MAX WEBER AND POSTMODERN THEORY

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CONTENTS

PART TWO - Postmodern Challenges

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Abstract

This thesis analyses the ways in which the work of Jean-François Lyotard, Michel Foucault, and Jean Baudrillard develops Max Weber's analysis of the rise, nature, and trajectory of modern culture. Further to this, it examines the strategies which may be drawn from the work of each of these theorists to enable resistance to the further rationalisation and disenchantment of the world. This research, first, addresses Weber's analysis and critique of the rationalisation process, focusing in particular on his account both of the rise of instrumental rationalism in the West and of the differentiation of modern culture. Second, it examines the forms of resistance to rationalisation which are advanced by Weber in his lectures 'Science as a Vocation' and 'Politics as a Vocation', focusing on his attempt to place limits on the uses of instrumental rationalism and thereby protect the realm of ultimate values from further disenchantment. Third, it examines the commonalities between Weber's rationalisation thesis and the analyses and criticisms of the modern order forwarded by Lyotard, Foucault, and Baudrillard. It is held that the work of these three 'postmodern' theorists develops Weber's account of the rationalisation of the modern world, even if this is rarely, if ever, acknowledged. On this basis, the thesis analyses the strategies employed by Lyotard, Foucault, and Baudrillard to transgress the limits of modern rationalism, and disrupt or even undo the rationalisation process. This analysis centres on the following: Lyotard's celebration of cultural difference and his commitment to the development of radical forms of artistic experimentation, Foucault's counter-historical or genealogical practice, and Baudrillard's theory of symbolic exchange and seduction.

Chapter I

Introduction

There is currently a resurgence of interest in the work of Max Weber.[1] There are, I believe, three important reasons for this. First, the collapse of state socialism in the late 1980s and early 1990s effectively marked the end of Marxism as one of the dominant paradigms of social theory.[2] This collapse of the Marxist orthodoxy has lent weight to Weber's analysis of modernity, and, in particular, to his critique of Marx. Here, one may recall Weber's critique of historical materialism[3], his critique of historical progress, his argument for the force of beliefs and ideas - or, more generally, culture - in shaping history, his belief that socialism could not escape the progressive bureaucratisation of the world, and his critique of the political means employed by revolutionary movements.[4] Each of these lines of criticism against Marx has to some extent proved justified, and, because of this, Weber has become a figure to turn to in the post-Marxist world.

Second, Weber's work is deeply critical of modern culture. It views the development of Western rationalism with a degree of pessimism, and posits a connection between the rationalisation of the world and the loss of meaning in modern life. The work of Weber, like that of Nietzsche, outlines an historical movement towards nihilism (the devaluation of ultimate values) in the West, and holds scientific rationalism not as a cure but as a key contributory factor to this process. For with the onset of the scientific rationalisation of the world, Weber argues, ultimate values are disenchanted, or, in Nietzschean terms, devalued, and increasingly are replaced by the means-ends pursuit of material interests (see chapter 2). This process involves the progressive subordination of value-rationality (*Wertrationalität*) to instrumental rationality (*Zweckrationalität*), and the reduction of religious ethics and ultimate beliefs to rational calculation and routinised this-worldly action.[5] Weber here stands

against the view that the scientific rationalisation of the world engenders human 'progress', and against Emile Durkheim's belief first, in the moral nature of science, and second, in the possibility of moving from questions of fact (is) to those of value (ought) through the scientific distinction of the normal from the pathological.[6] Weber's distance from Durkheim on this question of 'progress' through science has proved popular in the current climate of Enlightenment critique, in the light of arguments, for example, that question the legitimacy of expert knowledge, or question the connection between scientific and 'human' progress.[7] And in this respect, the basic problems addressed by Weber's work concerning the meaning and value of Western rationalism very much remain problems of the contemporary world.

Third, the renewed interest in Weber's work is also due, in part, to the bearing of this work on two of the main strands of contemporary cultural and social critique: Frankfurt school critical theory and postmodern theory. Weber's influence on the former has aroused much interest, and has been well documented.[8] The relation of his work to postmodern critique, however, is less clear.[9] In view of this, this thesis will seek to establish the ways in which postmodern theory, in particular the writings of three prominent postmodern theorists, namely Jean-François Lyotard, Michel Foucault, and Jean Baudrillard, develops the work of Weber. My argument here is that there exists an implicit dialogue between postmodern theory and Weber, a dialogue concerning the trajectory of Western culture, and, more specifically, the questions of instrumental rationalism, rationalisation, and disenchantment. The aim of this thesis is to render this dialogue explicit through examination of the ways in which postmodern theory, albeit implicitly rather than explicitly, both develops Weber's analysis and critique of modern culture, and offers a response to what he terms the rationalisation of the world. There are three main tasks of this project: first, to establish the nature of Weber's analysis and critique of the rationalisation of the world (chapter 2); second, to examine the possible forms of resistance to rationalisation outlined by Weber (chapters 3 and 4), and third, to read between the work of Weber and that of Lyotard, Foucault, and Baudrillard, focusing on their respective analyses of, and responses to, the rise and development of Western rationalism (chapters 6, 7, and 8).

The first part of this thesis opens with an analysis of Weber's theory and critique of the rationalisation and disenchantment of the world.[10] One is here presented,

however, with an immediate difficulty, namely how to read Weber's work, which is not only daunting in scope and magnitude (the Max Weber *Gesamtausgabe* is projected to run to thirty-three volumes) but is in many respects fragmentary and incomplete. Wilhelm Hennis reminds us, for example, that

> In his lifetime Weber published only two "proper" books, and these were the dissertation and *Habilitationsschrift* indispensable for an academic career. The entirety of the remaining work consists of survey reports and essays that were, for the most part, hurriedly composed. It was only after his death that these appeared as collections in book form: the collected writings on methodology, on sociology and social policy, on the sociology of religion, on social and economic history constructed from student's notes, the political writings, and finally *Economy and Society*.[11]

This, coupled with the problematic nature of Weber's vast personal correspondence (see chapter 8.4), means that it is difficult to read Weber's work as a unified statement or position, and that any attempt to do so rests upon a project of reconstruction.

There has been much debate over the central theme or question around which such a reconstruction may proceed.[12] The generally accepted view is that Weber's central interest is that of rationality, and, by extension, the historical process of rationalisation, and that this interest provides the key to the entirety of his work. This is the position taken, for example, by Karl Löwith in his 1932 essay on Max Weber and Karl Marx[13]:

> the fundamental and entire theme of Weber's investigations is the character of the reality surrounding us and into which we have been placed. The basic *motif* of his "scientific" inquiry turns out to be the trend towards secularity. Weber summed up the particular problematic of this reality of ours in the concept of "rationality". He attempted to make intelligible this general process of the rationalisation of our whole existence precisely because the rationality which emerges from this process is something specifically irrational and incomprehensible.[14]

In the late 1930s Talcott Parsons challenged this position, positing the concept of social action rather than rationality as the central theme of Weber's work[15], but in the 1950s and 60s Weber scholarship broadly reaffirmed rationality as *the* interest of his work.[16] This reaffirmation has since been forcefully elaborated by Friedrich Tenbruck, in his 1975 essay on the problem of thematic unity in Weber's work[17], and by Rogers Brubaker, who argues in his 1984 *The Limits of Rationality*:

The idea of rationality is a great unifying theme in Max Weber's work. Weber's seemingly disparate empirical studies converge on one underlying aim: to characterise and explain the development of the "specific and peculiar rationalism" that distinguishes modern Western civilisation from every other. His methodological investigations emphasise the universal capacity of men to act rationally and the consequent power of social science to understand as well as to explain action. His political writings are punctuated by passionate warnings about the threat posed by unchecked bureaucratic rationalisation to human freedom. And his moral reflections build on an understanding of the truly human life as one guided by reason. Rationality, then, is an *idée-maîtresse* in Weber's work, one that links his empirical and methodological investigations with his political and moral reflections.[18]

This reconstruction of Weber's work through the concepts of rationality or rationalisation, however, has been recently placed under scrutiny. Lawrence Scaff, for example, has argued that rationality or rationalisation can only be taken as the central themes of Weber's work if one ignores the significance of his early writings. On this basis, he proceeds to dispute the conventional view of the central concept of Weber's work, arguing that whilst '[c]oncepts like rationalisation, bureaucratisation, and domination come to mind...another concept seems an attractive candidate: *Arbeitsverfassung* ["labour relations"], the key theoretical term in Weber's major writings from 1892 to 1894'.[19] Scaff's argument against using rationality or rationalisation as the keys to Weber's work is supported and extended by Wilhelm Hennis, who asks:

> does the process of rationalisation help us understand *Economy and Society*, its introductory chapter or the body of the text? Does it help to explain the methodology, the planned and completed surveys, the early economic works, the political options? Certainly not. Does it make the sociology of religion intelligible? That I doubt as well.[20]

Hennis argues that whilst it is not wrong to read rationalisation as a fundamental theme in Weber's later work, it is 'misleading to read everything in its terms and to see it everywhere'.[21] The questions of rationality and rationalisation, Hennis argues, must be placed in a much wider context, and read in relation to Weber's interest in the development of *Menschentum* ('humanness').[22]

The reading of Weber that I wish to forward in the course of this thesis concurs with, but also departs from, Hennis's argument. Hennis's work is to be commended for treating rationality and rationalisation not as the ends of Weber's work, but as means which enable an understanding of the modern condition. This said, however, I do not

believe *Menschentum* to be the central interest or theme that provides the key to the entirety of Weber's thought. The question of *Menschentum* is one interest rather than the *central* interest of Weber's work. It is an interest which, although of considerable importance, in no way unlocks all of Weber's detailed studies of economics, politics, labour relations, law, religion, and methodology.[23] Here, rather than impose an artificial unity on Weber's work, I suggest that one should celebrate its conceptual and substantive diversity.[24] This approach renders the question of Weber's central interest redundant, but raises a further question of how to read such a diverse *oeuvre*. The answer to this problem lies, I believe, in a more active engagement with Weber's published texts, for too often Weber scholarship has failed to advance beyond reconstruction and clarification of his work.[25] In view of this, this thesis will seek to replace the endless search for 'master-keys' and 'central interests' with a more active concern, namely: to use Weber's work to outline the key contradictions of modernity (chapter 2), and to develop Weber's response to these contradictions from his work on the scientific and political vocations (chapters 3 and 4).

On this basis the first half of the thesis focuses on Weber's theory and critique of rationalisation. **Chapter 2** is an exegesis of the key points of Weber's rationalisation thesis, and focuses in particular on his account of the decline of religious legitimation in the West. This decline, for Weber, is embodied first in the transition from primitive religion to universal religion, and then from universal religion to the 'death of God' in modernity. This historical movement is theorised in relation to a series of connected developments, for example, the progressive restriction of value-rationality by instrumental rationality, the shift from charismatic or traditional rule to bureaucratic government, and the transition from natural law to modern rights. The effects of these movements on the leading of life are here of specific interest, for it is argued that each contributes to the nihilism of modern culture: to the devaluation of ultimate values, and to the retreat of 'the ultimate and most sublime values' from public life.

The second half of chapter 2 extends this analysis through a study of the process of cultural differentiation that is outlined by Weber in his essay 'The Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions' (the *Zwischenbetrachtung*). It is here argued that with the disenchantment of religious legitimation a number of autonomous life-orders, each with their own value-spheres, separate out and enter into conflict with

one another: the economic, the political, the aesthetic, the erotic, the intellectual, and the religious. The result of this process of differentiation, or *Eigengeseztlichkeit*, is a perpetual war between values, for each sphere not only now contains the basis of its own legitimacy, but, for Weber, the legitimacy of values themselves cannot be judged before the tribunal of reason. In view of this, it is argued that the conflict between and within these value-spheres cannot be reconciled through recourse to science, natural right or natural law. This said, however, Western culture, for Weber, is not simply fragmented with the transition to modernity, for all value-spheres tend towards rationalisation. In view of this, it is argued that cultural differentiation is essentially a tragic process, for each value-sphere is progressively ordered by the rule of instrumental rationality (a point which is also addressed in chapter 6 through analysis of the work of Lyotard). The pursuit of values here becomes ruled by rational purpose rather than individual belief, and the range of values that it is possible to pursue within modernity is restricted accordingly. This movement towards nihilism is compounded by the fact that, for Weber, rationalisation, whilst seemingly placing questions of ultimate value at the discretion of the individual through the differentiation of culture, deprives the individual of the very individuality or humanness (*Menschentum*) needed to confer the legitimacy of these values. In view of this, it is argued that the tragic irony of rationalisation is that it forces the individual to select and legitimate values whilst restricting both the capacity of the individual to make such a choice, and the scope of values from which it is possible to choose.

Chapters 3 and 4 turn to Weber's response to this tragedy of rationalisation. In the light of the above pessimistic vision of Western history, **chapter 3** analyses Weber's position on the value of science and enlightenment. This position is more complex then it may at first seem, for on one hand, Weber appears committed to the scientific vocation, to the preservation of individual freedom through reason, whilst on the other, he is clearly critical of the scientific rationalisation of the world, of world-mastery through the reduction of value-rationality to instrumental rationality, individuality to calculable action. This latter line of Weber's thought, which emphasises the darker side of modern reason, is hostile to important consequences of the Enlightenment project, and has led a number of scholars to reassert the influence of Nietzsche on Weber. The aim of this chapter, given the apparent ambivalence of

Weber's position, is to reassess his work on science and enlightenment through a detailed analysis of his lecture 'Science as a Vocation'. This analysis proceeds through consideration of the bearing of scientific rationalisation on the leading of life, the (historical) value of science, and the meaning of the scientific vocation. It here is argued that Weber remains critical of the loss of meaning and value which accompanies the scientific rationalisation of the world, and of the conflation of 'human' and technical progress that legitimises this process, but defends the scientific vocation insofar as it can clarify and therefore inform value-judgements. The concluding chapter of the thesis (chapter 9) returns to this point to suggest that Weber's position here is perhaps unsatisfactory, for although it seeks to confine scientific activity within strict limits, it endorses a form of interpretative sociology that risks contributing to, rather than resisting, the further disenchantment of the world.

Chapter 4 analyses the bearing of rationalisation on the leading of life through reference to the sphere closest to Weber: the political. This chapter treats the political ethics of conviction (*Gesinnungsethik*) and responsibility (*Verantwortungsethik*) outlined by Weber in his lecture *Politics as a Vocation* as ideal-typical forms of value-and instrumentally rational action. It is argued that Weber's theory of the political vocation calls for an integration of these two opposing ethics. The political leader, for Weber, is to pursue achievable ends and to take responsibility for the consequences of this action, thereby guarding against the sacrifice of political means to ultimate ends, whilst at the same time resisting the eradication of ultimate values by the rational (means-ends) pursuit of mundane ends, or what could be termed the 'instrumentalisation' of the world. It is argued that this endeavour works within but also against the rationalisation of the world, for it demands not only an acute sense of realism, but also calls upon the individual to 'take a stand' and to thereby confer the legitimacy of ultimate values.

The second part of this thesis reads between Weber's analysis and critique of modern culture and the theory and critique of the modern order advanced by three postmodern theorists: Jean-François Lyotard, Michel Foucault, and Jean Baudrillard. This research opens with an intermediate reflection (**chapter 5**) which addresses, first, the definition of the term 'postmodern' to be employed in the thesis; second, the way in which Lyotard, Foucault, and Baudrillard can be termed postmodern theorists, and

third, the basis upon which it is possible to read between the work of these three theorists and that of Weber. There are three main arguments forwarded here. First, that the postmodern is that which works to expose and transgress the limits of the modern through the aporetic resuscitation of forms of difference or otherness which are repressed by, or concealed within, the modern order. Second, that on the basis of this definition the work of Lyotard, Foucault, and Baudrillard is postmodern in nature. Third, that it is possible to read between the work of Weber and that of Lyotard, Foucault, and Baudrillard through analysis of their respective accounts of the rise, nature, and trajectory of Western culture, and of their respective responses to the rationalisation of the world.

On this basis, **Chapter 6** reads between Weber's theory and critique of rationalisation and Lyotard's theory of postmodern knowledge and celebration of cultural pluralism. This chapter opens with an analysis of Lyotard's theory of postmodern science, and then proceeds to compare Weber and Lyotard's accounts of the differentiation of culture. It is argued that Lyotard, unlike Weber, celebrates this process of differentiation as a movement towards freedom, but does so through negation of the overriding movement of rationalisation which, for Weber, progressively subordinates value-rationality to instrumental rationality in each value-sphere. The final section of this chapter examines the possibility of escaping this process of rationalisation through engagement in the aesthetic sphere, a sphere which, for Weber, ultimately succumbs to the logic of rationalisation, but, for Lyotard, remains a site through which it is possible to resist and perhaps even undo the instrumental rationalism of modern culture.

Chapter 7 analyses Foucault's counter-historical attack on the modern order. This chapter focuses on Foucault's genealogical history as a means through which it is possible to disrupt the rationalisation of the modern world. The chapter opens with an analysis of the form and uses of genealogy, before questioning the ethics of this practice, which, Foucault claims, proceeds without pre-established rules, and leaves the ends of political work undefined. It is here argued that Foucault's genealogical history is in fact not as radical as it may at first seem, for not only does it remain tied to the construction of presentist metanarratives, but, whilst claiming to be free from

presuppositions or a particular telos, conceals the value and direction of its own enterprise, thereby concealing a normative basis which it formally claims to negate.

Chapter 8 reads Baudrillard's work on symbolic exchange as an argument for the possibility of re-enchantment. Baudrillard argues that modernity is unable to free itself from the archaic or *symbolic* order that it seeks to eradicate, and that in view of this the elements for a reversal of modern 'progress' are always present. This chapter examines Weber and Baudrillard's respective positions on this possibility of re-enchantment through analysis of their work on the erotic sphere and seduction. It is argued that whereas Weber refuses to place faith in the possibility of the re-enchantment of the world, Baudrillard works to enable precisely this possibility, but in doing so overestimates the ability of the intellect to sacrifice itself, and underestimates the capacity of Western rationalism to resist the threat of forms which are other to itself.

