestination.[24] Yet, the consequence of this inner rationalisation of religious responses to the theodicy question is that religion itself increasingly moves into the irrational realm; the "other" to the purposive rationality of the world whose primitive image, originally unified in a magical conception of reality, is now fragmented through rational cognition and the mastery of nature.[25] This disenchantment of the world through rationalisation leads to a privatisation of religion as the public rational domain of reality governed by impersonal rules shifts religious experience into the private realm of the individual. Secularisation here is thus clearly a privatisation of religion as religious experience seems inaccessible to public rationality. Moreover, as

[23] As an example of this secularising process of disenchantment within originally Protestant American institutions, he notes the tendency of American universities to lack the relevant theological literature that he required to write his *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism*. See WEBER [1920] 1988a, pp. 86-87, n. 2; LICHTBLAU and WEISS [1904-1905] [1920] 2000, pp. 55-56, n. 66.

[24] See WEBER [1920] 1988a, pp. 246-247, 253-254.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 253.

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the notion of religious vocation itself rationalises from referring to other-worldly contemplation to this-worldly action, the growth of ascetical Protestantism opens up the possibility of the religious transformation of everyday life.[26]

Weber understands Protestantism to have greatly influenced the rationalisation of the world at both a theoretical and a practical level. At the theoretical level of basing its theology on scripture, the Catholic metaphysical theology was devalued and a gap opens between faith and reason that would have enormous consequences for the religious development of the West. This ''de-Hellenisation''[27] of religious faith leads to a rejection of the speculative Catholic metaphysics and now Luther's *Deus absconditus* revealed only in the revelation of the scriptures will, for Weber, uncouple faith and reason leaving religion as a leap in the irrational dark for those who cannot bear the demands of science. At the practical level human action is no longer seen as actively contributing to one's own salvation and so the way is opened for a purely secular theory of human action. Thus human thought can no longer penetrate the hidden mysteries of God and action is now purely secular leaving the way open for purposive rationality to take the place of both speculative theological reason and a soteriological understanding of human action. The gradual development of the age of Western secular modernity is thus also the emergence of an exclusively secular theory of action.

Weber's investigations of the religions of China and India provide contrasts with the development of Protestantism in the West. He compares Puritanism with the religions of China by investigating the stage of rationalisation embodied in each in order to bring out the specificity of Western cultural development. The measure to which a religion may be said to be rational is the degree to which it can be considered disenchanted and its capacity for generating an inner-worldly ethic. Thus the degree of internal secularisation within a religion, in terms of its rejection of magical theories and practices, is the criteria of it being rational. As Protestantism most systematically eliminates the magical means of salvation and promotes an inner-worldly oriented ethic it represents a rational advance on the religions of China.[28] Weber's judgment of what counts as a rational advance fits within a liberal Protestant conception of religion and situates his criteria within this schema.[29]

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[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 262-263.
[27] See BENEDICT XVI 2006.
[28] See WEBER [1920] 1988a, pp. 512-513.
[29] See CARROLL 2007, pp. 101-107.

Of particular interest in his study of the religion of India is his discussion of the contemplation and action dichotomy. Indian religions represent, for Weber, ideal types of contemplation and so are the polar opposites of the ideal type of Protestantism as the religion of inner-worldly ascetical action. The oppositional typology employed by Weber in the categories of contemplation and action, and mysticism and asceticism structures his analysis of rationality, social action, and the development of modernity. His ideal type of contemplation plays a significant role within his general methodological narrative of causal historical sociology accounting for patterns of historical development that occur across cultures.[30] In particular in Asia, Weber sees the dominance of the contemplative model of religion as closing off these cultures to the development of capitalism as inner-worldly rationality is devoid of the high premium that is placed upon it in the West. As an illustration of these religious tendencies, Weber uses the biblical figures of Martha and Mary as representatives of the two different attitudes associated with active and contemplative religious stances. The distinct ends of contemplation and action within Weber's sociology mean that as India privileges passive contemplation this route of salvation cannot support a social rationalisation based on inner-worldly action.

The transferral of value from contemplation to action is a secularisation motif that recurs throughout Weber's theory of secularisation and in opposing contemplation and action Weber follows the liberal Protestant theology[31] of the nineteenth century in his construction of these categories and so weaves into his comparative historical sociology a critical appropriation of a liberal Protestant metanarrative[32] that cannot thematise the theoretical possibility and sociologically significant historical and actual reality of contemplative action.[33] One also sees this typology employed by Weber in his *Zwischenbetrachtung*

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[30] KALBERG 1994, pp. 177-192.

[31] See GRAF 1995. I shall return to this point below when I discuss Weber's understanding of asceticism and mysticism in his *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*. It should be noted, however, that whilst it is beyond reasonable doubt that Weber's theory of secularisation is marked by its liberal Protestant heritage, Weber (as does Troeltsch) also departs in places from the standard liberal Protestant understanding of world-rejecting asceticism in seeing this as not simply confined to Catholicism but also as having an affinity to Lutheranism. On this

point, see TREIBER 1999, pp. 248, 260-270.

[32] For an assessment of the extent of the influence of liberal Protestant theological sources on Weber's concepts of asceticism and mysticism, and contemplation and action, see KRECH 2001; TREIBER 1999, 2001.

[33] The notion of "contemplative action" derives from one of the early members of the Society of Jesus, Jerome Nadal, and signifies the particular type of action associated with those who follow the spirituality of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. See CARROLL 2007, pp. 152-153, n. 117.

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which concludes the *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie I*. Here, he provides a bridge between *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie I* and *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* that illustrates the complementarity of these two texts, and also connects his studies of world-accepting and world-rejecting religions.[34] Weber outlines how, through the ethic of brotherhood, the world-rejecting cultural religions come into conflict with the developmental logic of the cultural value spheres. This results in a gradual elimination of their influence within these domains and so one may read the *Zwischenbetrachtung* as a general narrative of the cultural dynamics of secularisation and disenchantment in which the cultural value spheres gain their autonomy from religious influence.[35]

This long process of secularisation and disenchantment is one which whilst it reaches its zenith in ascetical Protestantism has its roots, for Weber, deep within ancient Judaism. In his monumental study of ancient Judaism, Weber outlines how in the rejection of magical practices as ways of dealing with evil, Israel rejects Babylonian dualism and instead favours an ethical response to the theodicy question. This, for Weber, represents the origin of the process of disenchantment that eventually flowers within the Puritanical groups of Protestantism and reinforces his use of the ideal typical opposition between mystical contemplation and ethical inner-worldly asceticism. The Jewish opposition to magic in favour of rational knowledge is embodied in the institutionalisation of the legal reforms of the Torah in the Deuteronomic tradition. Crucial in the social organisation of Judaism, which prefigures that of Protestantism, was the institutional rejection of a spiritual hierarchy. All are now required to follow the same discipline and ascetical practices of the faith. Also, for Weber, the Jewish conception of God does not favour a contemplative union but rather an ethical following of God's law, which itself can be understood as a form of secularisation in that the emphasis is shifted from mystical practices to the rational principles of daily life codified in the law. The ethical response to the theodicy question represented the singularity of the people of Israel at their time and one that would later be shared by ascetical Protestantism.[36]

In *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* Weber's development of the concepts of asceticism and mysticism in the "Sociology of Religion" section further clarifies his understanding of secularisation and its role

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[34] See SCHLUCHTER 1985, p. 65.
[35] For a general outline of this secularisation and disenchantment narrative, see CARROLL 2007, pp. 107-123.
[36] *Ibid.*, pp. 129-138.

in his sociology. He is not interested in religion for its own sake here, but rather, he wants to investigate the effect that types of religious attitudes and stances towards the divinity and the world have on social action. He organises these reflections on asceticism and mysticism according to the answer given by each religious form to a particular question: how is it possible for a religious believer to gain a sure sense of salvation? He outlines three historical paths that have been followed to resolve this question: ecstasy, asceticism, and contemplation.[37] Whilst the attaining of certainty is the objective in each path, it is only when this certainty endures that it is sociologically significant as a religious attitude. For this reason, Weber assimilates ecstasy into contemplation and argues that only contemplation and asceticism provide an enduring sense of salvation and so are meaningful for social action. Asceticism is understood as a practical attitude that manifests itself in right action and leads to a religiously guided form of permanent behaviour. Contemplation on the other hand is understood to be a theoretical attitude that manifests itself in right knowledge of a mystical kind and leads to a permanent type of consciousness in which the certainty of salvation is manifested.

In these categories one sees how Weber unites means and ends and fixes asceticism as the means to its end of action, and mysticism as the means to its end of contemplation. This effectively couples action guiding sociologically significant behaviour to the Reformed Protestant tradition in his analysis and so does not allow the Catholic or indeed Lutheran traditions to be seen as significant for a sociological theory of action.[38] Consequently, these typologies tie his sociology of action tightly to the Reformed Protestant tradition and eliminate the Catholic understanding of action from being sociologically significant. Moreover, as we have already seen, since these categorical distinctions are themselves shaped by the liberal Protestant theological sources upon which he drew one can detect a Protestant metanarrative governing his theory of action here. The categories of contemplation and action, mysticism and asceticism are used by Weber as analytically constructed historical landmarks that chart the development of the Western world and normatively assess the degree to which religious attitudes are rational and hence sociologically significant action in the world. Essentially, Weber is following an *ora aut labora* (prayer or work) dichotomy in separating contemplation and action and an understanding of contemplation that derives from a liberal Protestant

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[37] WEBER [1921] [1922] 1972, pp. 324-326.   [38] See CARROLL 2007, pp. 169-176.

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tradition in which contemplation and action are seen as by nature separate.[39] This is significant for a sociological theory of action because the Catholic tradition of contemplation in action (*ora in labora*), deriving from the early modern Catholicism of the sixteenth century, is effectively eliminated from the horizon of analytical and historical significance for a sociological theory of action. The possibility of a ''contemplative theory of action'' is thus not considered as an option for Weber because of his oppositional typology of religious attitudinal ends of salvation. Consequently, Weber's theory of social action articulates a Protestant pathway of secularisation that drives modernity forward.

The sociology of law outlined in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* together with his conception of charisma also provides insight into Weber's understanding of secularisation. The secularisation of natural law has commonly been considered an indicator of the process of secularisation and Weber's analysis of the dialectic of formal and substantive rationalisation in his sociology of law plays a major part in his conception of the disenchantment and systematisation of modern secular rationalism.[40] Influenced by Rudolf Sohm, the Protestant Church historian and anti-Catholic canon lawyer, Weber's understanding of Christianity's eschatological withdrawal from the world opens the way for the secularisation of substantive sacred law into formal secular law. Here, Weber follows the more Protestant understanding of eschatology defended by Luther and championed by Calvin in rejecting the realised eschatology in ecclesial and sacramental form. In the tradition of the Protestant History of Religion School, and especially the work of Johannes Weiss,[41] Weber sees the kingdom of God as a future oriented transcendental reality of which no trace can be found in the present historical reality. This means that whilst the gospel may govern the world to come, secular rationality in the form of legal codes orders this world.[42] Secularisation here is understood by Weber to be the retreat of ''sacred reasoning'' as secular rationality takes over the responsibilities of structuring the normative basis of society according to formal principles. Weber's application of the concepts of charisma and vocation, originally theological concepts, to the analysis of power, rule, and the state in his political sociology provides a good illustration of Carl Schmitt's famous suggestion of the origin of political concepts and secularises this concept for his own

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 210, n. 22.
[40] *Ibid.*, pp. 176-182.
[41] *Ibid.*, p. 180.
[42] See WEBER [1921] [1922] 1972, p. 480.