The concluding chapter of the thesis **(chapter 9)** reflects on the ways in which Lyotard, Foucault, and Baudrillard develop Weber's rationalisation thesis but offer different responses to the rationalisation of the world. A contrast is here drawn between Weber's commitment to vocational work (to work within but against the limits of the modern world) and the transgressive practices found in the work of Lyotard, Foucault, and Baudrillard (which seek to expose and overcome of the limits of the modern order). The key difficulties of Weber's rationalist response to rationalisation, on one hand, and of the postmodern belief in the potentiality of a-rational or irrational forms, on the other, are raised briefly, before finally it is suggested that the strengths of these two approaches may be developed to form a basis upon which future work in the social sciences may proceed.

Notes

[1] This renewed interest may be illustrated through reference to a number of different, although connected, areas of Weber scholarship. One may note, for example, a renewed interest in the nature of Weber's neo-Kantianism. See Thomas Burger, *Max Weber's Theory of Concept Formation* [1976]; Guy Oakes, *Weber and Rickert* [1988], and more recently John Drysdale, 'How are Social-Scientific Concepts Formed?' [1996]. There has also been a renewed interest in Weber biography and in the

position of Weber's thought within the history of ideas. See, for example, Wolfgang Mommsen and Jürgen Osterhammel (eds.) *Max Weber and His Contemporaries* [1987]; Dirk Käsler, *Max Weber: An Introduction to His Life and Work* [1988]; Peter Lassman and Irving Velody (eds.), *Max Weber's 'Science as a Vocation'* [1989]; Stephen Turner and Regis Factor, *Max Weber: The Lawyer as Social Thinker* [1994], and Sam Whimster (ed.), *Max Weber and the Culture of Anarchy* [1999]. Finally, one may note the recent interest in Weber as a theorist and/or critic of modernity. See, for example, Wolfgang Schluchter, *The Rise of Western Rationalism* [1981]; Scott Lash and Sam Whimster (eds.), *Max Weber: Rationality and Modernity* [1987]; Wilhelm Hennis, *Max Weber: Essays in Reconstruction*; Lawrence Scaff, *Fleeing the Iron Cage: Culture, Politics and Modernity in the Thought of Max Weber* [1989]; David Owen, *Maturity and Modernity: Nietzsche, Weber, Foucault and the Ambivalence of Reason* [1994], and Asher Horowitz and Terry Maley (eds.), *The Barbarism of Reason* [1994]. It is this latter line of Weber scholarship which is specifically of interest in this thesis.

[2] This view has, of course, been contested. Alex Callinicos, for example, has argued that the collapse of state socialism is in fact the precondition for true Marxist theory and practice. He states: 'Now classical Marxism can finally shake itself of the Stalinist incubus and seize the opportunities offered by a world experiencing great "uncertainty and agitation" than for many decades. It is time to resume unfinished business', *The Revenge of History*, p.136. See also Callinicos, *Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Critique*. This call for a return to the 'true' Marx (undistorted by either Lenin or Stalin), however, has been swept aside by new forms of thought that cast doubt on the nature of ideology, class, progress, and revolution. The key figure behind these new forms of thought is not Marx but Nietzsche, whose work heavily influenced Weber and first-wave critical theorists such as Horkheimer and Adorno, and today continues to inform contemporary continental philosophy, post-structuralist and postmodern theory. For a more engaging Marxist reading of the 'postmodern', one which treats postmodernism as a stage in the development of capitalism, see Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*.

[3] Weber argues, for example: 'The so-called "materialistic conception of history" with the crude elements of genius of the early form which appeared, for instance, in the *Communist Manifesto* still prevails only in the minds of laymen and dilettantes. In these circles one still finds the peculiar condition that their need for a causal explanation of an historical event is never satisfied until somewhere or somehow economic causes are shown (or seem) to be operative', '"Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy', *Methodology of the Social Sciences*, p.68.

[4] On the key differences between Marx and Weber see Wolfgang Mommsen's *The Age of Bureaucracy*, chapter 3. One may note, however, that there are important points of convergence between Marx and Weber. These are clearly elucidated by Karl Löwith in *Max Weber and Karl Marx*, and have been developed by Frankfurt School Critical Theorists such as Adorno and Horkheimer (see below, footnote 8). For an accessible overview of Marx and Weber on modernity, see Derek Sayer,

Capitalism and Modernity: An Excursus on Marx and Weber, in particular chapter 4, and Robert Antonio and R. Glassman (eds.) *A Weber-Marx Dialogue*. For a Marxist critique of Weber see Herbert Marcuse, *Negations*; John Lewis, *Max Weber and Value-Free Sociology: A Marxist Critique*, and Johannes Weiss, *Weber and the Marxist World.*

[5] I have here followed the translators of *Economy and Society* in choosing to use 'instrumental rationality' rather than 'purposive rationality' or 'ends orientated rationality' as the English translation of *Zweckrationalität*. This translation, whilst not literal, not only captures the means-ends basis of this type of rationality but brings out the important contrast between value-rationality (*Wertrationalität*) and the more calculating, and thus rational, *Zweckrationalität*.

[6] On the moral nature of science see Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society*, pp.13-4. On the possibility of moving from value ('ought') to fact ('is') through the use of science see *The Rules of Sociological Method*, pp.85-107, and W. Watts Miller, *Durkheim, Morals and Modernity*, pp.251-261.

[7] On the curious relation of Durkheim and Weber see Edward Tiryakian, 'A Problem for the Sociology of Knowledge'. For an argument for the theoretical convergence of the work of Durkheim and Weber see Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action*, and for a recent Parsonian account which also elucidates the divergence of their work see Richard Münch, *Understanding Modernity*, pp.5-56.

[8] For an account of the aims of first-wave (Adorno, Horkheimer) and second-wave (Habermas) critical theory, and for a general overview of the importance of Weber within these projects, see Jay Bernstein. *Recovering Ethical Life: Jürgen Habermas and the Future of Critical Theory*. For an account that addresses the bearing of Weber's work on critical theory in greater detail see Thomas McCarthy's excellent 'Translator's Introduction' to Habermas's *The Theory of Communicative Action*, and Bryan Turner, *For Weber*, chapter 3.

[9] There have been a number of attempts to locate Weber within an intellectual trajectory running from Nietzsche to Foucault, most notably David Owen's *Maturity and Modernity*, but none of these specifically question the connection between Weber's work and postmodernism.

[10] On the difference between rationalisation and disenchantment see Friedrich Tenbruck, 'The Problem of Thematic Unity in the Works of Max Weber', pp.51-53. The processes of rationalisation and disenchantment, which are essentially different sides of the same historical process, are analysed at length in chapter 2 of this thesis.

[11] Wilhelm Hennis, *Max Weber: Essays in Reconstruction*, pp.24-5.

[12] For a useful summary of the different lines along which Weber's work has been interpreted see Ralph Schroeder, *Max Weber and the Sociology of Culture*, pp.3-6.

[13] Jürgen Habermas also notes that this 'was once the dominant perspective of interpretation in the philosophical discussions of the twenties', *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One*, p.143. See p.428, footnote 1 for references of these early discussions.

[14] Karl Löwith, *Max Weber and Karl Marx*, p.62. Jürgen Habermas adopts much the same position in *The Theory of Communicative Action*. He states that 'Weber left his work behind in a fragmentary state; nevertheless, using his theory of rationalisation as a guideline, it is possible to reconstruct his project as a whole', *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One*, p.143. One may note in passing, however, that Habermas's reconstruction of Weber's project proceeds by situating his rationalisation thesis within an underlying 'philosophy of consciousness', a philosophy which Habermas then turns to as his point of attack against Weber.

[15] Parsons argues, for example, that 'Weber's central methodological concern was to vindicate the necessity for general theoretical concepts in the sociohistorical sciences. But the only kind of general concepts for which he provided an explicit methodological clarification was his general ideal types. This...is a hypothetically concrete type which could serve as a unit of a system of action or social relationships', *The Structure of Social Action Volume 2*, p.640. One may note in passing that the ideal type is not in fact a 'hypothetically' concrete type. Weber states: 'The ideal-typical concept will help to develop our skills in imputation in *research*: it is no "hypothesis" but offers guidance to the construction of hypotheses. It is not a *description* of reality but it aims to give unambiguous means of expression to such a description', '"Objectivity" in Social Science and Social Policy', p.90. See also *Economy and Society Volume One*, p.21.

[16] See, for example, Reinhard Bendix, *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait* [1959], and Julian Freund, *The Sociology of Max Weber* [1968].

[17] Tenbruck states that Weber's 'undoubted and marked interest in occidental rationalisation was...only the condensation and starting point of a theme that preoccupied him throughout his life. In fact only a small part of his *oeuvre* was directed to specifically occidental development, while the entirety of his work, including the methodology, owes its existence to the question: what is rationality?', 'The Problem of Thematic Unity in the Works of Max Weber', p.75. Tenbruck is here specifically concerned with making a case against the reconstruction of Weber's work through a reading of the posthumously assembled *Economy and Society*.

[18] Rogers Brubaker, *The Limits of Rationality*, p.1. For a variation on this theme, see also Wolfgang Schluchter, *The Rise of Western Rationalism*.

[19] Lawrence Scaff, 'Weber Before Weberian Sociology', p.25.

[20] Wilhelm Hennis, *Max Weber: Essays in Reconstruction*, p.23.

[21] *Ibid.*, p.24.

[22] Hennis demonstrates this thesis by reading Weber's work in the light of the contemporary controversies of its time, centring in particular on the conflict between Weber and Felix Rachfahl over the *Protestant Ethic*, see *Ibid.* pp.24-46. For Weber's comments on Rachfahl, see his 'Anticritical Last Word on *The Spirit of Capitalism*'.

[23] In similar vein, I would argue that Arpád Szakolczai is mistaken in suggesting that Weber's 1920 'Author's Introduction' (the '*Vorbemerkung*') to the 'Collected Essays on the Sociology of World

Religions' (*Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*) provides the master key to his work, see *Max Weber and Michel Foucault*, chapter 3. The *Vorbemerkung* is clearly of great important but there is little evidence to suggest that this essay serves as *the* key to Weber's early studies of labour relations, or to his early work on the methodology of the social sciences.

[24] I here agree with Wolfgang Mommsen, who argues that there is no one Weber, and no single theme which dominates his writings. See *The Age of Bureaucracy*, p.1, and his 'Introduction' to Mommsen and Osterhammel's *Max Weber and His Contemporaries*, p.6.

[25] A prime example of this problem is Wolfgang Schluchter's *Paradoxes of Modernity*. See my review of this work, *Acta Sociologica*, 41, 3, 1998, pp.285-7, and the appendix to this thesis.

PART ONE

Max Weber's Theory and Critique of Rationalisation

Chapter II

Rationalisation, Disenchantment, and the Differentiation of Modern Culture

> 'What does nihilism mean? *That the highest values devaluate themselves*' (Nietzsche).[1]

This chapter elucidates Max Weber's vision of the progressive rationalisation and disenchantment of the world. First, it addresses Weber's analysis of the movement from primitive and universal religion to the 'Death of God', and the corresponding movements from value-rationality (*Wertrationalität*) to instrumental rationality (*Zweckrationalität*) and from charismatic and traditional authority to the bureaucracy of the modern state (other-worldly legitimation to this worldly legitimation). Second, it addresses the differentiation of culture that results from this disenchantment of religious legitimation. This analysis focuses on the incommensurability of the modern life-orders and their value-spheres, and on the tendency of each of these spheres to be rationalised. Finally, this chapter considers the tragic nature of this rationalisation process. It is argued that the modern life-orders and their value-spheres cannot be reconciled through science, natural law, or natural right, and that this fundamental irreconcilability has tragic consequences on the leading of life (*Lebensführung*). The bearing of the movement towards instrumental rationality on the individual is here also considered, in particular the question of the freedom of the individual to confer the legitimacy of ultimate values in the modern world.

2.1 From the Origins of Religion to the 'Death of God'

Max Weber's sociology of religion contains an historical account of the progressive disenchantment (*Entzauberung*) of superstition and religious myth, and of

the concurrent rise of rationalism in the West.[2] This account focuses on the ethics of the world religions, and in particular on the connection of these ethics to the rationalisation of modern life. Weber's interest in religion is thus not confined to the nature of religion itself but addresses the bearing of religion on the development of scientific rationalism, and beyond this the bearing of both religious ethics and rationalism on the leading of life (*Lebensführung*). Weber hence states at the very outset of *The Sociology of Religion* that '[t]he essence of religion is not even our concern, as we make it our task to study the conditions and effects of a particular type of social action'.[3] Weber analyses this social action according to the type of rationality it embodies (for example, value- or instrumentally rational action), and constructs a developmental history which suggests that action becomes increasingly rational (from the viewpoint of means-ends rationality) with the rise and eventual fall of Occidental universal religion. This history is essentially an account of the emergence of modern Western culture, an account which, as noted by both Ralph Schroeder and David Owen, identifies two key developmental transitions: first, the progressive elimination of prehistoric forms of magical religiosity through the rise of universal religion, and, second, the disenchantment of these universal religions following the rise of modern science.[4] I will here briefly consider the characteristics of these three historical stages (characterised by magic, universal religion, and science) before turning more directly to the specific bearing of rationalisation and disenchantment on the nature of social and political action.[5]

1). *Magical Religiosity*

Weber's *Sociology of Religion* opens with an account of the 'Origins of Religion', an account which focuses on the historical movement from this-worldly, naturalistic forms of magical action to universal, monotheistic forms of religious belief. Weber here argues that the earliest forms of religious behaviour are generally everyday forms of *this-worldly* conduct. He argues that this behaviour

> follows rules of experience, though it is not necessarily action in accordance with a means-end schema. Rubbing will elicit sparks from pieces of wood, and in like fashion the mimetical actions of a magician will evoke rain from the heavens. The sparks resulting from

> twirling the wooden sticks are as much a "magical" effect as the rain evoked by the manipulations of the rainmaker.[6]

Weber states, however, that nót every person possesses the extraordinary powers to evoke such magical effects, for the capacity to do so rests upon *charismatic* power, which may either be naturally endowed or artificially produced through extraordinary means. This belief in the charismatic power of natural objects, artefacts, animals, or persons, is accompanied by a belief in the 'spirit' that lies behind these concrete objects. Weber notes that this '"spirit" is neither soul, demon, nor god, but something indeterminate, material yet invisible, non-personal and yet somehow endowed with volition', and that in these early forms of religious belief, gods and demons are neither personal nor enduring, sometimes having, for example, no names of their own.[7]

Weber argues, however, that over time not only do concrete things and events which actually exist play a role in life but experiences that *signify* something begin assume significance. Here, he argues, magic is transformed from a practice which proceeds through the direct manipulation of forces into a symbolic activity. This transformation rests upon the progressive development of a realm of souls, demons, and gods, which have a transcendental rather than concrete existence and can only be accessed and coerced through the mediation of symbols and meanings. This development signals the increasing predominance of worship through representation and analogy, and thus effectively marks the end of pre-animistic forms of naturalism.[8] Weber states: 'More and more, things and events assumed meanings beyond the potencies that actually or presumably inhered in them, and efforts were made to achieve real effects by means of symbolically significant action'.[9]

This transition from naturalism to religious symbolism based upon analogy, which, for Weber, is only replaced in modern times by the syllogistic construction of rational concepts, is accompanied by the increasing personification and characterisation of the gods. Here, the forms the of gods become secured, and ideas regarding the nature of these forms are progressively systematised, a process which generally leads to the emergence of a pantheon. Weber argues:

> as a rule there is a tendency for a pantheon to evolve once systematic thinking concerning religious practice and the rationalisation of life generally, with its increasing demands upon the gods, have reached a certain level, the details of which may differ greatly from case to

> case. The emergence of a pantheon entails the specialisation and characterisation of the various gods as well as the allocation of constant attributes and the differentiation of their jurisdictions.[10]

This rationalisation of religious belief, which entails the functional specialisation of the gods, is connected to the economic demands of a people and to the progressive delimitation of political jurisdictions. For with the pursuit of shared economic goals and the demarcation of political territory, particular gods are called upon to secure a group's economic and political success. Weber states: 'it is a universal phenomenon that the formation of a political association entails subordination to its corresponding god...every permanent political association had a special god who guaranteed the success of the political action of the group'.[11]

2). *Universal Religion*

This process, whereby a group subordinates itself to a particular god in pursuit of economic and political gain or territorial security, marks the earliest stage of the developmental transition from religious polytheism to monotheistic universal religion, for this act of subordination suggests a single god's domination of a pantheon, which may in turn lead to the establishment of a universal deity.[12] Weber illustrates this transition from magical religiosity to universal religion through reference to ancient Judaism.[13] He argues that the early tribal confederation of the Jews, the result of an unstable alliance of the Jews and the Midianites, found integration under a common god: Yahweh. This god presided over the confederation but was not simply a functional or local god for he was seen to rule over all spheres of life, and his promise of salvation was open to all.[14] Yahweh was thus a universal god, and the Israelites accepted him under oath, entering into a contractual relationship which demanded that his commandments be satisfied. Yahweh's will, however, was always changeable, with the consequence that the believer could never be sure that these demands had actually been met (a condition later reproduced in ascetic Protestantism), which led in turn both to the progressive systematisation of conduct and to the pursuit of an ordered understanding of Yahweh's demands and purpose. This gap between Yahweh, as a transcendent god who could not be represented through symbolism, and the imperfection of the human world, thus drove the rationalisation of everyday life, and in

particular the pursuit of rational knowledge. In view of this, Weber argues that the foundations of Western rationalism lie within the religious ethics of ancient Judaism. He states: 'In considering the condition of the Jewry's evolution, we stand at the turning point of the whole cultural development of the West and the Middle East'.[15]

Whilst ancient Judaism plays a key role in the development of Western rationalism, there is, for Weber, a stronger affinity between the religious ethics of ascetic Protestantism and the 'specific and peculiar' rationalism of modern Western culture. Weber notes that Protestantism is similar to Judaism in one key respect: its worldview centres around the idea of a transcendent God, a God separated from the imperfect human world and whose demands and purpose can never fully be known. David Owen argues that in fact 'Protestantism is the "logical conclusion" of the process initiated by Judaism simply because it rules out *any* mediation between God and the world'.[16] This said, however, there is a key difference between Protestantism and Judaism: that whereas ancient Judaism is founded upon an ethical contract upon which Yahweh is called to intervene in history, Protestantism rests, at least initially, on faith alone and conceives the whole of history as pre-ordained in the moment of creation. Furthermore, it is a central tenet of Protestant theodicy that not everyone will be saved, and that God's will is here not open to human influence. This belief finds its strongest expression in the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. Weber argues that here

> The Father in heaven of the New Testament, so human and understanding, who rejoices over the repentance of a sinner as a woman over the lost piece of silver she has found, is gone. His place has been taken by a transcendental being, beyond the reach of human understanding, who with His quite incomprehensible decrees has decided the fate of every individual and regulated the tiniest details of the cosmos from eternity. God's grace is, since His decrees cannot change, as impossible for those to whom He has granted it to lose as it is unattainable for those whom He has denied it.[17]

This doctrine of predestination results in the 'unprecedented inner loneliness of the individual' and is crucial in respect of the development of Western rationalism, for whilst one would assume that belief in predestination would lead to an ethic of resignation, Weber argues that in fact it leads to an increasingly rational engagement in worldly activity. The key point here is that whilst the believer can never know whether or not he/she is one of the elect, it was their duty to believe that they have been chosen, and to work for the utmost glory of God through their allotted vocation. This

belief, which is not found in Catholicism, manifested itself in the form of the Protestant 'calling', and demanded that the believer fulfil his/her duties within *this* world. Whilst for Luther, this calling remained traditionalistic, in so as far the calling was not seen to be *the* task set by God, followers of Calvin increasingly saw worldly activity as the means to attaining God's favour. This movement effectively led to the progressive rationalisation of all spheres of life. For on one level, it led to the internal transformation of personality, to the systematisation of thought and conduct. Weber notes: 'A man without a calling...lacks the systematic, methodical character which is...demanded by worldly asceticism'.[18] On another, it had a profound impact on all aspects of external life, leading to the emergence of rational labour, and, in view of the fact that one engaged in this labour on an ascetic basis (for the glory of god rather than private gain), to an ethic of investment and accumulation.