sociological purposes.[43] Rudolf Sohm's influence on Weber is also important here. Weber had known Sohm through their joint political engagement in the National Social Party[44] and also through their regular attendance at the Evangelical Social Congress.[45] Moreover, Weber acknowledged the debt he owed to Sohm in the development of his own concept of charisma.[46]

Weber's Munich speeches on science and politics as a vocation[47] present a rather harsh account of secularisation and its Protestant heritage[48] and, as Friedrich Tenbruck noted, in many ways these speeches are a continuation of themes already taken up in *The Protestant Ethic and the ''Spirit'' of Capitalism*.[49] The issues of vocation, of the importance of single mindedness for realising an objective, and the modern conditions of disenchantment are all themes that resurface in these speeches and carry with them the meanings of secularisation already noted. However, the influence of the Protestant theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) on Weber's essay on science has often been overlooked.[50] Weber interpreted Schleiermacher to hold the notion that at some point the believer needs to sacrifice his or her rationality in order to maintain a religious faith.[51] The scientist who needs to submit himself to the uncompromising rigours of rationality, Weber holds, cannot bridge this gulf between faith and reason.[52]

Friedmann Voigt notes the influence of the Protestant Old Testament historian and exegete Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) on Weber's speeches here. Wellhausen's research on the Old Testament prophets provides Weber with a model for his conception of a ''man of vocation.'' In both these speeches, the prophet represents the individual who is fearless in the face of the institutional compromises of lesser mortals and speaks the truth regardless of personal cost. This image of the prophet is a Jewish and Protestant theological construction used to champion the individual in his or her pursuit of religious integrity in the face of a corrupt and corrupting institution. Weber uses this Protestant image as an ethical critique of the practices of his contemporaries in the universities who lacked the courage and

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[43] See SCHMITT 1934, p. 49.
[44] See CARROLL 2007, p. 214, n. 40.
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 186.
[46] See WEBER [1921] [1922] 1972, pp. 124, 654-655.
[47] See CARROLL 2007, pp. 195-207.
[48] See VOIGT 2002.

[49] See TENBRUCK 1999, pp. 246-247.
[50] See VOIGT 2002, p. 251.
[51] For Schleiermacher's views on faith and reason, see LOUDEN 2002, pp. 193-195; MARIÑA 2005, pp. 35-51.
[52] See WEBER [1922] 1988b, p. 611.

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integrity to pursue academic research and rather hid behind dogmatic formulas that betrayed their inability to face the fate of the times.[53]

This critique of dogmatic intellectuals is very much tied up in Weber with his opposition to the value-bound research that he considered Catholic intellectuals to be pursuing. He represents, by contrast, Protestantism as ideally the inheritor of the honesty and intellectual rigour of the Jewish prophets against the ideological and institutionally compromised position of the Catholic Church.[54]

The Protestant Heritage of Weber's Theory of Secularisation

What is meant by a Protestant heritage in Weber's thought?[55] In order to answer this question, one needs to make explicit the foundational principles of Protestantism. There are three such fundamental principles: *Sola Scriptura*, *Sola Fide*, and *Sola Gratia*. Let us consider each in turn.

In the principle of scripture alone, *Sola Scriptura*, the central issue is the origin of ultimate authority in matters of faith. For Luther, the Bible was the only source of normative authority in the church. God revealed himself to each individual through the medium of the word of God in the Bible and not through the humanly created institution of the church. His famous declaration before Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Worms on April 18, 1521 is the origin of the Protestant principle of the freedom of conscience based on the capacity of the individual Christian in faith to decide, *Sola Scriptura*, right and wrong.

The principle of faith alone, *Sola Fide*, concerns the Protestant understanding of the means of salvation. Following St. Paul, in his Letter to the Romans, Luther rejects the notion that our works help to save us and rather holds that it is only the freely given gift of faith that brings us salvation or in Paul's language makes us justified before God. Luther outlined this position in a speech he gave on *The Freedom of a Christian* in early November 1520, making it clear that our works have no positive soteriological effect and that it is by faith alone that we are redeemed.

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[53] *Ibid.*, pp. 612-613.
[54] The importance of the *Kulturkampf* and the confessionalisation of politics background on the German academic system should not be underestimated in this context. See CARROLL 2007, pp. 202-204.
[55] See HONIGSHEIM 1950.

The third fundamental principle of Protestantism is grace alone, *Sola Gratia*, that is, salvation only comes through the free action of God, grace, and cannot be mediated to the individual by the Church. God deals directly with each person and is not bound by the need for His grace to be mediated through the institution of the church. It is this freely given grace alone that allows the individual to believe and confers the gift of faith in Jesus as Lord and Saviour. The mystery of the election of the saved and the doctrine of predestination most dramatically bring out the significance of this principle expressing the characteristic Protestant mistrust of hierarchy. As grace is freely given by God's Holy Spirit, there is no need for priests to administer the sacrament of confession, restoring the believer to a state of grace. Rather, the central role of the church minister is to preach the Word of God so that believers may be nourished in their faith.

These three principles form a basic constitution of Protestantism and whilst the various types emphasise each one differently they give a characteristic architecture to the Protestant faith. Another feature that may be considered characteristic of Protestantism is its basic ethical orientation as opposed to the metaphysical orientation of Catholicism. Rather than starting from the metaphysical understanding of the creation and proceeding to understand God's law, God is seen as the lawgiver and through listening to this law one comes to know God as creator.[56] One sees this aspect of Protestantism in Weber's account of ascetic Protestantism and his understanding of how it responds to the theodicy question. Taken together, these three principles and the ethical orientation provide a reasonable characterisation of the nature of Protestantism within the various forms that it takes.