3). *Towards The 'Death of God'*

Weber's thesis is that ascetic Protestantism, in particular Calvinism, contains an ethic or 'spirit' which, albeit indirectly, enabled and legitimated the rise of capitalism in the West. Further to this, however, Weber notes a more general connection between Protestantism and rationalism, between ascetic Christianity and the rationalisation of life.[19] There are two main points of interest here. First, as noted above, there is a connection between the Protestant 'calling' and the progressive systematisation of life, in particular, the emergence of rational (capitalist) labour. Weber states: 'rational conduct on the basis of the idea of calling, was born...from the spirit of Christian asceticism'.[20] Second, there is a connection between the systematisation of life (in the attempt to understand and fulfil God's demands) and the pursuit and accumulation of rational knowledge. This connection manifests itself in a form of cultural rationalisation whereby ideas and beliefs are subjected to a process of perpetual rationalisation. Weber, for example, states of Calvinism: 'That great historic process in the development of religions, the elimination of magic from the world, which had begun with the old Hebrew prophets and, in conjunction with Hellenistic scientific thought, had repudiated all magical means to salvation as superstition and sin, came here to its logical conclusion'.[21] The important point here is that in two senses Protestantism works towards an unforeseen and ironic conclusion. First, whilst there exists an affinity

between the Protestant spirit and rise of capitalism, capitalism itself engenders the decline of religious (ultimate) values, for once it is fully established it obeys its own logic of production, accumulation, and formal exchange, and no longer requires any form of spiritual legitimation. In the conclusion to the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* Weber notes:

> Since asceticism undertook to remodel the world and to work out its ideals in the world, material goods have gained an increasing and finally an inexorable power over the lives of men as at no previous period in history. Today the spirit of religious asceticism - whether finally, who knows? - has escaped from the cage. But victorious capitalism, since it rests on mechanical foundations, needs its support no longer.[22]

Second, in similar fashion, just as capitalism no longer requires the support of Protestantism in modernity, rational thought (science), no longer has a religious basis or motivation, indeed it, like capitalism, destroys the very basis of religious legitimation. The pursuit of rational knowledge here becomes an end in itself (see chapter 3), and modern science proceeds to denude all forms of religious or spiritual beliefs, denigrating them as irrational forms of superstition or myth regardless of their intrinsic rationality or value. Weber, in depicting this movement of science from the pursuit to the disenchantment of God, adheres to a Nietzschean thesis: that the logic of disenchantment is contained within the core of universal religion (Protestantism) itself. Weber here argues that Protestant values devaluate themselves insofar as they contribute to the rise of Western capitalism and rationalism. He analyses this logic of self-disenchantment as follows:

> The rational knowledge to which ethical religiosity had itself appealed followed its own autonomous and innerworldly norms. It fashioned a cosmos of truths which no longer had anything to do with the systematic postulates of a rational religious ethic - postulates to the effect that the world as a cosmos must satisfy the demands of this ethic or evince some "meaning" or other. On the contrary, rational knowledge had to reject this claim in principle.[23]

The result of this process of disenchantment, of the transition from a world ordered by ultimate (religious) values to modern capitalism and the rule of rational science, is a change in the basis of societal rationality and legitimation. For with the rationalisation of life, and the corresponding disenchantment of religious ideas and beliefs, modern society is increasingly ordered upon an instrumental, or means-ends,

rationality, and organises itself less and less according to value-rational principles.[24] Ralph Schroeder rightly states: 'The striving for mastery over the world continues to dominate modern life, yet it is nowadays completely devoid of its former religious and ethical significance'.[25] This movement towards instrumental rationality leads to a world in which social action is increasingly separated from the sphere of meaning, as particular (often technical) means are employed to realise specific ends regardless of the ethical significance or meaning of this action. In view of this, rationalisation may be understood as a movement towards nihilism, as it involves the devaluation of ultimate values, and, in particular, the reduction of questions of meaning and value, which define the scope for creative action, to scientific (instrumental) questions of technique and purpose, which in themselves are presupposed to be of value (see chapter 3).[26] This reduction of the pursuit of ultimate values to the rational pursuit of secular ends leads to an impersonal social world - exemplified by capitalism - in which individuals are treated not as ends in themselves but as the instrumental means to a particular end. In this sense, modern culture is dominated by a principle of impersonal rationalism, a principle that is far removed from the Protestant ethic which is to be found at its historical roots. Weber states: 'The intellect, like all cultural values, has created an aristocracy based on the possession of rational culture and independent of all personal ethical qualities of man. The aristocracy of intellect is hence an unbrotherly aristocracy'.[27]

The institutional manifestation of this movement towards instrumental rationality is modern (monocratic) bureaucracy.[28] This type of societal authority legitimates itself on rational grounds, resting upon a complex order of formal rights, rules, and duties which in themselves constitute a realm of expert knowledge (officialdom). In view of this, bureaucracy, for Weber, is the institutional embodiment of Western rationalism. He argues: 'Bureaucratic administration means fundamentally domination through knowledge. This is the feature of it which makes it specifically rational'.[29] This type of legal/rational domination is an impersonal form of rule based upon the objective pragmatism of the nation-state, and, in particular, on the principle of formal equality before the law.[30] It gives rise to an impersonal order of social relations or 'external life' in which personal values and beliefs are progressively subordinated to the rational consideration of worldly conduct. This process of

rationalisation not only strips the modern world of ultimate values, but subordinates creative action to the rational consideration of means and ends, in the process draining social life of its 'humanness' (*Menschentum*). Indeed, Weber argues: 'Bureaucracy develops the more perfectly, the more it is "dehumanized", the more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements which escape calculation'.[31]

This type of bureaucratic rule, driven by the logic of instrumental rationality, resides in stark contrast to pre-modern forms of legitimate authority. The pre-modern world, Weber argues, is characterised by a combination of traditional and charismatic, rather than bureaucratic, authority.[32] Weber defines these two types of authority as forms of legitimate domination which confer the validity of rule either on '[t]raditional grounds - resting on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them (traditional authority)' or '[c]harismatic grounds - resting on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him (charismatic authority)'.[33] Both these types of domination are personal rather than impersonal forms of rule, and neither is grounded upon a system of rational law. On one hand, traditional authority, which includes gerontocracy, primary patriarchalism, patrimonialism and, in extreme cases, sultanism, demands 'obedience to the master' and 'personal loyalty', and proceeds 'by virtue of age-old rules and powers'[34] through a form of traditional rationality that is determined by 'ingrained habituation'.[35] On the other, charismatic authority, whilst based on personal devotion to the leader or hero (prophet), is foreign to rules and proceeds through the repudiation of past authority. This repudiation of history is exemplified by the earliest forms of Christian faith, which, for example, marked the authority of Christ with a new narrative of time - Anno Domini (in the year of our Lord, or, colloquially, "advancing age"). This type of rule is characterised by value-rational *(wertrational)* rather than instrumentally rational social action, 'that is, determined by a conscious belief in the value for its own sake of some ethical, aesthetic, religious, or other form of behaviour, independently of its prospects of success', and also by affectual action that is 'determined by the actor's specific affects and feeling states'.[36]

IDEAL-TYPE OF LEGITIMATE DOMINATION	EXAMPLE	TYPE OF SOCIAL ACTION	TYPE OF LAW	SOCIAL RELATIONS	HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE
Traditional	Gerontocracy, primary patriarchalism, patrimonialism	Traditional	Traditional Rules	Personal (Obedience to master)	Rule through past tradition
Charismatic	Rule of individual personality	Value-Rational (*Wertrational*), Affectual	No Rules	Personal (devotion to leader)	Repudiation of past authority
Legal/ Bureaucratic	Capitalism, socialism, (monocratic bureaucracy)	Formal (*Zweckrational*)	Rational (Right, Duty)	Impersonal (Specialised bureaucracy)	Rationalisation (destruction) of past

Table 2.1 A typology of Weber's account of pre-modern and modern legitimation.

Weber's argument is that with the rationalisation of the world traditional and charismatic authority - which are both orders of personal authority that demand unlimited personal obligation, the former ruling through a personal master with a traditional status, the latter through an individual personality who is treated as if 'endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities'[37] - are replaced by the impersonal rule of the modern (capitalist) bureaucratic state.[38] Here, pre-modern forms of authority or domination, based predominantly upon value-rationality and natural law, are progressively replaced by legal/rational forms of legitimation and the rule of instrumental rationality. The tragic result of this developmental process is, as argued below (see section 2.3), the progressive subordination of ultimate values to means-ends rationality, and with this the restriction of the scope for creative, meaningful action in the modern world. Here, religious beliefs or ideals recede from (public) life as they are disenchanted by rational science and subordinated to rational, this-worldly action, leaving a world in which questions of meaning and value are increasingly replaced by the instrumental pursuit of material ends.

2.2 Rationalisation and Cultural Differentiation

This process of rationalisation has a profound effect on both the form of modern culture and the leading of life (*Lebensführung*). For with the progressive disenchantment of religious myth through the accumulation of 'rational' knowledge and the accompanying movement towards instrumental rationality, the religious basis of cosmological legitimation is, for the first time, challenged by the competing claims of a number of other life-orders: the economic, political, aesthetic, erotic, and intellectual. This separation of the individual life-orders (*Lebensordnungen*) and their value-spheres (*Wertsphären*) into autonomous realms (the process of *Eigengeseztlichkeit*), realms which are no longer bound together by a central religious narrative, leads to the progressive differentiation of modern culture.[39] For as religious legitimation separates off from the other life-orders and becomes simply one value-sphere amongst many, a new form of absolute polytheism is born, as the legitimation of the world is reduced to a struggle between an infinite number of competing values.

This form of polytheism mirrors that of the ancient order in appearance but not in reality. Weber states:

> We live as did the ancients when their world was not yet disenchanted of its gods and demons, only we live in a different sense. As Hellenic man at times sacrificed to Aphrodite and other times to Apollo, and, above all, as everybody sacrificed to the gods of his city, so do we still nowadays, only the bearing of man has been disenchanted and denuded of its mystical but inwardly genuine plasticity.[40]

The key point here, for Weber, is that the fabric of life itself changes dramatically with the transition to the modern world. We now live in a *different sense* to the ancients, whose lives were conducted according the charismatic powers of the gods. Today, as argued above, these gods have been disenchanted by the drive to eliminate myth and superstition from all spheres of life, leaving a collection of competing values which are of an increasingly materialistic rather than ethical orientation. Weber states: 'Today the routines of everyday life challenge religion. Many old gods ascend from their graves; they are disenchanted and hence take the form of impersonal forces. They strive to gain power over our lives and again they resume their eternal struggle with one another'.[41]

This eternal struggle between the value-spheres has a specific bearing on the leading of life (*Lebensführung*) in modernity. For with the progressive disenchantment of myth, the individual is no longer contained within the bounds of a religious narrative but becomes, at least in theory, an autonomous being who is forced to choose his/her values from a number of conflicting value-spheres. This choice, however, is a matter of some difficulty, for not only may the individual be constrained by the rule of instrumental rationality, but the value-spheres themselves are ultimately irreconcilable. The value-spheres of each life-order exist in fundamental opposition to one another, as each offers a competing, although incomplete, world view. In addition, the value-spheres are not only in conflict with each other but are also dogged by internal conflict. This external and internal conflict is irresolvable, for with the collapse of religious legitimation there now no longer exists a single transcendental standpoint from which a conflict between two opposing values can be reconciled. One can thus confer the legitimacy of a value only through rejection of an opposing belief, a difficulty Weber illustrates as follows: 'It is really a question not only of alternatives between values but

of an irreconcilable death-struggle, like that between "God" and the "Devil". Between these, neither relativization nor compromise is possible. At least, not in the true sense'.[42]

Weber addresses the irreconcilable nature of the life-orders and their value-spheres in his essay *Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions* (the *Zwischenbetrachtung*).[43] This essay, located in Weber's collected writings on the sociology of religion (*Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*) between the studies of Confucianism and Taoism and Hinduism and Buddhism[44], analyses the conflict between the life-orders and value-spheres of modern culture from the viewpoint of the religious sphere, more specifically, from the viewpoint of an ethic of brotherliness.[45] This method of delineating the conflict between the value-spheres is a point of some interest. Charles Turner explains this approach by arguing that Weber, in granting religion an 'exceptional status', follows the tradition of neo-Kantian value-philosophy (in particular the work of Rickert and Windelband).[46] Turner is here right to note that Weber grants religion such a status, but the reasons for this move, I believe, are not rooted in his neo-Kantian methodology.[47] First, on a basic level, Weber addresses the conflict between the value-spheres from the perspective of the religious sphere because this analysis is an 'intermediate reflection' (*Zwischenbetrachtung*) on the first parts of the *Sociology of Religion*.[48] Second, and more importantly, religion is granted an 'exceptional status' because, as noted above, it is precisely through the rationalisation and subsequent disenchantment of religious belief that the conflict between life-orders and their value-spheres is inaugurated. Weber states:

> the further the rationalisation and sublimation of the external and internal possession of - in the widest sense - "things worldly" has progressed, the stronger has the tension on the part of religion become. For the rationalisation and the conscious sublimation of man's relations to the various spheres of value, external and internal, as well as religious and secular, have then pressed towards making conscious the *internal and lawful autonomy* of the individual spheres; letting them drift into those tensions which remain hidden to the originally naive relation with the external world. This results quite generally from the development of inner- and other-worldly values towards rationality, towards conscious endeavour, and towards sublimation by *knowledge*.[49]

Weber draws out this tension between 'things-worldly' and religious belief through analysis of the tension between the value-spheres from the perspective of salvation

religion (an ethic of brotherliness).[50] This perspective enables Weber to illustrate the increasing tension between myth and rationalism, and between religious belief and personal autonomy. It is in this sense that the *Zwischenbetrachtung* is more than an intermediate reflection on the *Sociology of Religion*, it is a contribution 'to the typology and sociology of rationalism'[51], and offers a diagnosis of modern culture and *Lebensführung* following the disenchantment of religious legitimation. The *Zwischenbetrachtung* is thus not concerned simply with the 'religious rejections of the world and their directions' but, more generally, with the transition to, and nature of, modernity. To recapitulate:

> The religion of brotherliness has always clashed with the orders and values of this world, and the more consistently its demands have been carried through, the sharper the clash has been. The split has usually become wider the more the values of the world have been rationalised and sublimated in terms of their own laws. *And this is what matters here*.[52]

Weber's exegesis of this process of rationalisation opens with an analysis of the economic sphere: the sphere in which the 'tension between brotherly religion and the world has been most obvious'.[53] Weber notes that in early forms of religious belief there exists no tension between religious and economic interest, as '[a]ll the primeval magical or mystagogic ways of influencing spirits and deities have pursued special interests. They have striven for wealth, as well as long life, health, honour, progeny and, possibly, the improvement of one's fate in the hereafter'.[54] This relationship changed, however, with the sublimation of salvation religion and the rationalisation of the economic sphere, for with the development of rational and impersonal capitalism a fundamental tension grew between the economic sphere and the personal religious ethics of brotherliness. The irony of this tension is that there exists, as Weber demonstrates in *The Protestant Ethic* (see above), an affinity between the sublimation of salvation religion and the rationalisation of the economic sphere. He notes: 'The paradox of all rational asceticism, which in an identical manner has made monks in all ages stumble, is that rational asceticism itself has created the very wealth it rejected'.[55] In spite of, or perhaps because of this irony, Weber argues that no religion of salvation has actually overcome 'the tension between their religiosity and rational economy'. Indeed, he notes that there have been only two ways for escaping this conflict 'in a principled and consistent manner': first, through a Puritan ethic of vocation, which

accepts and works within the routinisation of the economic world, and, second, through the pursuit of mysticism, which escapes this world through an objectless devotion to anybody 'for devotion's sake'.