As well as these somewhat formal considerations, knowledge of the socio-historical context of Germany in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries is also important for explicating the importance of the Protestant heritage for Weber's thought. Three aspects are most important in this regard: The *Kulturkampf*, cultural Protestantism, and nationalism. In Friedrich Wilhelm Graf's seminal article on cultural Protestantism, he singles out four different ways in which this concept has been used: 1. As a concept for the period of Protestant theology between Schleiermacher and Troeltsch; 2. As a concept for the theological school of Albrecht Ritschl, which crystallised around the journal *Die Christliche Welt*; 3. As a category used to describe the religious and social values associated with the Wilhelmine bourgeoisie;

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[56] See STUCKI 1999, p. 62.

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4. As the category used to describe the transformation of Christian values into the values of middle-class capitalism.[57] What is common to all four different uses of the concept is that they all focus on how Christianity can meet the needs of modern people.

This motif of cultural Protestantism is clearly manifested in one of the most important institutions of cultural Protestantism in the nineteenth century, the *Deutscher Protestantenverein* (The German Protestant Association), founded in 1863. Richard Rothe, the leading Heidelberg theologian of the time, spoke of the Association as an attempt to reconcile religion and culture and so to make Christianity a force in modern culture.[58] The Protestant Association saw the future of the German nation in the hands of the popular Protestant majority with Heidelberg acting as the intellectual centre for the Association.[59] Weber himself collaborated in this cultural Protestant movement acting as an editor for the major liberal Protestant Lexicon *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, being responsible for the twelfth part of the Lexicon on the social sciences. Moreover, Weber also participated in the important Evangelical Social Congress which tried to transform social policy through Protestant influence.[60]

An indicator of the Protestant heritage of Weber's ideas can be seen in the overlapping of Protestantism and nationalism in the nation-building project of early modern Germany.[61] Cultural Protestantism considered national history and culture to be an expression of the divine will, and the state came to be seen as the highest embodiment of national culture. Such German historicism was profoundly marked by Lutheranism and its Protestant heritage was inscribed on the foundation of the state. The question of nationalism in Germany in the nineteenth century brought into sharp focus the matter of religious confession and, as Paul Münch notes, the German national character was formed by Protestantism and Protestant values, excluding Catholics and Catholicism as a foreign body that was unable to bring national unity and even brought division and foreign loyalties into play.[62] Weber stands in this tradition of seeing Catholicism as divisive for the German nation[63] and is influenced by such anti-Catholic sentiment.[64]

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[57] See GRAF 1992.
[58] *Ibid*., p. 24.
[59] See HÜBINGER 1994, pp. 112-113.
[60] See ALDENHOFF 1987.
[61] For a series of essays on this subject, see

LASSMAN 2006, pp. 483-542.
[62] See MÜNCH 1995, pp. 58-59, 71.
[63] See LASSMAN 2006, pp. 395-542.
[64] See MÜNCH 1995, p. 71.

Weber's Protestant account of modernity raises a general question that I have noted but not answered in *Protestant Modernity* concerning just how an alternative conception of modernity might differ from his Protestant version. I would like to consider this question now by merely sketching some of the central issues that would face the theorisation of a Catholic account of modernity.

Towards a Catholic Modernity

The question of how to describe Catholicism in the early modern period is a challenging one for contemporary historians. John W. O'Malley, the American Jesuit historian, makes the point in surveying the historiography of the period, that just how a scholar describes Catholicism at this time reveals their working presuppositions about it.[65] Whether one uses terms such as ''Counter Reformation'' or ''Catholic Reformation'' the inescapable fact is that each reveals an implicit hermeneutic within which these categories function and make particular sense.[66] So, for example, the term ''Catholic Reformation'' conveys the idea that Catholicism was undergoing an internal renewal at the time, but by contrast, the term ''Counter Reformation'' stresses more the external combative aspect of Catholicism acting at a whole range of levels against the threat of Protestantism.[67] As a result, describing the ''facts'' of sociologically significant actions and systems in the early modern period goes hand in hand with making judgments as to which of these contributed to modernisation of the societies in which they took place. Even judgments about what constitutes modernisation cannot simply be read off from factual descriptions. We are inevitably caught in the ''double hermeneutic'' bind of social scientific explanation at each stage of our analysis.[68] Consequently, it is especially important for social scientific analyses of early modern societies not to be hermeneutically naïve about encrusted anti-Catholic or indeed anti-Protestant prejudices that operated at the time and anti-religious prejudices operating at later periods of the reception history that have anachronistically screened out the religious frameworks within which early periods of history operated.[69]

[65] See O'MALLEY 2000, p. 3.
[66] *Ibid.*, p. 15.
[67] *Ibid.*, pp. 126-134.
[68] See GIDDENS 1993, pp. 9-10, 12-15, 166-167.

[69] On the importance of confessional frameworks in rival understandings of the enlightenment in early modern Germany, see HUNTER 2001; SOROKIN 2008.

Protestant Modernity has highlighted the importance of this hermeneutical awareness for seeing the Protestant metanarrative which informs Weber's theory of secularisation.[70] This should come as little surprise to historically aware sociologists of the period since for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries it was Protestant historians who dominated research on the early modern period and provided a Protestant hermeneutic of it. They took it for granted that modernity was the leaving behind of the medieval dominance of Catholicism, which was seen as out-dated and oppressive, and the entry into a new Protestant-led-era of individual liberty and progress.[71] Unintentionally, this account was reinforced by the Catholic historians of the time since they tended to react to this Protestant reading and by doing so merely strengthened a default Protestant setting on early modern history and historiography.

This state of affairs fostered a dominant historical view of Catholicism in the early modern period as anti-modern. In recent times, however, this view has undergone serious revision.[72] The work of historians such as Wolfgang Reinhard has changed this view of early modern Catholicism by bringing to light different ways in which Catholicism, often unintentionally, contributed to modernisation. He has argued that modernisation processes can be found in Catholicism of the time in areas such as increasing bureaucratisation, in the development of rationalisation procedures for the regulation of church business, in the social disciplining of the faithful, and in the spirituality and practices of the newly founded Society of Jesus (Jesuits).[73]

Weber's account of modern Catholicism largely follows the standard historical picture portrayed by nineteenth century Protestant historians and so overlooks the actual practices and spiritualities of early modern Catholicism.[74] Consequently, his account of modernity tends to see modernisation as resulting from Protestant sources and eventually moving away from and beyond Protestantism to a secularised modernity.[75] Influenced by Weber's account other social

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[70] Historians, such as Thomas Nipperdey, have done a great deal to peel away the layers of anti-religious prejudice to reveal the importance of religion in understanding the whole social context of nineteenth and early-twentieth century Germany, see NIPPERDEY 1988.

[71] See O'MALLEY 2000, p. 27.

[72] The more recent theories of "confessionalisation" and "social disciplining" have done much to recast some of these one-sided

views of Catholicism. See for example REINHARD 1977, 1995; O'MALLEY 2000, pp. 108-117.

[73] See REINHARD 1977, pp. 231, 240. Here Reinhard is drawing on earlier work produced by the English historian EVENNET 1951, pp. 3, 20.

[74] See STARK 1968.

[75] This is Mark Lilla's self-declared limitation in LILLA 2007, p. 12.

theories of modernity have given little attention to Catholicism in their portrayals of modernity. In effect, due to an overly biased account of the early modern period, the Catholic influence on modernisation has not been taken into account in sociological, historical, and philosophical theories of modernity.[76]

In *Protestant Modernity*, I have averted to this ideological screening out of the importance of Catholicism by suggesting that Weber's inability to thematise the sociological significance of ''contemplative action'' is due to the Protestant metanarrative which forecloses his typology of action short of the Catholic tradition.[77] This typological limitation has caused serious confusions at the analytical and historical levels of Weber's sociology of religion. In joining the analytical separation of asceticism and mysticism to the historical distinctions between Western and Asian salvation religions, he effectively cuts off the possibility of conceiving Western mysticism after St. Thomas Aquinas as having any sociological significance in the development of modernity.[78] This fits neatly into Weber's Protestant account of modernity but it fails to recognise the sociological significance of ''inner-worldly'' mysticism that has been described by historians of the early modern period in their accounts of the Catholic Reformation.[79] The self-understanding of the actions and systems of religious orders such as the Franciscans, the Dominicans, and the Jesuits, so vitally important in the history of the early modern times, is not taken seriously in Weber's analytical action typology and so remains un-theorised by him in his account of the rational development of the West. In reducing mysticism to essentially ''other-worldly'' action, a potential Catholic theory of action involving ''inner-worldly'' trans-formative action is screened out of Weber's account as the mystic is reduced to passivity within the world.

Limited by such an analytical categorisation, articulation of Catholic Social Teaching and its understanding of action within the world are made impossible. This follows a Protestant line of opposing church and culture and so of seeing the eschatological separation between church and world as only overcome in the future reality of the kingdom of God. The Catholic tradition of seeing contemplative action as the partial but never complete realisation of the kingdom of God on earth is articulated by moral theologians and ecclesiologists

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[76] See CLARK and KAISER 2003, p. 7.
[77] See CARROLL 2007, pp. 107-112, 167-176.
[78] *Ibid.*, p. 173.
[79] See for example HÖPFL 2004.

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today by the notion of the ''correlational cultural engagement'' of the church with the world.[80] This approach is an integration of the Augustinian tradition of holding the world as in need of transformation due to its fallen nature and the Thomist position of respecting the relative autonomy of the world due to its basic goodness within the created order. Understood in this way contemplative action is a consequence of the sacramental nature of the church as being both a sign and instrument of God's saving offer operative at individual, social, and systematic levels.[81] This contemplative understanding of action is realised in a three-fold ecclesial manner within the Catholic tradition: through the redemptive transformation brought about by the active remembrance of scripture and its articulation in doctrine; in personal, communal, and systematic ecclesial practices which can range from acts of prayer, through almsgiving, to campaigning, and social, cultural, political, and economic analyses; and in the liturgical celebration of the church in which God's eschatological promise of salvation is realised in the various sacraments of the church.

An essential difference between Protestant and Catholic paradigms of human action is well brought out in Daphne Hampson's book on the different frameworks which structure Catholic and Lutheran theological anthropology.[82] She highlights how in the Lutheran framework the self is newly constituted in Christ such that one has to speak of the ''theological person'' as living only in Christ and it is Christ who acts in us and whose power is the sole origin of our good acts and hence of our salvation. The relation of the Christian to the world in this Protestant tradition follows a de-sacramentalised conception such that the world is no longer seen as capable of being affirmed as good in itself at the ordinary level of human experience. However, in the Catholic tradition, which tends to follow the Aristotelian metaphysical line, communicated to medieval Catholic theology through Boethius, the person is viewed as an autonomously derived substance which exists in and for itself and is ontologically good. The sociologically significant consequence of this from a Catholic perspective is that secular society at social, cultural, economic, and political levels is considered to be potentially good and so human action at these different levels affirms the integrity of the natural order and upholds the legitimate autonomy of the human community apart from the church. This is the basis for the

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post-Vatican II Catholic acceptance of secularisation as a legitimate basis for the healthy development of non-theocratic democratic societies.[83] As such, autonomous human action can cooperate with grace, the free action of God, to realise ''good works.'' In this Catholic tradition human action is soteriologically significant: it plays a major role in the actual constitution of our salvation. This is commonly spoken of within the Catholic and also Orthodox traditions of Christianity as the divinisation of the human person through cooperative human and divine action. As Hampson notes, the break with this Catholic theological anthropology has had enormous consequences for the history of Western thought and it is in this tradition that one has to understand Weber's typologies of sociology of action and his Protestant informed sociological neutralisation of contemplative action as a significant action type.[84]