Weber next turns to the relation between religious ethics and the political orders of the world. This relation follows a similar course of historical development to the relation between the religious and economic spheres. Weber notes that there exists no tension between early forms of magical religiosity or functional deities and the political sphere, for the ancient gods of locality, tribe, and polity 'protected the undoubted values of everyday routine'. He argues: 'The problem only arose when these barriers of locality, tribe, and polity were shattered by universalist religions, by a religion with a unified God of the entire world. And the problem arose in full strength only when this God was a God of "love"'.[56] This problem, grounded in the tension between politics, which legitimates 'right' through the threat of violence (a point which is addressed in chapter 4 of this thesis through analysis of Weber's lecture 'Politics as a Vocation', and in chapter 7 through analysis of the work of Foucault), and an ethic of brotherliness, which seeks an 'ethical right' through 'love', is accentuated through the rationalisation of the political sphere. This process of rationalisation, whereby politics develops its own autonomy and follows its own laws, culminates in the bureaucratic power politics of the modern state (see above). This type of state, which operates through the appeal to naked violence and on the basis of impersonal, rational social action, stands against all notions of brotherliness. Weber states of this process of rationalisation:

> The bureaucratic state apparatus, and the rational *homo politicus* integrated into the state, manage affairs, including the punishment of evil, when they discharge business in the most ideal sense, according to the rational rules of the state order. In this, the political man acts just like the economic man, in a matter-of-fact manner "without regard to the person', *sine ira et studio*, without hate and therefore without love.[57]

Weber argues that, again, there have been only two consistent ways of resolving this clear tension: first, the Puritan attempt to interpret God's will through the means of this world (violence), and, second, the radical anti-political attitude of mysticism, which 'resists no evil' and 'withdraws from the pragma of violence which no political action can escape'.[58]

Weber, finally, analyses the relation between the intellectual sphere and redemption religion, observing that 'the self-conscious tension of religion is greatest and most principled where religion faces the sphere of intellectual knowledge'.[59] He notes that there exists a fundamental unity between these two spheres in all forms of magical religiosity (in particular Chinese thought), and that there is a 'far-going and mutual recognition' between religion and metaphysical speculation. He argues, however, that this unity between religion and the intellect breaks down the moment the accumulation of rational knowledge begins to drive the combined rationalisation and disenchantment of the world. Weber states: 'The tension between religion and intellectual knowledge definitely comes to the fore wherever rational, empirical knowledge has consistently worked through to the disenchantment of the world and its transformation into a causal mechanism'.[60] The irony of this process, as discussed above, is that salvation religion has itself tended towards rationalisation in its move towards doctrine and away from magic, and in the process has lent force to the movement towards the disenchantment of the world. In spite of this, however, Weber argues that there remains a fundamental tension between intellectual rationalism (science), which pushes religion into the realm of irrationalism, and the religious pursuit of the meaning of the world. The key point here is that science progressively disenchants religious claims for a 'God-ordained' and meaningfully oriented cosmos (see chapter 3), whilst religious doctrine never eschews its claim to some form of inner- or other-worldly legitimation, and on this basis Weber notes: 'There is absolutely no "unbroken" religion working as a vital force which is not compelled at *some* point to demand the *credo non quod, sed quia absurdum* - the "sacrifice of the intellect"'.[61] This demand to at some point sacrifice the intellect for faith or works forces apart the religious and intellectual spheres, as does the increasingly impersonal nature of intellectual labour. Weber states: 'The intellect, like all cultural values, has created an aristocracy based on the possession of rational culture and independent of all personal ethical qualities of man. The aristocracy of intellect is hence an unbrotherly aristocracy'.[62]

There are two important points to be drawn from this analysis of salvation religion (the religious sphere), the economic, political, and intellectual spheres: first, that the rationalisation of the world leads to an irreconcilable tension between

competing value-spheres (discussed further below, section 3), and, second, that each of these spheres tend towards rationalisation. In view of the latter, it may be argued that the differentiation of modern culture is not a movement towards freedom but is in fact an extension of the movement towards instrumental rationality that is outlined in the first section of this chapter, a point which is discussed at further length through analysis of the work of Lyotard in chapter 6. The rationalisation of the world here inaugurates a struggle between competing value-spheres, but at the same time progressively constricts the range of values and hence the number of valued ends offered by each sphere through a process of further rationalisation. In view of this, whilst the rationalisation of the world appears to diversify culture through a process of a progressive differentiation, it may be argued that to some extent it engenders the opposite, namely the progressive homogenisation of all spheres of modern life (a process which has been identified and attacked by a number of postmodern theorists, in particular Foucault and Baudrillard, see chapters 7 and 8 of this thesis).[63] The two value-spheres yet to be discussed are possible exceptions to this process: the aesthetic, which is examined through reference to the work of Lyotard in chapter 6, and the erotic, analysed in connection to the work of Baudrillard in chapter 8. These spheres, whose 'fundamental essences are "arational" or "antirational", appear to disrupt the course of rationalisation and, following this, appear to offer the possibility of escape from the instrumentalism of modern rationalism.[64] This possibility is addressed in detail in the second half of this thesis, but for now we may briefly note that even these spheres tend toward rationalisation. Weber states:

> the spheres of the irrational, the only spheres that intellectualism has not yet touched, are... raised into consciousness and put under its lens. For in practice this is where the modern intellectualist form of romantic irrationalism leads. This method of emancipation from intellectualism may well bring about the very opposite of what those who take to it conceive as its goal.[65]

2.3 The Tragedy of Rationalisation

On the basis of the arguments presented in the above two sections, the rationalisation and disenchantment of the world may be seen to be a tragic process in a number of respects.[66] First, as detailed in sections 2.1, the rationalisation of the world

entails the disenchantment of religious legitimation and the movement from a social order founded upon value-rationality, and governed through charismatic and traditional forms of authority, to an order founded upon instrumental rationality and characterised by new forms of institutional bureaucracy. This movement results in the progressive depersonalisation of the social world: instrumental calculation steadily suppresses the passionate pursuit of ultimate values, specialisation heightens the impersonality of social relations, and bureaucracy reduces the scope for individual initiative and personal fulfilment. The rationalisation of the world, as I have argued above, can on these grounds be seen as a general movement towards cultural nihilism, whereby ultimate values are devalued, or, as demonstrated by the developmental transition to universal religion and beyond to the 'death of God', devalue themselves, and become subordinated to a means-ends rationality based on technique and calculation. The advance of instrumental rationality and its institutional embodiment, bureaucracy, here make social relations more predictable but at the same time deprive the modern individual of the very individuality needed to pursue particular values with conviction (a point discussed further below). In view of this, 'human' progress and rationalisation are clearly not one, for the advance of instrumental rationality restricts rather than expands the basis of individual autonomy and freedom.[67]

The rationalisation of the world may also be seen to be a tragic process insofar as it drives the differentiation of modern culture (see above, section 2.2). This process of differentiation is tragic first, because the movement towards rationalisation explodes the unity of pre-modern culture, thereby inaugurating a struggle between a number of life-orders and their value-spheres which is fundamentally irreconcilable. This leads Wilhelm Hennis to rightly note: 'For Weber, there is no human relationship, no "life order", that could not be defined by struggle, struggle is life'.[68] The key point here is that there are, for Weber, no theoretical grounds upon which the value-pluralism of modern culture can be resolved.[69] I will briefly attempt to show why this is the case through reference to three models of legitimacy which attempt to bring some degree of unity to the world: science, natural right, and natural law.

First, there can, for Weber, be no reconciliation of the modern struggle between values through recourse to scientific knowledge, for whilst science disenchants the traditional (religious) basis upon which values have been legitimated it

can provide no grounds upon which questions of value may be addressed or resolved (this point is addressed further in chapter 3). Weber argues that questions of value and meaning lie outside of the realm of science for they demand a subjective preference, the rightness of which cannot be proven through scientific means. He states:

> Even such simple questions as the extent to which an end should sanction unavoidable means, or the extent to which undesired repercussions should be taken into consideration, or how conflicts between several concretely conflicting ends are to be arbitrated, are entirely matters of choice or compromise. There is no (rational or empirical) scientific procedure of any kind whatsoever which can provide us a with a decision here.[70]

The rationalisation and disenchantment of the world is driven by the accumulation of scientific knowledge, but this very knowledge is, as argued above, itself unable to answer questions of meaning or value. This irony, for Weber, underlies the nihilism of modern culture, for the instrumental rationality of natural science progressively removes questions of value through the repression of value-rationality, through the presupposition of its own value and, following this, the self-legitimation of its own enterprise (see chapter 3). The scientific rationalisation of the world, whilst inaugurating the modern struggle between the life-orders and their value-spheres through the disenchantment of religious myth, can thus provide no new value-standard through which this conflict can be resolved. In view of this, Weber draws the conclusion that this conflict is without resolution: '"Scientific" pleading is meaningless in principle because the various value spheres of the world stand in irreconcilable conflict with each other'.[71]

This argument for the incommensurability of values and against the possibility of reconciling the value-spheres through (scientific) reason places Weber firmly at odds with natural right theorists such as Leo Strauss[72] and Eric Voegelin.[73] Leo Strauss, in particular, is critical of Weber for arguing that values cannot be evaluated and ranked through scientific reason. He argues, in *Natural Right and History*, that Weber's adherence to a distinction between facts and values descends into philosophical relativism and beyond into nihilism, as from the standpoint of reason every value must be treated as having an equal claim to legitimacy.[74] In view of this, Strauss argues that, for Weber, there can be no genuine knowledge of what 'ought to be'.[75] Shadia Drury provides a clear summary of Strauss's position:

> Social science begins with relativism or the acceptance of a permanent, irresolvable and deadly conflict between the plurality of "values" that sustain different societies. "Values" refer roughly to the goods or ends that are to guide human life; they also refer to what is morally good, right and just. Social science cannot provide us with any knowledge of values because such knowledge is not available to men. There is no rational foundation for choosing between diverse values. From a rational point of view, all values are of equal worth. Nevertheless we must choose.[76]

On this basis, Strauss argues that Weber shifts values into the realm of the non-rational decisions of individuals. Against this move, Strauss argues that there are in fact a number of immutable principles of justice which are discernible, if only by a select few, through the faculty of human reason. This is what Strauss terms 'natural right': the right of the wise (the philosopher) to use the highest form of human knowledge (philosophy/science) to discover the natural and superior form of right or goodness for 'man'. He argues:

> Natural right in its classic form is connected with a teleological view of the universe. All natural beings have a natural end, a natural destiny, which determines what kind of operation is good for them. In the case of man, reason is required for discerning these operations: reason determines what is by nature right with ultimate regard to man's natural end.[77]

Strauss is here diametrically opposed to Weber's commitment to value-freedom, arguing that it is the true purpose of science and philosophy to arbitrate within, rather than abstain from, conflicts over value.

There are, however, a number of important points to be made in reply to Strauss's natural right critique. First, Strauss criticises Weber for arguing that conflicts between values cannot be resolved through reason or science but gives little indication of how these conflicts can be resolved by such means. Strauss is here critical of Weber's work on social policy and his position on the relation of politics and ethics in *Politics as a Vocation*, but fails to state how value-disputes in these areas may be reconciled. Moreover, Strauss completely ignores the examples given by Weber in *Science as a Vocation* of the impossibility for scientific reason to arbitrate within particular conflicts. Weber asks, for example, how science can be employed to settle the value-conflict between a Catholic and a Freemason, or a dispute over the value of French and German culture (see chapter 3 for further discussion of this point).[78] Strauss here dismisses Weber's neo-Kantian distinction between facts and values for

placing questions of value beyond the limits of scientific reason, yet fails to demonstrate how such questions may be resolved with within these limits.

Second, Strauss's critique of Weber divorces his theory of value-pluralism from his theory of rationalisation and disenchantment, and proceeds not through an analysis of the *Zwischenbetrachtung* but through an attack on Weber's neo-Kantian distinction between facts and values.[79] The important point here is that, for Weber, the incommensurability of modern life-orders and their value-spheres is the product of an historical process of disenchantment. It is the outcome of the destruction of the traditional (religious) basis of legitimation, so that questions of value can no longer be resolved through the appeal to a single right or law, be it derived from nature or a divine source. Strauss misses this connection between the historical process of disenchantment and the modern crisis of values, and thus misses the fact that, for Weber, the differentiation of culture into a number of conflicting value-spheres is specifically a *modern* condition, and represents the *tragic* outcome of the developmental logic of Western history. Strauss also misses the connection between Weber's historical analysis of disenchantment and his commitment to value-free methodology, for neo-Kantianism is an approach employed by Weber in order to clarify this modern crisis, an approach which does not posit the equivalency of all values but does point to the limits of science in dealing with questions of value. The key point to be drawn from this is that Weber, like Nietzsche, is himself not a nihilist but rather a critic of nihilism who attacks the modern descent of ultimate values to mere instrumental means. Indeed, Weber questions the presupposition, which underlies Strauss's position, that human reason - which drives the disenchantment of the world - is itself of value (see chapter 3), arguing that the very 'progress' of scientific reason subordinates value itself to questions of technique or purpose. Weber is thus highly critical of the 'progression' of scientific reason or, more generally, Western culture, and of the idea that, in view of the disenchantment of the world, one can place faith in the idea of scientific knowledge of the 'right' or 'good' which will resolve the modern crisis of values. Indeed it would seem that the pursuit such knowledge could in fact only contribute to further disenchantment and thereby only compound the problem.

Weber's position also suggests that the conflict between the life-orders and their value-spheres cannot be resolved through reference to a natural law (a law

which Strauss rejects for resting on divine will and not natural human reason).[80] Weber argues that the rationalisation of the world engenders a shift from natural law to positive right (typified by legal positivism) through the disenchantment of the traditional basis of law itself. He portrays the effect of this process as follows:

> The disappearance of the old natural law conceptions has destroyed all possibility of providing the law with a metaphysical dignity by virtue of its immanent qualities. In the great majority of its most important provisions, it has been unmasked all too visibly, indeed, as the product or the technical means of a compromise between conflicting interests.[81]

This process of disenchantment reduces law from a divine standard that is 'legitimated by God's will' to a technical, this-worldly means of settling questions of positive right. Jürgen Habermas neatly summarises this process: 'From the perspective of a formal ethic based on general principles, legal norms (as well as the creation and application of laws) that appeal to magic, sacred traditions, revelation and the like are devalued. Norms now count as mere conventions that can be considered hypothetically and enacted positively'.[82] Weber argues that there can be no return to the legitimation of the world through natural law, for scientific rationalisation destroys the very basis of this divine form of legitimation.[83] The possibility of such a return, of re-unifying the differentiated life-orders through reference to a divine narrative (thereby reversing the process of *Eigengeseztlichkeit*), rests with the possibility of revoking the intellect and re-enchanting the world, a possibility which Weber rejects as a fantastical form of world-flight (*Weltflucht*) (this is discussed further in relation to the work of Baudrillard in chapter 8).

There is then, for Weber, no clear solution to the conflict between the life-orders and value-spheres of the modern world. But, in view of this, does it follow that this world is of a fundamentally tragic nature? This is a point of some contention. Charles Turner, for example, argues that the disenchanted gods, or impersonal values or forces, which make up modern 'polytheistic' culture each offer the possibility of a new totality. He states: 'these gods were interesting to Weber not as indices of a pluralistic culture, but as a proliferation of "totalising" standpoints'.[84] This argument, which we will return to in chapter 6, is, however, problematic. One may note that, for Weber, the underlying fabric of pre-modern life is destroyed by the rationalisation of the world and the accompanying differentiation of culture. Whereas for the peasant, or

for Abraham, life may be complete, for the modern man life is always partial, as it is situated within an irreconcilable struggle between values, and before the infinite march of scientific 'progress' (this latter point is discussed in the following chapter). The modern life-orders and their value-spheres here do not offer a proliferation of 'totalising' standpoints but rather mark the decline of a totalising standpoint (a religious narrative), and the proliferation of a series of partial standpoints. The key point here is that the life-orders and value-spheres are defined by internal and external conflict which prevents the reconstitution of a meaningful totality. The modern individual is not only torn by the war between values, between, for example, the values of conviction and responsibility in the realm of political leadership (see chapter 4), but is also pulled in a number of directions by the values of different life-orders. This means, by extension, that the life of the individual is never 'totalised' but always fragmented and incomplete. In fact, the only 'totalising' movement that is noted by Weber, which lends modern Western culture its unity, is the drive towards instrumental rationality, which, as noted above, extends through each sphere, restricting both the movement towards complete value-pluralism (cultural difference) and the realisation of individual autonomy.

The rationalisation of the world thus has a tragic bearing on the life of the modern individual. On one hand, Weber argues that the scope of individuality in the modern world is progressively curtailed by the advance of instrumental rationality, and its institutional embodiment, bureaucracy. Wolfgang Mommsen rightly notes: 'Weber thought that the free societies of the West were undergoing a process of routinisation and rationalisation of all aspects of social life which would slowly but steadily lead to a paralysis of all individual initiative'.[85] On the other hand, however, Weber argues that the modern individual is to confer the legitimacy of values from an array of competing life-orders and value-spheres, which themselves tend towards rationalisation. The individual is thus torn in opposite directions by the same process, for he/she gains the autonomy to pursue particular values at the very same time as losing the capacity to exercise this autonomy. Here lies the tragic irony of the process of rationalisation: the individual is able, or perhaps forced, to choose and legitimate ultimate values, whilst the scope of the individual to make such a choice is restricted by the rule of instrumental rationality, for the very 'success' of rationalisation lies in the eradication

of the formal irrationality of humanness (*Menschentum*). The rationalisation of modern culture thus demands individual initiative and strong personal ethics to select values - the very range of which, as argued above, is restricted by the rationalisation of each life-order and value-sphere - and to thereby take a stand, but at the same time restricts the means through which the individual may take such a stand (this process is considered in relation to the question of political leadership in chapter 4). This process places an impossible burden on the modern individual, and, moreover, progressively removes the possibility of questioning the value of the rationalisation process itself.

2.4 Conclusion

Weber's account of the transition to modernity may be read, in the light of the above, as an account of the descent rather than of the progress of Western culture. The promises of Western rationalism - universal freedom, personal autonomy - have, for Weber, turned into their opposites, into the bureaucratic constriction of individuality and freedom, and into new forms of discipline and domination (which subsequently have been analysed by Michel Foucault, see chapter 7). This process of rationalisation has also been accompanied by a movement towards nihilism, as questions of purpose, calculation and technique have progressively replaced questions of meaning and value (the movement from value- to instrumental rationality, see above and chapter 3). In view of the tragic nature of this transition to modernity, one is left with the following question: how is it possible to work against the instrumentalism of modern culture, or, put in different terms, to resist the drive towards the further rationalisation of life? The second half of this thesis will examine three postmodern responses to this question, but here we may note that for Weber there are only two choices: withdrawal into the 'acosmic brotherliness' of Christian mysticism (a form of *Weltflucht*), or devotion to the innerworldly asceticism of the Protestant ethic of vocation.[86] Weber chooses the latter of these two options, committing himself to work within *this* world[87], and it is to this vocational ethic, to this 'this-worldly' form of resistance to the rationalisation of the world, that we now turn.

Notes

[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, § 2, p.9.