However, some of the responsibility for Weber's inability to conceptualise this Catholic typology of contemplative action lies with the dominant anti-modern attitude of the Catholic Church of the time demonstrated by popes such as Pius IX (1846-1878) and the so-called ''modernist crisis'' following the encyclical of Pius X (1903-1914) *Pascendi dominici gregis* in 1907.[85] This was further reinforced by the excommunication of the liberal Catholic historian Johann Joseph Döllinger who had sought ways for the church to have a more favourable relation with modernity. With this as background, it is not surprising that the image of Catholicism in many parts of Germany and indeed Europe was decidedly negative.[86] In seeking to develop a Catholic modernity it will be necessary to consider the nature and function of Catholicism in the modern period and to consider in what ways Catholicism should be considered to be a causal agent in modernity and modernisation. Such a confessionally aware historical sociology needs to be conscious of hermeneutical prejudices of the past which have provided an uneven account of sociological modernisation and to take into account the considerable historical literature on the importance of religion in the origins of modernity.[87]

A second area to pursue in the formulation of a Catholic theory of modernity is the extent to which the Second Vatican Council

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[83] See RATZINGER 1988, pp. 160-163.
[84] See LADRIÈRE 1990.
[85] On the ''modernist crisis,'' see REARDON 1970.

[86] See BORRUTA 2003.
[87] See for example KAPLAN 2007; HELLYER 2005; WHEELER 2006.

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(1962-1965), an internal renewal of the Catholic Church, has in-augurated a rapprochement of Catholicism with modernity. José Casanova has spoken of this in terms of Catholicism becoming a "public religion" at the time of the Council, and this event is without doubt one of significant change in the history of the relation of the Catholic Church with secular culture.[88] The Council's under-standing of the church in the modern world has de-legitimated the spirit of anti-modernism that scholars such as Max Weber saw in the church of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[89] This new approach has been promoted by a theological vision that has sought to return to biblical and patristic sources after the accretions of a certain reading of St. Thomas Aquinas that became dominant in the nine-teenth and early twentieth centuries. As a result of this theological renewal there has been an acceptance of the legitimate autonomy of secular society based on a reading of natural law,[90] which has also allowed for a coming to terms with the realities of liberal democratic government, human rights and even the desire for dialogue with other religious traditions.[91] This new relationship of the church with the world that came to be legitimated at the Council has a number of consequences that have barely begun to be thought about in either the theological or sociological literature.

One example of this is the significance of faith-based action in the secular public sphere. As Jürgen Habermas has noted religious communities seem to have preserved a particular sensitivity to the poor and the marginalized that secular post-metaphysical societies are struggling to reproduce and to maintain.[92] This transcends the philosophically significant extra semantic potential present in re-ligious language formally recognised by Habermas[93] and alludes to the sociological significance of faith-based action. Does faith based action intensify or even make possible dimensions of compassionate action that are more difficult to generate and sustain in purely post-metaphysical secular action systems? Charles Taylor makes a similar point in his 1996 lecture on "A Catholic Modernity?", when he raised the question of whether secular society has the moral resources to sustain its humanitarian aims.[94] Clearly, faith-based action transcends the Catholic tradition but given the global

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[88] See CASANOVA 1994, pp. 9, 51, 71-74, 211-234.
[89] See DRURY 2001. It should be noted that historians are divided as to how best to describe nineteenth century Catholicism. On this point, see CLARK 2003.

[90] See HONNEFELDER 1988.
[91] See ALBERIGO 2006, pp. 573-644.
[92] See HABERMAS and RATZINGER 2005, p. 31.
[93] See HABERMAS 1988, p. 60.
[94] HEFT 1999, p. 30.

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significance of Catholicism and its post-Vatican II rapprochement with the secular world, investigation of the sociological significance of Catholic faith-based action may help to articulate a sociological theory of compassion that has important resources for post-meta-physical societies.[95]

Furthermore, the opening out of the church to the modern world is particularly well illustrated by the radical transformation of the nature and extent of the post-Vatican II papacy. The papacy of Pope John Paul II provides an interesting test case on this point. George Weigel notes that in his papacy one can discern a post-Constantinian model of Catholicism emerging.[96] That is to say, following the Second Vatican Council, the medieval tendency of the church to fuse with secular culture has been left behind with the acceptance of the necessary autonomy required by both sides in order to act freely and responsibly.[97] Moreover, with the emergence of a truly global church and a pope who is no longer confined to Rome, papal, and more broadly Vatican, systematic action throughout the world has taken on sociological significance. Whether this is a matter of visits by popes to various parts of the world or speeches at world institutions such as the United Nations, interventions by the pope on matters such as international human rights, economic affairs, and the role of science and technology have considerable impact in a manner unthinkable prior to the Council. This politico-religious significance of the post-Vatican II papacy is a new phenomenon of considerable sociological importance and one which should be analysed in a systematic account of Catholic modernity.

In developing the idea of a Catholic modernity it will be important to assess the historical continuity and discontinuity of the Second Vatican Council church structures such as the papacy[98] and the Vatican diplomatic service for ushering in a new epoch for the Catholic Church in the modern world.[99]

A third area to pursue in working out an account of Catholic modernity is that of tracing pathways of Catholic modernisation from the Council of Trent (1545-1563) up until the present time. Building upon the new historical research of the early modern period one such example in the area of the sociology of spirituality would be to see how

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[95] See HEYTROP INSTITUTE FOR RELIGION, ETHICS, AND PUBLIC LIFE 2008a and 2008b.

[96] BERGER 1999, pp. 31-35.

[97] See MARKUS 2006, p. 91.

[98] For a subtle analysis of the position of Pope Benedict XVI on the Council, see KOMONCHAK 2009.

[99] See McEvoy 2006; NIRAPPEL 1972.