[2] As Sam Whimster notes in his translation of F.H. Tenbruck's 'The Problem of Thematic Unity in the Works of Max Weber': 'the term disenchantment [*Entzauberung*] should not be read so much as the final state of a world purged of illusion, but as an actual process, literally, or dis-enchantment', *Reading Weber*, p.48. Ralph Schroeder offers a slightly different translation of the term: 'the literal translation of the German term *Entzauberung* is "demagification"', *Max Weber and the Sociology of Culture*, p.72.

[3] Max Weber, *Economy and Society Volume One*, p.399.

[4] See Ralph Schroeder, *Max Weber and the Sociology of Culture*, p.207, and David Owen, *Maturity and Modernity*, p.101.

[5] I here focus specifically on Weber's account of the development of Western rationalism and do not address in detail *The Religion of China*, *The Religion of India*, or his work on Islam. Here see Wolfgang Schluchter *Paradoxes of Modernity*, chapter 3, and Ralph Schroeder *Max Weber and the Sociology of Culture*, chapter 2.

[6] Weber, *Economy and Society Volume One*, p.400. These 'early' or 'elementary' forms of behaviour are, for Weber, 'relatively' rational as '[o]nly we, judging from the standard of our modern views of nature, can distinguish objectively in such behaviour those attributions of causality which are "correct" from those which are "fallacious", and then designate the fallacious attributions of causality as irrational, and the corresponding acts as "magic"', *Ibid.*. Here, one may recall Weber's perspectivism in *The Protestant Ethic*: 'what is rational from one point of view may well be irrational from another', p.26, and in 'The Social Psychology of the World Religions' (the '*Einleitung*'): 'We have to remind ourselves in advance that "rationalism" may mean very different things', *From Max Weber*, p.293.

[7] Weber, *Economy and Society Volume One*, p.401.

[8] Weber notes, however, that the 'occurrence of this displacement of naturalism depends on the pressure which the professional masters of such symbolism can put behind their belief and its intellectual elaboration, hence, on the power which they manage to gain within the community', *ibid.*, p.404.

[9] *Ibid.*, p.405.

[10] *Ibid.*, p.407.

[11] *Ibid.*, p.413.

[12] Weber also notes that a god's dominance may result from political and military conquest, which entails 'the victory of the stronger god over the weaker god of the vanquished group', *Ibid.*, p.413.

[13] The crucial role of ancient Judaism in the development of Western rationalism is discussed in detail by David Owen, *Maturity and Modernity*, pp.102-107, and Ralph Schroeder, *Max Weber and the Sociology of Culture*, pp.72-84. See also H. Gerth and D. Martindale's excellent preface to the English translation of *Ancient Judaism*.

[14] See Ralph Schroeder, *Max Weber and the Sociology of Culture*, p.73.

[15] Weber, *Ancient Judaism*, p.5.

[16] David Owen, *Maturity and* Modernity, p.109.

[17] Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, pp.103-4.

[18] *Ibid.*, p.161.

[19] It is here possible to argue that Weber's account is rather one-sided, for it emphasises the important role of the Protestant 'calling' but overlooks the bearing of the counter-Reformation, in particular the Jesuit movement, on the development of Western rationalism, neglecting, above all, the emergence of Cartesian rationalism in France. On Descartes's influence on the emergence of the 'rationalist state of mind', see, for example, Durkheim, 'Sociology in France in the Nineteenth Century', pp.21-22. One may note in passing that Jean Baudrillard traces the emergence of the modern orders of simulacra to the counter-Reformation, see *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, pp.50-53, and chapter 8 of this thesis.

[20] Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, p.180.

[21] *Ibid.*, p.105.

[22] *Ibid.*, pp.181-2.

[23] Weber, quoted in Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One*, p.229. T. McCarthy's translation of this passage is preferable to that of Gerth and Mills in 'Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions', *From Max Weber*, p.355.

[24] Weber's ideal-types of value- and instrumental rationality are discussed in detail in chapter 4.

[25] Ralph Schroeder, 'Nietzsche and Weber: Two "Prophets" of the Modern World', p.211.

[26] In view of this, Ralph Schroeder argues that Weber, like Nietzsche, 'thought that the decline of religious ideals would inevitably lead to the routinization or ossification of social life', Ralph Schroeder, 'Nietzsche and Weber: Two "Prophets" of the Modern World', p.220.

[27] Weber, 'Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions', p.355.

[28] Weber argues that forms of bureaucratic administration have clearly existed outside of the modern, Western world, see, for example, *Economy and Society Volume Two*, p.964, and pp.969-71, and his remarks on patrimonial bureaucracy in *The Religion of China*. Weber's argument, however, is that the development of bureaucracy is connected to the emergence of a 'rational', money economy. He thus states: 'Bureaucracy...is fully developed in political and ecclesiastical communities only in the modern state, and in the private economy only in the most advanced institutions of capitalism', *Economy and Society Volume Two*, p.956.

[29] Max Weber, *Economy and Society Volume* One, p.225.

[30] Weber notes: 'It is decisive for the modern loyalty to an office that, in the pure type, it does not establish a relationship to a *person*, like the vassal's or disciple's faith under feudal or patrimonial authority, but rather is devoted to *impersonal* and *functional* purposes', *Economy and Society Volume Two*, p.959.

[31] *Ibid.*, p.975.

[32] Weber argues: 'In prerationalistic periods, tradition and charisma between them have almost exhausted the whole of the orientation of action'. *Economy and Society Volume One*, p.245.

[33] *Ibid.*, p.215.

[34] *Ibid.*, p.226.

[35] *Ibid.*, p.25. Weber does note, however, that traditional authority is a double sphere which, because of its demand for unlimited personal obedience, comprises of action bound to specific traditions *and* action free of specific rules. The contrast of traditional and charismatic authority is thus complex, but the key point here is that the principles of traditional rule 'are not formal principles, as in the case of legal authority', *Ibid.*, p.227. This distinction is crucial as it distinguishes the personal rule of traditional and charismatic authority from the rational law characteristic of the bureaucratic rule of modernity.

[36] *Ibid.*, p.24-5.

[37] *Ibid.*, p.241.

[38] I here present the movement towards disenchantment or nihilism, in particular the movement from personal to impersonal legitimation (charismatic and traditional to bureaucratic domination), in the form of a developmental history. Weber, however, rightly offers a cautionary note to this practice: 'charismatic domination is by no means limited to primitive stages of development, and the three basic types of domination cannot be placed into a simple evolutionary line: they in fact appear together in the most diverse combinations. It is the fate of charisma, however, to recede with the development of permanent institutional structures', *Economy and Society Volume Two*, p.1133. On the problematic relation of developmental sequences and ideal-types, see Weber, '"Objectivity" in Social Science', *Methodology in the Social Sciences*, p.101.

[39] Lawrence Scaff perceptively notes that the ethical does not in itself constitute an autonomous life-order. He argues: 'Although the ambiguous category "ethics" cannot in itself be a sphere of value with its own "lawful autonomy", Weber's entire treatment of the religious sphere of action and valuation must be interpreted as suggesting that there are distinctly "absolutist ethical" paths, sharing an affinity with the ascetic religious life, that some choose to follow as a way of counteracting the dilemmas of living in this world', *Fleeing the Iron Cage*, p.94. Weber's conflation of the religious with the ethical is challenged by Wolfgang Schluchter, who splits ethics and religion into separate spheres, see *The Rise of Western Rationalism*. On this point, see Charles Turner, *Modernity and Politics in the Work of Max Weber*, pp.90-1. In addition, Schluchter also argues that the familial constitutes a life-order, see *The Rise of Western Rationalism*, p.27. There is little evidence in Weber's

short analysis of the conflict between prophecies of salvation and the natural sib, however, that suggests that this is the case. See 'Religious Directions of the World', *From Max Weber*, pp.328-30.

[40] Max Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', *From Max Weber*, p.148.

[41] *Ibid.*, p.149. Charles Turner offers an unusual reading of this passage. He argues: 'When he [Weber] refers to the old *gods* having ascended from their graves he refers to their (charismatic) power to generate forms of community based on the alleged universal validity of values, not simply to modern institutional differentiation', *Modernity and Politics in the Work of Max Weber*, p.124. Weber, however, here does not refer to the charismatic power of the 'old gods', but to the fact that these gods have been disenchanted, reduced to 'impersonal forces', and thus robbed of their charismatic power.

[42] 'The Meaning of "Ethical Neutrality" in Sociology and Economics', pp.17-8. The original title of this essay is 'Der Sinn der "Wertfreiheit" der soziologischen und ökonomischen Wissenschaften'. *Wertfreiheit* could here also be translated as "value-freedom" or "value-neutrality". On this difficult point of translation see Wolfgang Schluchter, 'Value-Neutrality and the Ethic of Responsibility', footnote 1, pp.65-6, and Wilhelm Hennis, 'The Meaning of "*Wertfreiheit*"', pp.113-125. Weber also states of the conflict between the value-spheres: 'According to our ultimate standpoint, the one is the devil and the other the God, and the individual has to decide which is God for him and which is the devil. And so it goes throughout all the orders of life', 'Science as a Vocation', p.148. Leo Strauss reads these allusions to God and the Devil literally rather than metaphorically. He argues that 'Weber's "idealism", i.e. his recognition of all "ideal goals of all "causes", seems to permit of a nonarbitrary distinction between excellence and baseness or depravity. At the same time, it culminates in the imperative "Follow God or the Devil", which means, in nontheological language, "Strive resolutely for excellence or baseness". For if Weber meant to say that choosing value system A in preference to value system B is compatible with genuine respect for value system B as base, he could not have known what he was talking about in speaking of a choice between God and Devil; he must have meant a mere difference of tastes while talking of a deadly conflict. It thus appears that for Weber, in his capacity as a social philosopher, excellence and baseness completely lost their primary meaning', *Natural Right and History*, pp.45-6. This reading centres on Weber's commitment to value-freedom in social science, and his subsequent refusal to employ science or reason to rank values. Weber, however, here does not overlook the meaning of baseness and excellence but argues that such a hierarchical evaluation of values cannot and thus should not proceed through scientific means. Science, he argues, can clarify actions and values, but questions of baseness or excellence remain questions of faith. On Strauss's natural right critique of Weber, see the final section of the present chapter.

[43] 'Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions' is the subtitle of this essay. The actual title of this essay is *Zwischenbetrachtung*, or *Intermediate Reflection*. See S. Whimster's note to F. Tenbruck, 'The Problem of Thematic Unity in the Works of Max Weber', p.58.

[44] On the positional significance of the *Zwischenbetrachtung*, see Charles Turner, *Modernity and Politics in the Work of Max Weber*, pp.97-9.

[45] Lawrence Scaff here notes: 'According to Weber's notation and to Lukács' citation of the "enormous impression" it left with him, at least portions of the "Intermediate Reflection" were read to Weber's Heidelberg circle before World War I and almost certainly in 1913. Marianne Weber's account of the episodes suggests that Weber intended his text partially as a reply to Lukács' and others' "eschatological hopes" for "salvation from the world" through creation of a new "socialist society founded upon an ethic of brotherliness"', *Fleeing the Iron Cage*, p.93. See Marianne Weber, *Max Weber: A Biography*, p.466.

[46] See Charles Turner, *Modernity and Politics in the Work of Max Weber*, pp.88-91.

[47] Charles Turner's reading of the *Zwischenbetrachtung* is, I believe, too methodological. He states: 'My concern is less with the reconstruction of a developmental schema, at the end of which lies "modernity" as a product which has emancipated itself, as an explanandum, from the rationalisation process which produced it, than with the manner in which Weber employs neo-Kantian value philosophy', *ibid.*, p.99, see also chapter 6 of this thesis. For a less methodological, more Nietzschean reading of the *Zwischenbetrachtung* see Lawrence Scaff, *Fleeing the Iron Cage*, chapter 3.

[48] There is no equivalent English language edition of this work, see Sam Whimster's note to F.H. Tenbruck, 'The Problem of Thematic Unity in the Works of Max Weber', p.43. For the contents of Weber's *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, see p.84.

[49] Max Weber, 'Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions', *From Max Weber*, p.328, *emphasis original.*

[50] I here do not wish to suggest that it is only in modernity that the conflict between religion and 'this-world' is inaugurated, for, as Weber argues, salvation religions have always existed in a state of conflict with 'things-worldly'. The difference in modernity, however, is that the relation between salvation religion and the world is effectively reversed, so that worldly values now rule ideal interests or beliefs. The conflict between religion and the world is thus sharpened by rationalisation, and religion itself is reduced to one value-system amongst many.

[51] Weber, 'Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions', p.324.

[52] *Ibid.*, p.330, *emphasis mine.*

[53] *Ibid.*, p.331.

[54] *Ibid.*

[55] *Ibid.*, p.332.

[56] *Ibid.*, p.333.

[57] *Ibid.*, p.333-4.

[58] *Ibid.*, p.336.

[59] *Ibid.*, p.350.

[60] *Ibid.*

[61] *Ibid*, p.352.

[62] *Ibid.*, p.355.

[63] One may here note that whilst each value-sphere tends towards rationalisation, implying a progressive constriction of the range of values offered by each sphere and thus a general movement towards the 'sameness' of modern culture, the individual is still forced to confer the legitimacy of mutually antagonistic values. The point here, for Weber, is that even though the array of ultimate values may contract with the rationalisation of the world, this does not relieve the individual from the existential burden of choice, hence his argument for the importance of the differentiation of the value-spheres.

[64] See Scaff, *Fleeing the Iron Cage*, pp.101-2.

[65] Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', p.143.

[66] I here use the term tragic in a literal sense to refer to rationalisation as a process which is accompanied by a deep sense of loss, loss, for example, of the unity of pre-modern culture, of ultimate and 'sublime' values, and of the individual freedom it promised by modernity.

[67] Weber's argument has to some extent been developed by Zygmunt Bauman, who argues that the modern drive towards rational order, security, and civilisation (modernity) entails a loss of individual freedom. See, for example, *Postmodernity and Its Discontents*, pp.1-4.

[68] Wilhelm Hennis, *Max Weber, Essays in Reconstruction*, p.159.

[69] Weber here does not argue that there are, in practice, no grounds upon which conflicts between values may be resolved. Indeed, he states: 'The theoretically constructed types of conflicts between "life orders" merely signify that at certain points these internal conflicts are *possible* and "adequate", but *not* that there is no standpoint from which they could be held to be resolved in a higher synthesis', 'Religious Rejections of the World', p.323, translation corrected by Charles Turner, *Modernity and Politics in the Work of Max Weber*, p.87. This is not an argument for Hegelian synthesis but a neo-Kantian argument which stresses the divide between ideal-typical constructs (the life-orders and their value-spheres) and empirical reality. In theory there exists no clear grounds for the resolution of conflict between value-spheres (which are rarely found in reality with 'rational consistency') although in practice there may exist grounds for compromise or reconciliation between opposing values, see chapter 4.

[70] Weber, 'The Meaning of "Ethical Neutrality"', *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, p.18-9.

[71] Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', p.147.

[72] There has been little attempt to expound and assess Strauss's critique of Weber in *Natural Right and* History. Indeed, the secondary literature on Strauss has largely neglected the second chapter of this work. Drury's *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss*, for example, mentions Weber only in passing, whilst Udoff's collection *Leo Strauss's Thought* contains a brief reflection (two pages) on Weber by Richard H. Kennington in his essay 'Strauss's Natural Right and History'. Equally, the secondary literature on Max Weber has neglected Strauss's *Natural Right and History*, Robert Eden noting that

'[t]he critique advanced by L. Strauss in *Natural Right and History*, has been ignored rather than rebutted by social scientists', 'Weber and Nietzsche: Questioning the Liberation of Social Science from Historicism', p.418. There is, for example, no analysis of Strauss's position in Roth and Schluchter's *Max Weber's Vision of History*; Schluchter's *The Rise of Western Rationalism* and *Paradoxes of Modernity*; Hekman's *Max Weber and Contemporary Social Theory*; Brubaker's *The Limits of Rationality*; Habermas's *The Theory of Communicative Action*; Scaff's *Fleeing the Iron Cage* or Mommsen's *The Political and Social Theory of Max Weber*. Brief reflection on Strauss's critique of Weber may be found in Bendix and Roth's *Scholarship and Partisanship*, pp.62-4; S. Turner and R. Factor's *Max Weber and the Dispute Over Reason and Value*, chapter 9, and C. Turner's *Modernity and Politics in the Work of Max Weber*, pp.17-19.

[73] There has also been a widespread neglect of Voegelin's critique of Weber. This is also surprising, for as Bendix and Roth note: 'As a young man, Voegelin was under Weber's spell and wrote an excellent analysis of his rationalism, in particular of the difference between the necessary resignation of the responsible political activist (Weber's theory) and that of the esthetic creator (Simmel)' Scholarship and Partisanship, pp.63-4. See Eric Voegelin, 'Max Weber', *Deutsche Vierteljahrschaft für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistgeschichte*, 3, 1925. This same essay influenced Karl Löwith's reading of Weber's political ethics. See Löwith *Max Weber and Karl Marx*, p.68.

[74] Strauss argues, for example, that 'Weber assumed as a matter of course that there is no hierarchy of values: all values are of the same rank', *Natural Right and History*, p.66.

[75] See, for example, *Ibid.*, p.41.

[76] Shadia Drury, *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss*, p.164.

[77] Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, p.7.

[78] See Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', pp.146 and 148.

[79] One may also note that Strauss's critique of Weber is not merely tendential but is voiced in a dismissive and derogatory manner. Richard Kennington rightly notes: 'the only chapter in *Natural Right and History* that examines a twentieth-century thinker at length is also the only chapter in which Strauss permits irony to pass over into jest and ridicule', 'Strauss's *Natural Right and History*, p.237.

[80] This important distinction between natural right and natural law has often been missed. On this point, see Strauss's preface to the seventh impression of *Natural Right and History*, p.vii.

[81] Weber, *Economy and Society Volume Two*, pp.874-5. On the question of natural law, also see Weber's critique of Wilhelm Roscher, *Roscher and Knies: The Logical Problems of Historical Economics*, p.71.

[82] Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One*, pp.162-3. Habermas rightly notes, however, that Weber fails to analyse law in any detail in the *Zwischenbetrachtung*. See Ibid. p.242.

[83] See chapter 3.2 for further elucidation of Weber's position on the intrinsic conflict between scientific rationalisation and the divine.

[84] Charles Turner, *Modernity and Politics in the Work of Max Weber*, p.124.

[85] Wolfgang Mommsen, *The Political and Social Theory of Max Weber*, p.34-5.

[86] See Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One*, p.227.

[87] It would here be interesting, if space permitted, to examine the Protestant nature of Weber's work. We may note in passing the Protestant nature both of Weber's methodology and politics. On the former, see Sheldon Wolin, 'Legitimation, Method, and the Politics of Theory'. Wolin argues: 'The exacting, even obsessive, demands which Weber imposed on the social scientist form a counterpart to the Calvinist's adherence to the letter of the Scripture and to the rules of piety prescribed by Puritan divines', p.297-8. Weber himself states, for example, that '[w]e deprive the word "vocation" of the only meaning which still retains ethical significance if we fail to carry out that specific kind of self-restraint which it requires', 'The Meaning of "Ethical Neutrality"', pp.5-6. On the Protestant nature of Weber's politics, Michael Waltzer, *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics.*

Chapter III

The Value of Enlightenment: *Science as a Vocation*

'Reason, that highest faculty of man, essential for his life, which gives him...the means of existence and enjoyment: this same faculty poisons his life' (Tolstoy).[1]

'Reason commands us much more imperiously than a master. If we disobey a master we are unhappy, but if we defy reason we are fools' (Pascal).[2]

The previous chapter outlined the basis of Max Weber's theory of the rationalisation and disenchantment of the world, focusing in particular on the rise of new instrumentally rational forms of worldly legitimation (for example, monocratic bureaucracy), and the differentiation of modern culture, manifested in the rise of autonomous and conflicting value-spheres. The historical outcome of this movement, I argued, is a crisis in the leading of modern life (*Lebensführung*), for with the onset of scientific rationalisation the scope of individual action is constricted by increasing specialisation and the rule of instrumental rationality (the 'Iron Cage'), whilst at the same time, with the disenchantment of primitive and then universal religion (the 'Death of God'), the individual is called upon to select and confer the validity of ultimate values. The individual is thus torn in opposite directions by the same process, for individuality and value-rationality are demanded at precisely the moment at which impersonality and instrumental rationality come to dominate. On this basis, the rationalisation of the world may be seen to be a tragic process, for whilst it promises mastery of the world this mastery is achieved through the reduction of value-rationality

to instrumental rationality, and individuality to calculable action. In the light of this process, the present chapter examines Weber's position on the value of science, or, more broadly, the value of enlightenment, through analysis of his most explicit statement on this subject, his 1917 lecture 'Science as a Vocation'.

3.1 The Fate of Science

Weber's analysis of 'the *inward* calling of science' in 'Science as a Vocation' opens with an examination of the nature of the vocation of science before moving to a more general reflection on the fate of science and the bearing of this fate on the leading of life (*Lebensführung*).[3] This examination first considers the impact of scientific specialisation on the vocation of scientific work. Weber here notes that modern science, like all areas of modern culture, has become a highly specialised field, and that not only has it 'entered a phase of specialisation previously unknown' but 'this will forever remain the case'.[4] This process of specialisation, he argues, has a profound effect on the nature of scientific activity, for not only does it isolate the scientist within his/her vocation, it necessarily renders all scientific work partial and incomplete, as a highly specialised science can offer only one viewpoint on a limited field of inquiry. In view of this, the modern scientist, for Weber, is to labour in the knowledge that his/her work may at best resolve problems within one particular field of science, for this work can assume a general significance only in as far it raises questions in other specialised fields. On this basis, Weber argues: 'One's own work must inevitably remain highly imperfect. Only by strict specialisation can the scientific worker become fully conscious, for once and perhaps never again in his lifetime, that he has achieved something that will endure. A really definitive and good accomplishment is today always a specialised accomplishment'.[5]

There is, however, a further sense in which scientific activity remains imperfect. The vocation of science strives for the accumulation and perfection of knowledge, and in this sense is tied to a model of *progress*. This means that the knowledge yielded by scientific inquiry is seen to be open to future refutation or refinement, and in view of this there is always the basis for further scientific work. But this very idea of progress, which will be further examined in chapter 6 through analysis of Lyotard's theory of

paralogy, also means that no accomplishment in science can in fact be known to be definitive or absolute. Weber illustrates this point by comparing the fate of science to that of art. He argues that a work of art which brings 'genuine fulfilment' can never be antiquated, for in spite of advances in technique such a work can never be *qualitatively* surpassed. Hence, as Löwith notes, 'Homer was not supplanted by Dante, nor Dante by Shakespeare'.[6] But scientific work, Weber argues, by its very nature, is different, for each accomplishment in the realm of science raises new questions and thus asks to be transcended. He states:

> In science, each of us knows that what he has accomplished will be antiquated in ten, twenty, fifty years. That is the fate to which science is subjected; it is the very *meaning* of scientific work, to which it is devoted in a quite specific sense, as compared with other spheres of culture for which in general the same holds. Every scientific "fulfilment" raises new "questions"; it *asks* to be "surpassed" and outdated. Whoever wishes to serve science has to resign himself to this fact. Scientific works certainly can last as "gratifications" because of their artistic quality, or they may remain important as a means of training. Yet they will be surpassed scientifically...for it is our common fate and, more, our common goal. We cannot work without hoping that others will advance further than we have. In principle, this progress goes on *ad infinitum*.[7]

This passage clearly raises a question regarding the value of the vocation of science, for if scientific work is imperfect, in as far as it is highly specialised and asks to be surpassed, then why, as Weber asks, 'engage in doing something that in reality never comes, and never can come, to an end?'.[8] Here lies the central problem of the scientific vocation, for why indeed should one want to commit one's life to the production of knowledge which will soon become redundant? This problem, for Weber, is not confined simply to the vocation of science, it is symptomatic of life in general within the rationalised world, for where do we, as individuals, stand before the infinite 'progress' of technical means and ideas? Weber's analysis of the vocation of science here raises questions far beyond those pertaining to the nature or vocation of science. His analysis questions the position of the vocation of science within 'the total life of humanity', and on this basis proceeds to question the bearing of the scientific rationalisation of culture on the life of the individual. The key concern here, for Weber, is the *meaning* of science, the meaning of an enterprise which gives no guidance as to the leading of life, and which furthermore subordinates questions of meaning or value

to quantitative concerns which, at least in theory, can be resolved through calculation. This concern raises a broader question regarding the meaning of life itself in the disenchanted world, a question Weber answers through reference to the work of Tolstoy.[9] Weber states:

> for civilised man death has no meaning. It is has none because the individual life of civilised man, placed into an infinite "progress", according to its own imminent meaning should never come to an end; for there is always a further step ahead of one who stands in the march of progress. And no man who comes to die stands upon the peak which lies in infinity...civilised man, placed in the midst of the continuous enrichment of culture by ideas, knowledge, and problems, may become "tired of life" but not "satiated with life". He catches only the most minute part of what the life of the spirit brings forth ever anew, and what he seizes is always something provisional and not definitive, and therefore death for him is a meaningless occurrence. And because death is meaningless, civilised life as such is meaningless; by its very "progressiveness" it gives death the imprint of meaninglessness. Throughout his late novels one meets with this thought as the keynote of the Tolstoyan art.[10]

This meaninglessness of modern life is, for Weber, the product of scientific disenchantment, for science not only rationalises the basis of legitimate authority (see chapter 2), thereby signalling the 'death of God', but cannot create values of its own, and diminishes the importance of life itself by placing the individual before an infinite realm of technical progress. In view of this belittling of the individual and his/her beliefs or values, Weber has little faith in the qualitative effects of scientific 'progress', and on this basis does not defend the pursuit of science for science's sake but instead questions the meaning of the vocation of science and asks: 'What is the value of science?'.[11]

3.2 The Historical Values of Science

Weber answers this question by comparing past to present values of science, noting that 'the contrast between the past and the present is tremendous'.[12] The first example Weber gives of this contrast is Plato's vision of science as the path to true being. Weber here recalls the simile of the cave in part seven of *The Republic*, in which men who are held in chains and deprived of light (reason) break free of their fetters, ascend into the sunlight (truth, enlightenment), and see the world for the first time as it

really is (reality).[13] Weber argues that Socrates's distinction of reality (true being) from appearance (abstraction) is of particular importance for it marks the first conscious discovery of 'one of the great tools of scientific knowledge': the *concept*. This tool of knowledge, for Weber, explains Plato's 'passionate enthusiasm' in *The Republic*, as it enabled one to pursue the true substance of life. Weber states: 'if one only found the right concept of the beautiful, the good, or, for instance, of bravery, of the soul...then one could also grasp its true being'.[14] This pursuit of true being, however, was also tied to the pursuit of ethical life: it opened the way for knowing the 'good' or the 'right' in life, and on this basis also indicated how to act as a citizen of the state. Science thus was of ethical and political value, and on the basis of this, Weber argues, one engaged in scientific activity. But, Weber asks, clearly overlooking the claims of Marx and Durkheim, 'who today views science in such a manner?'[15] He concludes that today conceptual abstractions are no longer seen as the means to true being or experience, and argues that in fact quite the reverse is now seen to be true, insofar as it is argued that 'the intellectual constructions of science constitute an unreal realm of artificial abstractions, which with their bony hands seek to grasp the blood-and-the-sap of true life without ever catching up with it'.[16] And as for science constituting the path to an ethical or a political good, contemporary arguments positing the connection of instrumental (scientific) rationality and political domination[17], or the separation of political democracy and scientific knowledge through the rule of a technocracy[18], indicate the this value is rarely held to be true today.

The second example of the historical value of science given by Weber dates to the Renaissance and in particular to the emergence of the rational experiment. The experiment, as a means of 'reliably controlling experience', existed both in India and in Hellenic antiquity, but, Weber notes, only became a principle of research during the Renaissance. This principle of experimentation came initially from the sphere of art, where pioneers such as Leonardo saw science as the path to true art, and who argued that art itself should be raised to the rank of a science.[19] From this sphere, Weber argues, the experiment entered science through Galileo, and theory through Bacon, and in the process science acquired a further value: it became the path to knowledge of true nature. Weber states of this third example of the historical value of science: 'To artistic experimenters of the type of Leonardo and the musical innovators, science

meant the path to *true* art, and that meant the path to true *nature*'.[20] Weber notes, however, that today precisely the reverse is again seen to be true: redemption from the intellect is held as the prerequisite for a return to true nature. And as for science being the path to true art, Weber claims that '[h]ere no criticism is even needed'.[21]

Weber's fourth example of the historical value of science is the belief prevalent amongst early modern scientists that their work marked the path to knowledge of the 'true' God. Karl Löwith notes, for example, that 'Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, and Newton were all equally convinced that God had ordained the world mathematically and that they could come to know Him by reading from what, by analogy with the Bible, they termed the "book" of nature'[22], a belief which, for Weber, is encapsulated in Swammerdam's proclamation: 'Here I bring you the proof of God's providence in the anatomy of a louse'.[23] Weber argues, however, that this belief in science as a path to God waned as philosophers and theologians began to place science and religion in fundamental opposition to each other, and argues that today only a few 'big children' still believe that science can teach us anything about the meaning of the world. Weber here argues that science disenchants the meaning of the world through the reduction of ultimate values to instrumental purpose, and that science by its very nature is an irreligious power for it destroys the basis of religious legitimation through the disenchantment of superstition and myth (see chapter 2). In view of this, Weber claims that the value of science has dramatically changed, for the pursuit of God now rests on the revocation of science.[24] He argues: 'Redemption from the rationalism and intellectualism of science is the fundamental presupposition of living in union with the divine'.[25]

Weber's final, and perhaps most interesting, example of the historical value of science is the Enlightenment prophecy that science presents the means to true happiness.[26] Weber does not, however, outline this position, or his critique of it, in any detail, rather he lets his comments regarding the fate of the individual before the rationalisation of the world stand (see above and chapter 2), and refers his audience to the work of Nietzsche. He states:

> After Nietzsche's devastating criticism of those "last men" who "invented happiness", I may leave aside altogether the naive optimism in which science - that is the technique of

> mastering life which rests upon science - has been celebrated as the way to happiness. Who believes in this? - aside from a few big children in university chairs or editorial offices.[27]

This passage refers to the fifth section of Zarathustra's prologue, in which Nietzsche is highly critical of the 'last men' who sacrifice their future for the sake of the present. This section of *Zarathustra*, which Weber also refers to at the conclusion of the *Protestant Ethic*[28], reads as follows:

> Alas! The time is coming when man will give birth to no more stars. Alas! The time of the most contemptible man is coming, the man who can no longer despise himself. Behold! I shall show you the *Last Man*...The earth has become small, and upon it hops the Last Man, who makes everything small..."We have discovered happiness", say the Last Men [letzten Menschen], and blink.[29]

Weber's interest in this complex passage lies, I believe, in four main points: first, Zarathustra's belief that the rise of modern science has made the world small, both in terms of its increasing ability to understand and control nature, and in terms of the outcome of this process, namely the rise of cultural nihilism and the progressive devaluation of ultimate values; second, the suggestion that this process is accompanied by the concurrent decline of charismatic authority ('man will give birth to no more stars'); third, Zarathustra's critique of the modern belief that the outcome of scientific 'progress' is happiness and not tragedy (Weber makes reference to precisely this point), and finally, his mocking both of the 'naive optimism' of this belief and of the unreflective and unquestioning nature of the modern individual (this is my reading of the blinking of the 'last men').

Weber gives little indication, however, of exactly why he sees Nietzsche's critique of the 'last men' to be so 'devastating', and passes over the idea, which is present in his own work, that science may be of value because it enables self-determination and thus enhances the possibility of human freedom.[30] Weber is here keen to 'resume his argument' - perhaps recognising that he himself, as a vocational scientist who affirms the value of modern science[31], is subject to this critique of the 'last men' - and returns to his initial question of the present value of science by asking what the meaning of the scientific vocation is now that the five 'former illusions' (science as the path to true being, art, nature, God, happiness) have been dispelled.[32] First, he notes that the scientific rationalisation of the world, whilst in principle making all objects and relations in life calculable, is not necessarily of practical value in itself,

for it does not engender a general understanding of the concrete conditions of life. Weber argues, for example:

> When we spend money today I bet that even if there are colleagues of political economy here in the hall, almost every one of them will hold a different answer in readiness to the question: How does it happen that one can buy something for money - sometimes more and sometimes less? The savage knows what he does in order to get his daily food and which institutions serve him in this pursuit. The increasing intellectualisation and rationalisation do *not*, therefore, indicate an increased and general knowledge of the conditions under which one lives.[33]

This passage appears to draw from the second epilogue to *War and Peace*, in which Tolstoy gives the following example of the completeness of the mythical existence of the peasant, as opposed to the partial, specialised knowledge of the modern individual. Tolstoy states: 'A locomotive is moving. Some one asks: What moves it? A peasant says the devil moves it. Another man says the locomotive moves because its wheels go round. A third asserts the cause of the movement lies in the smoke which the wind carries away. The peasant is irrefutable. He has devised a complete explanation'.[34] Weber adds, however, a further reason to question the meaningfulness of the vocation of science: whilst science disenchants the world through the calculation of all forces, it does not and cannot reflect on the leading of life itself. The key point here, for Weber, is that science can teach us nothing about the meaning of the world, and in fact destroys meaning through the disenchantment of beliefs and values.[35] Science, now that its former illusions or values have been dispelled, thus appears to be a pursuit that is itself without meaning. Weber reflects:

> Tolstoi has given the simplest answer, with the words: "Science is meaningless because it gives no answer to our question, the only question important for us: "What shall we do and how shall we live?"" That science does not give an answer to this is indisputable. The only question that remains is the sense in which science gives "no" answer, and whether or not science might yet be of use to the one who puts the question correctly.[36]

3.3 The Presuppositions of Science

Weber proceeds to answer these two questions through an examination of the presuppositions of science. There are, he argues, two main presuppositions concealed within scientific activity itself: first, that its rules of logic and method are valid, and

second, that what is yielded by this activity is 'worth being known'. These two presuppositions are bound together and both lend science its legitimacy, but Weber, again following Tolstoy, professes to be more interested in the latter of these assumptions: in the *value* of scientific activity.[37] The question here of particular interest is the way in which science fails or is unable to question the meaning of its own enterprise, and, following this, the way in which science presents itself as an activity that is valuable in its own right.[38] This presupposition of value is, for Weber, a fundamental point of concern, for it lends scientific activity its legitimacy and at the same time removes questions regarding the bearing of scientific rationalisation on life itself. Weber expresses this problem as follows: 'Natural science gives us an answer to the question of what we must do if we wish to master life technically. It leaves quite aside, *or assumes for its own purposes*, whether we should and do wish to master life technically and whether it ultimately makes sense to do so'.[39] Further to this, however, Weber argues that science not only conceals its assumption of self-value, but that as an activity which both proceeds for its own sake and destroys meaning by placing life within an infinite progress of ideas, it effectively removes the grounds upon which the validity of its enterprise may be questioned.

Weber illustrates this problem by giving a number of examples of rational value-spheres which presuppose their own value whilst also concealing the value of their presuppositions. The first of these examples is the sphere of aesthetics, which, he argues, presupposes that works of art actually exist and on this basis enquires into the conditions of art itself.[40] Weber claims that Lukács, amongst others, follows this Kantian practice. He states: 'The modern aestheticians (actually or expressly, as for instance, G. v. Lukács) proceed from the presupposition that "works of art exist', and then ask: 'How is their existence meaningful and possible?'[41] This practice of taking the existence of art as given, however, means that the question of whether there *should* be works of art is never asked, and, following this, it is simply presupposed that aesthetics itself is a legitimate subject of enquiry.

> Weber makes a similar criticism of jurisprudence. He argues that this discipline establishes what is valid according to the rules of juristic thought, which is partly bound by logically compelling and partly by conventionally given schemata. Juridical thought holds when certain legal rules and certain methods of interpretations are recognised as binding.