Ignatian spirituality, initially confined to the Jesuits but soon taken up by other male and indeed women's religious orders and today particularly by lay people, has fostered modernisation.[100] At the heart of this spirituality is a series of meditations that emerged out of the personal experience of Saint Ignatius and which he collected together in a retreat manual known as the "spiritual exercises."[101] These spiritual meditations and directives engendered a spirituality that

[100] In his now classic, *The Spirit of the Counter-Reformation*, Henry Outram Evennett argued that first and foremost the Counter-Reformation was forged through a new spirituality that engendered a novel religious movement. He saw this new movement that fostered religious reform as characterised by the spirituality communicated through the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), the founder of the Jesuit order, and one which in its turn led to various apostolic initiatives and institutional reforms. Central to this spirituality were a number of essential elements that came together in a "triple alliance." The first of these was the clarifications of the Council of Trent on the doctrine of Justification that had so divided Protestant and Catholic Europe and the spelling out of a Catholic understanding of grace. The second was the increase in zeal for a worldly activism that issued in a flowering of various forms of charitable work for the poor and a renewed zeal for the salvation of souls. Finally, new developments in ascetical teaching and practice which drew upon earlier spiritual teachings of the *devotio moderna* and Franciscan and Carthusian traditions were used to promote this new activism through powerful techniques of meditative prayer and eucharistic devotion. Dismissal of the Protestant teaching on the harmful effects of original sin on human nature and activity, this new spirituality taught that Christian struggle and effort with the support of rigorous ascetical techniques of disciplining the mind and body meant that our outward works of personal charity were a significant factor in personal sanctification. Historians such as Wolfgang Reinhard see in these new techniques of "social disciplining" and "confession formation" a cultural constellation that they have termed "confessionalization" (Konfessionalisierung). See REINHARD 1989. This essentially consists of three interrelated theses. First, the so-called Reformation and Counter-Reformation were movements structured in parallel in which the Catholic Counter-Reformation actually exhibited many "modern" traits such as individualism and rationality. Second, that there were structural similarities between the three major confessions: Lutheranism, Calvinism, and Tridentine Catholicism such that distinct social groups were created through the explicit formulation of dogma, the use of confessional propaganda, education, discipline, rituals, and language. Finally, that often unintended consequences of confessionalisation were the strengthening of political centralisation as the early modern state employed religion to firm up its territorial boundary, the rationalisation of church procedures as the church became incorporated into the state bureaucracy, and also the use of religion by the state to impose social control on its subjects. Through historical research such as Reinhard's the case for re-thinking the Catholic contribution to modernisation seems a strong one. Theories of modernity, such as Max Weber's, unaware of the issues raised by confessionalization theory have plotted the transition from the medieval period to the modern period using Protestant trajectories and so have overlooked the contribution that Catholicism has made to modernity. In tracing lines of modernisation through the post-Tridentine Catholic tradition to the Second Vatican Council existing partial accounts of the complex reality of modernity that are often dependent on a Protestant framework can be complemented by an alternative Catholic account of modernity.

[101] In his study of the origins of modernity, Louis Dupré considers the spiritual exercises to be a particularly modern synthesis of freedom and grace, much more effective than the medieval theology of the time and one that contained an ontotheological synthesis of nature and grace untypical of the Reformation understanding of grace. See DUPRÉ 1993, pp. 224-226.

would animate the Jesuits, their co-workers, and other religious orders throughout their nearly five-hundred year history, and as recent historical research has shown, were both products of and conveyors for a humanist education and culture that swept Europe during the period of the Renaissance.[102] As a result of the humanist spirit that characterises this spirituality, Jesuits have been at the crossroads of science and religion, of secular culture and faith in all its aspects since the beginning of the order in the sixteenth century.[103] This spirituality characterises a particular Ignatian way of proceeding that can be reasonably considered as one pathway of Catholic modernity during the early modern period. Three aspects of this way of proceeding may be singled out as having particular sociological significance in charting a distinctive Catholic pathway of modernisation at this time.[104]

First, whilst the spiritual exercises promoted an inner disciplining of desires, as they were specifically oriented to fostering an apostolic spirituality, they also inspired the wide variety of ministries undertaken by Jesuits and their co-workers throughout the world.[105] Thus, for example, the importance given over to a visual imagination that is cultivated in the various meditations of the spiritual exercises had a significant influence on promoting of the visual arts – emblem books, painting, sculpture, and architecture – by the Jesuits in the early modern period.[106] Even though other orders cultivated an appreciation of the visual arts, this was never done on the scale or with the same tenacity as with the Jesuits. In embodying their spirituality in a wide array of visual materials this way of proceeding bore a distinctive aesthetic that marked the contemplative actions of the Jesuits around the world.

Second, in the Constitutions of the Jesuits one sees a distinctively modern way of regulating Jesuit contemplative action according to humanist principles that broke away from former models of psychological development. Through attention to issues of motivation and in their insistence on flexible application, one can easily discern a modern way of structuring a religious life that had no precedent prior to the founding of the Jesuits. In the embodying of these principles in a variety of action domains one could analyse the application of the

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[102] See O'MALLEY 1990.
[103] See WORCESTER 2008.
[104] Cf. O'MALLEY 1999, pp. 27-29.
[105] In the codification of the encounter of the individual with God, the spiritual exercises effectively created the institution known as a retreat. As we have seen, this novelty of the retreat had far-reaching consequences in the areas of decision-making, social disciplining and styles of ministry. See O'MALLEY 1994, pp. 46-47.
[106] See BAILEY 1999.

Constitutions as a sociology of religious law which bears a distinctively Catholic understanding of modernisation inspired by Renaissance humanism.