> Whether there should be law and whether one should establish just these rules - such questions jurisprudence does not answer. It can only state: If one wishes this result, according to the norms of our legal thought, this legal rule is the appropriate means of attaining it.[42]

Jurisprudence, like aesthetics, is thus a discipline which proceeds on the basis of two concealed preconditions: that its object of analysis (law, art) is valid and, following this, that the analysis itself (the discipline of jurisprudence, aesthetics) is of value. These spheres accept *a priori* that their respective objects of study exist, that they are natural and hence unquestionable. The rightness of an object and the value of its analysis, Weber argues, are consequently questions which cannot be raised from within the discipline, for these questions are repressed from the outset by the presuppositions of the discipline itself.[43] The legitimacy of a rational discipline, such as jurisprudence, is thus derived and perpetuated through the removal of the possibility of self-reflection, ontological critique, and the question of ought: aesthetics does not question whether there *should* be works of art, just as jurisprudence does not question whether there *should* be law. This problem is then compounded by the fact that such disciplines claim to be ethical on the basis of this formal separation of facts from values. Jurisprudence, for example, claims not to judge the rightness of law itself, but employs a model of instrumental rationality to proceed through legal means in order to realise a particular ends. This conceals the fact, however, that this negation of values, which grounds every rational science, is founded upon an affirmation of an initial value (a presupposition), in this case the valid existence of law, and it on this basis that the discipline derives its own legitimacy. Weber firmly reminds us of this fact: 'No science is absolutely free from presuppositions, and no science can prove its fundamental value to the man who rejects these presuppositions'.[44]

The historical and cultural sciences, Weber argues, offer further proof of this fact. These disciplines seek to reach an understanding of political, artistic, literary, and social phenomena, but, following the example of the natural sciences, do not question whether these phenomena have been, or are presently, of *value*. This question of value is excluded from enquiry through the initial presupposition that these historical and cultural phenomena are of interest and are thus worth knowing. But, as Weber notes, these sciences 'cannot prove "scientifically" that this is the case; and that they presuppose this interest by no means proves that it goes without saying. In fact it is not

at all self-evident'.[45] This concealed presupposition of interest, however, is crucial, for it constitutes a double act of legitimation: it affirms the value of the phenomena under study and confers the legitimacy of the study itself.

Weber next considers the disciplines closest to him: 'sociology, history, economics, and political science, and those types of cultural philosophy that make it their task to interpret these sciences'.[46] His analysis of these disciplines is, however, quite different to his consideration of aesthetics, jurisprudence and historical and cultural science, for Weber here does not seek to expose the presuppositions concealed within sociology, history or political science, but instead argues that these disciplines should be value-free, or, in other words, free from presuppositions. He hence does not ask whether these disciplines are of value in themselves, rather, he reflects on the form and limits of their enquiry.

The first conclusion Weber draws here is that there is a practical or, more specifically, an ethical reason for these disciplines (sociology, history, economics, political science) proceeding without presuppositions. This is that these disciplines, as academic pursuits which claim to establish and clarify objective facts, should not be biased at any point either by concealed or declared value-judgements. These disciplines, Weber argues, are to proceed on the basis logical or formal analysis and not through axiological evaluation. This position reflects a staunch commitment to academic probity. Weber states, for example:

> One can only demand of a teacher that he have the intellectual integrity to see that it is one thing to state facts, to determine mathematical or logical relations or the internal structure of cultural values, while it is another thing to answer questions of the *value* of culture and its individual contents and the question of how one should act in the cultural community and in political associations.[47]

This neo-Kantian separation of facts and values, 'is' and 'ought', means that science is not to be used to answer questions of value, and demands of the teacher not to imprint his/her personal views on academic work.[48] Science, for Weber, may be used clarify and understand values *as empirical facts* but is not to be used to confer the validity of values themselves. It is only through this rigid separation of 'is' from 'ought', Weber argues, that an objective understanding of historical or cultural phenomena may be achieved. Indeed, he states: 'I am ready to prove from the works of our historians that

whenever the man of science introduces his personal value judgement, a full understanding of the facts *ceases*'.[49]

There is, however, a further argument for the pursuit of a value-free (presuppositionless) science: science should not be used to arbitrate between values precisely because it cannot do so.[50] It would be impossible, for example, for science to evaluate the values held by a Catholic or a Freemason.[51] Weber argues that science could at best merely elucidate the form and logic of these beliefs. The point here is that questions of value cannot be answered through scientific means for there exists no objective criteria upon which values may be ranked or judged, and on the basis of this, Weber, unlike Durkheim, argues that it is not the task of science to evaluate values or produce binding norms.[52] This inability of science to answer questions of value is, however, a tragic irony, for it is precisely the scientific disenchantment of the world which inaugurated the irreconcilable conflict between modern value-spheres (see chapter 2). Science is thus unable to resolve the crisis it has initiated, for not only is it unable to answer questions of ultimate value, but the value-spheres to which these values belong are themselves formally irreconcilable. Indeed, Weber states: '"Scientific" pleading is meaningless in principle because the various value spheres of the world stand in irreconcilable conflict with each other'.[53] The validity or legitimacy of values thus can only be conferred by the individual, and involves a subjective judgement of faith rather than the detached use of scientific reason.[54] The tragedy of this position, however, as discussed in the previous chapter, is that the curtailment of value-rationality by the instrumental rationality of science restricts the very scope of the individual to make such a judgement.

3.4 Weber on the Value of Enlightenment

The inability of science to answer questions of ultimate value, in particular those relating to the leading of life (*Lebensführung*), returns us to the central question of *Science as a Vocation*: what is the value of science, or, more broadly, what is the value of scientific enlightenment? This question is, however, difficult for Weber to answer, for it demands a subjective evaluation of culture, and such evaluation would contravene his commitment to a principle of value-freedom (*Wertfreiheit*) in academic

work. Weber is thus cautious in his approach to the value of science as a vocation. He states: 'Whether...science is a worthwhile "vocation" for somebody, and whether science itself has an objectively valuable "vocation" are...valuable judgements about which nothing can be said in the lecture-room'.[55] In spite of this formal declaration, however, Weber, in practice, does draw a number of conclusions regarding the value of science within modern society, and it is to these that we now turn.

It is first important to note that Weber's position on the value of the vocation of science rests on the belief that there can be no redemption from the scientific disenchantment of the world.[56] Weber argues that the intellect, once realised, is irrevocable, and, following this, that there is no possibility of a return to the naive state of the pre-modern world (see also chapter 8). In view of this, Weber argues that 'the *fate* of our times is characterised by rationalisation and intellectualisation and, above all, by the "disenchantment of the world"'.[57] This belief in the permanence of modern rationalism, which stands in opposition to Baudrillard's argument for re-enchantment (see chapter 8), leads Weber to draw two conclusions regarding the value of the scientific vocation. First, that the value of science is limited: science stands in direct opposition to the magical world, and cannot and should not be employed to legitimate new religious prophecies. Weber states:

> If we attempt to force and to "invent" a monumental style in art, such miserable monstrosities are produced as the many monuments of the last twenty years. If one tries intellectually to construe new religions without a new and genuine prophecy, then, in an inner sense, something similar will result, but with still worse effects. And academic prophecy, finally, will create only fanatical sects but never a genuine community.[58]

Science is of value within the sphere of the technical and the scientific but can neither create new values nor answer questions of ultimate value. It is the duty of the vocational scientist not only to recognise this but to avoid at all costs presenting academic prophecies in the guise of value-free science. Weber here calls upon the intellectual integrity of the scientist, arguing that scientific practice must itself be imbued with a sense of ethical responsibility.

Second, Weber argues that science, within its true limits, is of practical value. He notes that there are in fact three senses in which science positively contributes to practical and personal life. First, science to some extent enables the control of life

through the calculation of external objects and man's activities. Second, science offers rational methods of thinking and 'the tools and the training for thought', and third, science enables us to gain clarity about the world in which we live. It is this latter contribution which Weber holds to be the most important objective of science. He argues that it is the task of the vocational scientist to provide clarity about the empirical world, thereby enabling informed value-choices and reasoned social action.[59] Lassman and Velody rightly note that there is a moral dimension to Weber's position here, for the purpose of science is 'to create clarity and a sense of responsibility in which the individual cannot be relieved from the burden of decision'.[60] In addition, science, as Lyotard's theory of paralogy suggests (see chapter 6), is to be used to raise points of difficulty within the current realm of knowledge, and, further to this, to present the individual with 'inconvenient facts' and the necessity of making value-choices. Weber argues that science is here not to exist merely as an end in itself, rather it is to be employed to delineate the scope of facts and values in order to help meet the demands of this world. This calls upon the scientist to actively mediate his/her fate by refusing the desire to tarry for new prophets (which may in fact not exist) in favour of a practical ethic of vocational work. Weber states: 'we want to draw the lesson that nothing is gained by yearning and tarrying alone, and we shall act differently. We shall set to work and "meet the demands of the day", in human relations as well as in our vocation'.[61]

Weber thus, unlike Baudrillard (see chapter 8), neither seeks to abandon the use of reason nor argues that reason itself can be abandoned. Rather, he argues that scientific knowledge is an irrevocable fact of modern life, and as such should be used to clarify the existence of facts and values in the world, and to aid the selection of the means through which values may be pursued. In this sense, scientific reason represents a path to individual freedom, and Weber here works broadly within the spirit of the Enlightenment project. This said, however, this path to individual freedom is, for Weber, always limited, as science itself restricts the scope of individuality through the specialisation of work and the subordination of ultimate values to the calculative rule of means-ends rationality (see chapter 2). Weber argues that scientific (instrumental) rationality is thus not simply the means to individual freedom, for in many respects it is the path to the opposite: the curtailment of individuality through the impersonal rule of

bureaucracy.[62] One may note that this scepticism towards the rule of scientific reason bears a Nietzschean imprint.[63] Nietzsche states, for example, in his third *Untimely Meditation*:

> Science is related to wisdom as virtuousness is related to holiness: it is cold and dry, it has not love and knows nothing of self-dissatisfaction and longing. It is as useful to itself as it is harmful to its servants, insofar as it transfers its own character to them and thereby ossifies their humanity.[64]

This critique of the sterility of modern culture and the passionlessness of the modern individual is clearly embodied in Weber's critique of rationalisation. In the conclusion to the *Protestant Ethic*, for example, Weber argues: 'for of the "last men" of this cultural development, it might well be truly said: "Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilisation never before achieved"'.[65] The key point here is that technical 'progress' through the use of scientific reason is quite different to human progress or the qualitative advancement of life. For both Weber and Nietzsche, scientific rationalisation ('progress') in fact drains culture of its vitality, and reduces the modern individual to a passionless subject. Nietzsche proclaims, for example:

> Mankind does *not* represent a development of the better or the stronger or the higher in the way that is believed today. "Progress" is merely a modern idea, that is to say a false idea. The European of today is of far less value than the European of the Renaissance; onward development is not by *any* means, by any necessity the same thing as elevation, advance, strengthening.[66]

Weber embraces this critique of progress[67], but does not seek to flee the fate of modernity. For Weber, there can be no escape from the disenchantment of the world: there can be no return to the infancy of thought and no foreseeable advancement to a Utopian state. The key problem for Weber is the work to be done in the present, and the bearing of this work on the future. Weber's critique of modernity is thus pragmatic and not simply philosophical in nature, involving the identification of the limits of science and with this the delineation of the grounds for vocational work.

3.5 Conclusion

Weber argues that scientific reason may be used to clarify and inform choices between opposing values. At the same time, however, he notes that the ideal of

freedom through the use of instrumental rationality can in fact turn into its opposite, into a form of impersonal domination which, as discussed in chapter 2, curtails individuality through the reduction of the individual from an end to a means (a problem which has been addressed subsequently by Frankfurt School critical theory). Weber thus remains largely ambivalent in relation to the question of maturity or enlightenment. On one hand, he recognises the inescapable need for the further accumulation of knowledge in the modern world, and the need for the individual make responsible and thus reasoned value choices. On the other, he remains sceptical of the bearing of scientific reason on the nature of individuality itself. This scepticism towards the Enlightenment ideal of progress through science, and Weber's distinction between qualitative or human progress and the formal progress of scientific or technical advancement, clearly draws on the work of Nietzsche. This said, however, Weber, unlike Nietzsche, is engaged in a practical critique of this world. Weber's works are not philosophical writings dedicated to 'everyone and no one', they are studies written for the modern individual and grounded in the everyday world.[68] Weber thus does not attempt to flee the modern condition or revoke the irrevocable, rather he works within but against modernity, and it is on this basis that he affirms the value of science as a vocation. The value of this vocation, for Weber, lies not in its ability to free us from the world in which we live, but in its ability to clarify the nature of this world, and to thereby delineate the scope for value-choices and future action. Weber here works within the constraints of modernity but against the totalising tendency of modern science, for he argues that the vocation of science, whilst seeking to establish the realm of the possible, must be subordinated to an ethic of responsibility and confined within strict limits: it should not seek to confer the legitimacy of values, arbitrate within value conflicts, or create new values or norms. Weber is thus engaged in a practical project which seeks to establish the limits and uses of scientific reason, a project which seeks to protect values and beliefs from the encroachment of instrumental rationality, and which thereby offers a possible form of resistance to the further rationalisation and disenchantment of the world.

Notes

[1] Leo Tolstoy, 'On Life', *On Life and Essays on Religion*, p.37.

[2] Blaise Pascal, *The Pensées*, (section 266), p.101.

[3] Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', p.134. Weber opens this work with an analysis of the external conditions of the academic vocation. This analysis, which is not here of specific interest, is discussed in detail by Peter Lassman and Irving Velody, see 'Max Weber on Science, Disenchantment and the Search for Meaning', pp.179-184.

[4] Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', p.134.

[5] *Ibid.*, p.135.

[6] Karl Löwith, 'Max Weber's Position on Science', p.138.

[7] Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', p.138, *emphasis original.*

[8] *Ibid.*.

[9] The influence of Tolstoy on Weber should not to be underestimated. Paul Honigsheim, recalling the meetings of Weber's Heidelberg circle, notes: 'I don't remember a single Sunday conversation in which the name of Dostoyevsky did not occur. Perhaps even more pressing, even inflaming, was the necessity of coming to grips with Tolstoy', *On Max Weber*, p.81.

[10] 'Science as a Vocation', pp.139-40. See also the similar passage in Weber's essay 'Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions' (the *Zwischenbetrachtung*), pp.356-7. The different fates of the peasant and the modern individual are analysed in chapter 8.2.

[11] Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', p.140.

[12] *Ibid.*

[13] See Plato, *The Republic*, pp.316-325.

[14] 'Science as a Vocation', p.141.

[15] *Ibid*, p.140. For a critique of Weber's reading of Plato see Heinrich Rickert, 'Max Weber's View of Science'. Rickert argues: 'A matter of great concern is Weber's emphasis on the "enormous" contrast between the past and the present in the field of science. Are we really separated by so much form the people who created European science as Weber maintains? He oversimplifies Plato's metaphor of the cave which he cites to justify the opposition, and as a consequence he creates too much of an opposition, in a number of respects, between Plato's thoughts on the nature of science and the view we must hold today'. p.83.

[16] Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', p.140-1.

[17] This argument has been developed most extensively by Frankfurt School critical theorists. See, for example, Theodor Adorno and Horkheimer's *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*. One may note in passing that this line of argument is also advanced by Zygmunt Bauman in *Modernity and the Holocaust*, see chapter 1.

[18] One may here note that there has been a renewed call to end this separation through the subordination of expert knowledge to political democracy. See, for example, John O'Neill's *The Poverty of Postmodernism*.

[19] See, for example, Leonardo da Vinci's 'General Principles', *Leonardo on Painting*, pp.11-46.

[20] Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', p.142.

[21] *Ibid.*.

[22] Karl Löwith, 'Max Weber's Position on Science', p.142.

[23] Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', p.142.

[24] One may note, however, that science is still often called upon to legitimate religious doctrines. This process may proceed through verification of the historical facts of a prophecy, or, conversely, the inability of science to prove God's word to be false may be used to lend religious doctrines credibility. See, for example, A.T. Pierson, *Many Infallible Proofs*, chapters 5 and 6.

[25] Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', p.142.

[26] This notion of happiness through science is also present in the more general idea that humankind benefits through the use of scientific reason. See, for example, Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*: 'The Light of humane minds is Perspicuous Words, but by exact definitions first snuffed, and purged from ambiguity; *Reason* is the *pace*; Encrease of *Science*, the way; and the Benefit of man-kind the *end*', p.116. One may here note that Weber's five examples of the historical value of science overlap to some degree. The philosophy of Francis Bacon, for example, posits science as the path to true nature and is also at the root of the Enlightenment belief in science as the path to true happiness.

[27] Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', p.143. For a clear and accessible introduction to the prologue of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* see K. Higgins, *Nietzsche's Zarathustra*, pp.78-91.

[28] This connection between *The Protestant Ethic* and *Science as a Vocation* is noted by Thomas Kemple, 'Toward a Rational Analytics of Power', p.4. Weber refers to Nietzsche's 'last men' in the following passage of *The Protestant Ethic*: 'Dann allerdings könnte für die "letzen Menschen" dieser Kulturentwicklung das Wort zur Warheit werden: "Fachmenschen ohne Geist, Genußmenschen ohne Herz, dies Nichts bildet sich ein, eine nie vorher erreichte Stufe des Menschentums erstiegen zu haben', *Die protestantische Ethik und der "Geist" des Kapitalismus*, p.154. This reference to Nietzsche is obscured in the English translation of this work as Talcott Parsons translates 'letzen Menschen' as 'last stage' rather than as 'last men', *The Protestant Ethic*, p.182. This point of mistranslation is discussed by Stephen Kent in his paper 'Weber, Goethe, and the Nietzschean Allusion'.

[29] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p.46. I have here changed R.J. Hollingdale's translation of 'letzten Menschen' from 'ultimate men' to 'last men'. This passage reads as follows: 'Wehe! Es kommt die Zeit, wo der Mensch keinen Stern mehr gebären wird. Wehe! Es kommt die Zeit des verächtlichsten Menschen, der sich selber nicht mehr verachten kann. Seht! Ich zeige euch den letzten Menschen...Die Erde ist dann klein geworden, und auf ihr hüpft der letzte Mensche, der

Alles klein macht..."Wir haben das Glück erfunden" - sagen die letzten Menschen und blinzeln', *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, p.15.