Finally, in charting a sociology of education in the early modern period, Jesuit activities provide an immensely rich source of data for a contemplative theory of action.[107] By the middle of the eighteenth century, the Jesuits had founded more than eight hundred educational establishments around the world; probably the largest and most culturally diverse network under a single patronage ever. In these various schools, colleges, and universities the Jesuits ventured into areas of rhetoric, science, theatre, music and dance in ways which no other single group had done before. Such networks allowed the Jesuits to conduct conversations at a global level on a range of cultural issues and clearly fostered a creativity in education theory and practice that was without parallel. These institutions allowed the Jesuits to develop systematic relationships with the arts and sciences and so permitted them to develop a characteristically modern program of Ignatian humanism that is still very much alive today.[108]

Emblematic of the Jesuit commitment to a humanist education was the Roman College, the *Collegio Romano*, founded in Rome by Saint Ignatius in 1551 and staffed by Jesuits for more than two centuries. It embodied a modern humanist perspective of relating to culture that was shared by no other body of comparative corporate scale.[109] The College acted as a model for a number of such later institutions around the world that the Jesuits founded in Europe and Latin America in the mid-seventeenth century such as the Collège-Louis-le-Grand in Paris.

Missionary strategies of religious orders which issued out of this new spirituality also provide a wealth of material for analysing just how Catholicism in the early modern period was an agent of modernisation through various forms of contemplative action. An outstanding example here is to be found in the extraordinary life and work of the Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552-1610). Proficient in traditions of European humanism, after having studied law at the *Collegio Romano*, he was sent to China and began to enter the cultural world of Chinese classical literature. He became so adept in this area that he was able to converse on equal terms with Chinese scholars and used his cultural bilingualism to translate for both cultural worlds

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[107] See CHAPPLE 1993.
[108] See MODRAS 2004.

[109] See O'MALLEY *et al*. 1999, pp. 131-207.

using classical analogies to compare Confucius with Seneca, the Buddhists with the Pythagoreans, and Chinese governance with Plato's *Republic*. As superior of the Jesuit mission in China he issued the historic directive on ancestral and Confucian rites in December 1603 that would later launch the infamous ''Chinese rites controversy.''[110] From his knowledge of Chinese culture he had judged that it was licit, and in fact necessary, for Chinese Christians to observe rites which honoured their ancestors and Confucius in order for them to maintain their own Chinese cultural identity as Christians.

In embodying the characteristic feature of Ignatian spirituality through looking for God already at work in the Chinese cultural world, it is not surprising that Ricci led the way in the modern practice of what is now known as ''inculturation.'' Yet, in so doing he clearly acts as model of Catholic modernisation that has inspired thinkers such as Charles Taylor to find in Ricci a paragon of Catholic modernity.[111]

Whilst prior to the ''legitimation'' of a Catholic modernity provided by the Second Vatican Council, these pathways of modernity have existed and have clearly played a significant role in the formation of modernity.[112] Due to recent historical scholarship we are now entering into a new historiographical moment regarding the role of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) in the history of modernisation and one which has been un-theorised by the sociological tradition until now. In this sense, one may consider the theorisation of a Catholic modernity to be part and parcel of the re-thinking of overly homogeneous accounts of modernity that have dominated our sociological theories.[113]

Conclusion

As one of the truly great thinkers about action and modernity, Max Weber's account has been immensely fertile both in itself and also as a stimulus for other theorists such as Jürgen Habermas, Niklas Luhmann, Michel Foucault, Anthony Giddens, Charles Taylor, and Hans Joas. This article has argued that Weber's account of action and modernity is shaped by its Protestant architecture. Whilst this is clearly

[110] Ricci's directive was overturned by the Vatican in 1704 and effectively prevented Chinese Christians from maintaining their own cultural values if they remained Christian.

[111] See TAYLOR 1999.

[112] On this point, see TAYLOR 2007, Part I, ''The Work of Reform'', in which he describes Protestant and Catholic sources of reform and discipline contributing to the emergence of our secular age of modernity.

[113] See SACHSENMAIER *et al*. 2002.

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a limitation, it is also a strength as it has permitted Weber to draw on a tradition of thought and action that has revolutionised the world.[114]

At a time in which the contemporary world has been shaken to the foundations and is reeling from crisis to crisis, it may be time to take stock of the ''tectonic plates'' upon which it has been built and stabilised. I propose that by attention to the confessional specificity of our modern tectonic plates we may be able to thematise and perhaps actualise latent possibilities sometimes embedded within our social systems as a means of facing our contemporary challenges creatively. The articulation of a Catholic modernity is but one step along this long and complicated journey of unearthing a variety of possibilities which have been either overlooked or rejected but may well have a contribution to make to our present global situation.

In an enlightened context of ecumenism and inter-faith dialogue, sociological theories of action and modernity are in a new position to recover traditions of thought and action that have millennia of experience and reflection behind them. Rather than adopting the sometimes unnecessary conflictual attitudes that have tended to dog relations between theology and the social sciences,[115] now is a time for critical cooperation, mutual humility and creativity in order to serve objectives that transcend any one discipline. Inspired by the extraordinary breadth and depth of former social theorists such as Max Weber, social theory has an important role to play in reconstructing the modern project on firm foundations.

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[114] See NAPHY 2007.

[115] See ROBERTS 2002, pp. 190-214.

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Résumé

En relation avec le livre récent de l'auteur *Protestant Modernity. Weber, Secularisation and Protestantism*, qui reconstruit la théorie de la sécularisation de Weber, l'article montre que celle-ci est formulée dans le cadre du protestantisme libéral et qu'elle compte dans la contribution protestante à la modernité. L'auteur passe aussi en revue quelques grandes questions concernant la part du catholicisme à la modernité.

Mots clés : Weber ; Libéral ; Protestantisme ; Sécularisation ; Catholique ; Modernité.

Zusammenfassung

Ich beschäftige mich in diesem Beitrag mit meinem neuesten Buch ››Protestant Modernity. Weber, Secularisation and Protestantism‹‹, das Webers Säkularisationstheorie neu aufbaut und zeigt, dass diese dem liberalen Protestantismus angehört. Diese Theorie ist somit Teil seines protestantischen Beitrags zur Modernität. Desweiteren wird der katholische Beitrag zur Modernität beleuchtet.

Schlagwörter: Weber; Liberale; Protestantismus; Säkularisation; Katholisch; Modernität.