[30] There has recently been much discussion of the reason for the brevity of Weber's reference to Nietzsche on the question of the Enlightenment. Thomas Kemple, for example, suggests that Weber's 'silence' on this question may be understood, in part, as a recommendation to read Nietzsche here, see 'Toward a Rational Analytics of Power', p.4. Further to this, however, Kemple, following the lead of Frederic Jameson, draws a comparison between the similar narrative strategies between *Science as a Vocation* and *Zarathustra*, arguing that Weber, following Nietzsche, seeks 'not to preach directly to the passions and prejudices of his listeners but to argue allusively by way of citation, comparison, and analogy', p.5. Another explanation for Weber silence on this point may be found in the recent work of Wolfgang Schluchter, who argues that the content of *Science as a Vocation* may be explained by the specific context of this lecture, and by the specific nature of the audience addressed. Schluchter argues that this lecture is to be located within the broad context of Weber's return to university teaching and within the narrower context of his relationship to the youth and student movements of the time. This latter context is, I believe, the more important, as *Science as a Vocation* was a lecture in a series planned by the Munich Free Students in response to Franz Schwab's essay 'Vocation and Youth'. Weber's lecture may thus be seen as a targeted against a particular idea, namely Schwab's critique of 'vocation', and to a particular audience, namely a German Youth who Weber saw as craving both 'experience' and leadership. This context of *Science as a Vocation* may in part explain Weber's silence on the value of the Enlightenment and his refusal to discuss Nietzsche's position at any length, for as Schluchter argues, Weber was keen to convey a particular message to the Free Students: that of 'an insistence on an ascetic basis of action', *Paradoxes of Modernity*, p.36. In view of this, *Science as a Vocation* clearly was not the place for Weber to discuss Nietzsche's critique of the Enlightenment in any detail. For a more detailed discussion of Wolfgang Schluchter's *Paradoxes of Modernity* see the appendix to this thesis.

[31] Weber states: 'Whether...science is a worth while "vocation" for somebody, and whether science itself has an objectively valuable "vocation" are..value-judgements about which nothing can be said in the lecture room. To affirm the value of science is a presupposition for teaching there. I personally by my work answer in the affirmative', 'Science as a Vocation', p.152.

[32] One may note in passing that these five 'illusions' closely resemble Nietzsche's 'Three Errors of Science', *The Gay Science*, (section 37), pp.105-6.

[33] Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', p.139.

[34] Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, p.972.

[35] Weber argues, for example: 'If these natural sciences lead to anything in this way, they are apt to make the belief that there is such a thing as the "meaning" of the universe die out at its very roots', 'Science as a Vocation', p.142.

[36] *Ibid.*, p.143. Weber here appears to be alluding to Tolstoy's 1898 preface to the Russian translation of Edward Carpenter's essay *Modern Science: A Criticism*, in which he states: 'A plain reasonable working man...expects science to tell him how he ought to live: how to treat his family, his neighbours and the men of other tribes, how to restrain his passions, what to believe in and what not to believe in, and much else. But what does our science say to him on these matters?', *Recollections and Essays*, p.178-9. Weber may also be alluding to Tolstoy's 1902 essay 'What is Religion?', in which it is argued, for example, that the 'avoidance and perversion of essential questions is most strikingly seen in what is now called Philosophy. There would seem to be one essential question for philosophy to answer: "What must I do?" And in the philosophy of the Christian nations answers to this question - though combined with very much that is unnecessary and confused, as in the case of Spinoza, Kant (in his *Critique of Practical Reason*), Schopenhauer, and particularly Rousseau - have at any rate been given. But latterly, since Hegel (who taught that whatever exists is reasonable) the question: "What must we do?" has been pushed into the background and philosophy directs its whole attention into the investigation of things as they are and to making them fit into a prearranged theory', 'What is Religion?', *On Life and Essays on Religion*, p.261.

[37] See Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', p.143.

[38] On this point see also Weber's *Roscher and Knies*, p.116.

[39] Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', p.144, *emphasis mine*. This idea that science avoids the fundamental question of its own meaning or value for life is again found in the writings of Tolstoy. For Tolstoy, this evasion of the question of value appears to be linked to the progressive specialisation of science: 'In every domain of what is now called science one and the same feature is encountered baffling the mental efforts men direct to the investigation of various domains of knowledge. This feature is that all these scientific investigations evade the essential question calling for an answer, and examine side-issues the investigation of which brings one to no definite result but becomes more intricate the farther one advances'. Leo Tolstoy, 'What is Religion?', *On Life and Essays on Religion*, p.257.

[40] Weber analyses the aesthetic sphere in 'Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions', *From Max Weber*, pp.340-343. See chapter 6 of this thesis for an analysis of this work.

[41] Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', p.154. Weber is here referring to Lukács's early writings on aesthetics, see, for example, 'Heidelberger Philosophie der Kunst (1912-1914)', p.9. The relation of Weber and Lukács is complex and cannot be addressed here in any detail. For further discussion of this relation see A. Mitzman, *The Iron Cage*, chapter 9; A. Arato and P. Breines, *The Young Lukács and the Origins of Western Marxism*, and E. Karádi, 'Ernst Bloch and Georg Lukács in Max Weber's Heidelberg'.

[42] Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', p.144-5.

[43] Weber demonstrates this argument through reference to Kant, who, he claims, 'took for his point of departure the presupposition: "Scientific truth exists and it is valid", and then asked: "Under which

presuppositions of thought is truth possible and meaningful?", 'Science as a Vocation', p.154. See, for example, Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, pp.73-75.

[44] Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', p.153.

[45] *Ibid.*, p.145.

[46] *Ibid.*

[47] *Ibid.*, p.146.

[48] See *ibid.*, p.145.

[49] *Ibid.*, p.146, *emphasis original.*

[50] Heinrich Rickert rightly notes that 'Weber was convinced that there was no way theoretical research could deal with the question of the validity of values', 'Max Weber's View of Science', p.79. On this complex question of the validity of values see Gillian Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, chapter 1, and Guy Oakes, *Weber and Rickert Concept Formation in the Cultural Sciences*, chapters 1 and 3.

[51] Weber gives a further illustration of this point: 'I do not know how one might wish to decide "scientifically" the value of French and German culture; for here...different gods struggle with one another, now and for all times to come', 'Science as a Vocation', p.148. One may note in passing that Leo Strauss, who attacks Weber for removing questions of ought or value from the realm of science (reason), fails to address these examples of the incommensurabilty of values. See, for example, *Natural Right and History*, pp.35-80.

[52] See Weber, '"Objectivity" in Social Science and Social Policy', p.52.

[53] Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', p.147. Weber also addresses this point in his essay 'The Meaning of "Ethical Neutrality" in Sociology and Economics', *Methodology of the Social Sciences*, pp.1-47.

[54] See Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', p.151.

[55] *Ibid.*, p.152.

[56] One may note, for example, that Weber stands against all forms of intellectual Romanticism, a point illustrated by the critical distance he kept from the Stefan George circle, and by his own commitment to a *this-worldly* vocation. On Weber and the George circle see Wolf Lepenies, *Between Science and Literature*, pp.279-96.

[57] *Ibid.*, p.155, *emphasis mine.*

[58] *Ibid.*

[59] I would argue that in view of this Siegfried Landshut is wrong to claim that '[t]he lecture [*Science as a Vocation*] ends, having said nothing concrete about the task of science itself', 'Max Weber's Significance for Intellectual History', p.100.

[60] Lassman and Velody, 'Max Weber on Science, Disenchantment and the Search for Meaning', p.204.

[61] Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', p.156.

[62] One may note that this critique of instrumental rationality is clearly overlooked by Herbert Marcuse, who accuses Weber of defending the rationality of capitalism. See *Negations*, chapter 5.

[63] The important influence of Nietzsche on Weber has recently received much attention. See, for example: Robert Eden, *Political Leadership and Nihilism*, Wilhelm Hennis, *Essays in Reconstruction*, pp.146-161; L. Scaff, *Fleeing the Iron Cage*, pp.127-133; G. Stauth and B. Turner, *Nietzsche's Dance*, chapter 3; Mark Warren 'Nietzsche and Weber: When Does Reason Become Power?'; Martin Albrow, *Max Weber's Construction of Social Theory*, and David Owen, *Maturity and Modernity*.

[64] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, p.169.

[65] Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, p.182. I have here changed Parsons's translation of 'letzen Menschen' from 'last stage' to 'last men', see above footnote 28. Compare this passage, for example, to Nietzsche's critique of modern man: 'There are days when I am haunted by a feeling blacker than the blackest melancholy - *contempt of man*. And so as to leave no doubt as to *what* I despise, *whom* I despise: it is the man of today, the man with whom I am fatefully contemporary', *The Anti-Christ*, p.161.

[66] Friedrich Nietzsche, *ibid.*, p.128.

[67] See, for example, the conclusion to Weber's Inaugural Lecture, 'The National State and Economic Policy', p.208.

[68] I here disagree with George Stauth and Bryan Turner, who argue that 'Weber's definition of rational action precludes an analysis of the everyday world', *Nietzsche's Dance*, p.108. Weber's ideal-types of rational action are in fact designed to enable analysis of the everyday world. Weber's clear interest in the 'everyday' is reflected, for example, in his analysis of bureaucratic and patriarchal domination. He states: 'Bureaucracy, like the patriarchal system which is opposed to it in so many ways, is a structure of the "everyday", in the sense that stability is among its most important characteristics. Patriarchal power, above all, is rooted in the supply of the normal, constantly recurring, needs of everyday life and thus has its basis in the economy - indeed, in just those sections of the economy concerned with the supply of normal everyday requirements', 'The Nature of Charismatic Domination', *Weber: Selections in Translation*, p.226. For an alternative translation of this passage see *Economy and Society Volume Two*, p.1111.

Chapter IV

The Ethical Irrationality of the World: *Politics as a Vocation*

> 'In all commanding there appeared to me to be an experiment and a risk: and the living creature always risks himself when he commands' (Nietzsche).[1]

Max Weber's vision of the disenchantment of the world is a powerful reminder of the tragic disjunction of scientific 'progress' and political freedom. This vision, outlined in chapter 2, reminds us that the rationalisation of the world is not accompanied by a movement towards human happiness, 'progress', and freedom, but may in fact preclude the realisation of these ideals. The previous chapter analysed one possible route of resistance to this process, namely the pursuit of science as a vocation, which, for Weber, lends itself not only to the making of informed and thus responsible value-judgements, but also to the protection of the realm of ultimate values through the identification of the limits of scientific rationalism. The present chapter analyses a further possible means of resistance to the rationalisation of the world, that of the vocation of politics. This analysis focuses on the possibility of resisting the modern denigration of ultimate values through engagement in value-orientated but responsible political work. This analysis proceeds as follows. First, Weber's ideal-typical ethics of responsibility (*Verantwortungsethik*) and conviction (*Gesinnungsethik*), which have been the subject of much contemporary debate, are examined in detail, and are analysed in connection to the ideal-types of rational action outlined in *Economy and Society*. Second, it is argued that Weber's theory of the political vocation calls for a practical reconciliation of these two opposing ethics. Third, following a reading of Weber's ethics against those of Aristotle and Kant, it is argued that this reconciliation may proceed through the responsible pursuit of ultimate values. It is argued in the

conclusion to the chapter that Weber's analysis of the vocation of politics here offers a model for passionate yet rational human action, action which works within but also against the fabric of the rationalised world.[2]

4.1 The Ideal-Types of Political Action

Political leadership, for Weber, entails an active rather then passive mediation of fate. The political leader, like the vocational scientist, must neither live in passive acceptance or bitterness of disenchantment nor flee from reality, but instead measure up 'to the world as it is in its daily routine'.[3] This demand above all requires the political leader to face the ethical irrationality of the world and take responsibility for its bearing on political action. This ethical irrationality is manifested, in the sphere of politics, in the fact that all political action is ultimately sanctioned by the exercise of force, a fact that places the struggle for political success in fundamental opposition to the pursuit of an ethical good, for it precludes the possibility of an purely ethical correspondence of political means and ends. Weber states:

> No ethics in the world can dodge the fact that in numerous instances the attainment of "good" ends is bound to the fact that one must be willing to pay the price of using morally dubious means or at least dangerous ones - and facing the possibility or even the probability of evil ramifications. From no ethics in the world can it be concluded when and to what extent the ethically good purpose "justifies" the ethically dangerous means and ramifications'.[4]

Politics is thus, by definition, neither an ethical nor an exact science: it involves dangerous means and demands both calculation *and* risk. It is an unpredictable enterprise that operates within a sphere of human conduct, and thus retains an element of irrationality. This is demonstrated by the fact that political means, ends and consequences more than often do not either correspond as intended or ethically justify one another (a point which is addressed further through analysis of Foucault's work in chapter 7). It is the task of the political leader to face up to this fact, and to strive both for the successful pursuit of ultimate values and for an ethical correspondence of political means and ends, purposes and consequences. This form of realistic but ambitious political leadership, which calls for a combination of value-rational and

instrumentally rational action, can only be achieved, for Weber, through the reconciliation of two opposing political ethics: an ethic of responsibility (*Verantwortungsethik*) and an ethic of conviction (*Gesinnungsethik*).[5]

These two political ethics are themselves ideal-types of political action that correspond to the ideal-types of rational action outlined by Weber in chapter one of *Economy and Society*. Karl Löwith, following the initiative of Eric Voegelin[6], expresses this connection as follows:

> 'Weber contrasts the ethic of responsibility with the "ethic of conviction", which he regards as an ethic of "irrational conduct" because of its indifference to "consequences"; in comparison to purposive-rational action, the ethic of conviction has a "value-rational" orientation. The ethic of responsibility, by contrast, takes account of the prospects and consequences of action on the basis of available means. It is a relative, not an absolute, ethic because it is related to the knowledge, attained through this weighing of means, of the prospects and consequences of pursuing one's aims. If one opts for the ethic of responsibility one also decides in favour of rationality as means - ends rationality'.[7]

There is, as Löwith suggests, a strong link between instrumentally rational social action and the *Verantwortungsethik*, and value-rational social action and *Gesinnungsethik*. Conduct comprising the ideal-type of the *Verantwortungsethik* is, for example, instrumental action of the following type:

> Action is instrumentally rational (*zweckrational*) when the end, the means, and the secondary results are all rationally taken into account and weighed. This involves rational consideration of alternative means to the end, of relations of the end to secondary consequences, and finally of the relative importance of different possible ends. Determination of action either in affectual or in traditional terms is thus incompatible with this type.[8]

This ethic is characterised by a form of *Realpolitik* in which the relation of the purposes, means and ends of political action are rationally evaluated, *and* 'the responsibility for the predictable consequences of the action...taken into consideration'.[9]

Counterpoised to this ethic of responsibility is an ideal-type of value-rational action and a corresponding *Gesinnungsethik*. Weber details this type of rationality as follows:

> Examples of pure value-rational orientation would be the actions of persons who, regardless of possible cost to themselves, act to put into practice their convictions of what seems to them to be required by duty, honour, the pursuit of beauty, a religious call, personal loyalty, or the

> importance of some "cause" no matter in what it consists. In our terminology, value-rational action always involves "commands" or "demands" which, in the actor's opinion, are always binding on him. It is only in case where human action is motivated by the fulfilment of such unconditional demands that it will be called value-rational.[10]

This type of pure value-rational orientation gives rise to a conviction ethic of ultimate ends, one in which values are pursued unconditionally, regardless of the consequences. Wolfgang Schluchter suggests that this conviction ethic may be divided into religious and secular conviction, thereby establishing three political ethics rather than two. He argues, following Weber's distinction in the *Zwischenbetrachtung* between these two types of conviction, that we should 'distinguish between religious and non-religious ethic of conviction and put both, together with the ethic of responsibility, in an historical model of development'.[11] Whilst Schluchter is right to note that these two types of conviction rest upon differing types of political legitimation, one must also note that they share the same political ethic: an ethic of conviction based upon the religious commitment to values which, whether secular or non-secular, precludes the rational consideration of the consequences of action. The important point here is thus not the religiosity of conviction itself but that the *Gesinnungsethik*, whether secular or religious, demands that conviction overrides all concern for the relation of the means and ends of one's actions, and that this unconditional commitment precludes personal responsibility for the consequences. This conviction ethic gives rise to a fundamentalist ethic of political action, one in which devotion to a cause replaces concern both for the chances of realising a particular value and for the cost of such an enterprise. This ethic, for Weber, is present in all cases where the means and consequences of action are subordinated to the demands of the political cause, including 'all radical revolutionary political attitudes, particularly revolutionary "syndicalism"'.[12]

The formal opposition of Weber's *two* political ethics is thus clear. Weber himself observes that

> there is an abysmal contrast between conduct that follows the maxim of an ethic of ultimate ends - that is, in religious terms, "The Christian does rightly and leaves the results with the Lord" - and conduct that follows an ethic of responsibility, in which case one has to give an account of the foreseeable results of one's actions.[13]

The exact relation of these two ethics to Weber's ideal-types of rational social action is, however, a point of contemporary dispute.[14] Rogers Brubaker, for example,

questions the direct correspondence of the ethic of responsibility and instrumental rationality, and the ethic of conviction and value rationality. He argues instead that the ethic of responsibility is in fact a synthesis of value and instrumental rationality:

> the ethic of responsibility is *not* identical with pure *Zweckrationalität*. For pure *Zweckrationalität*...precludes any reference to ultimate value commitments: ends are determined by the urgency of an individual's "given subjective wants" and by the ease of satisfying them, not by their "worth" from the point of view of a system of ultimate values. The ethic of responsibility, on the other hand, is not merely compatible with a commitment to ultimate values, but demands just such a commitment. For responsibility is empty to some "substantive purpose" unless it is informed by "passionate devotion to a "cause"". Far from being identical with pure *Zweckrationalität*, the ethic of responsibility can best be understood as an attempt by Weber to integrate *Wertrationalität* and *Zweckrationalität*, the passionate commitment to ultimate values with the dispassionate analysis of alternative means of pursuing them.[15]

Weber does indeed attempt to integrate passionate commitment to ultimate values with detached analysis of political means and ends. This integration though does not in itself constitute the *Verantwortungsethik*, for if it did Weber would have no reason to argue for a synthesis of an ethic of conviction and an ethic of responsibility. For Weber, however, the possibility of synthesising these two ethics is the central problem of modern political leadership: 'an ethic of ultimate ends and an ethic of responsibility are not absolute contrasts but rather supplements, which only in unison constitute a genuine man - a man who *can* have the "calling for politics"'.[16] The point here is that neither an ethic of conviction nor an ethic of responsibility can alone guide the leader who wishes to pursue politics as a vocation. The ethic of responsibility is thus not, as Brubaker suggests, the integration of *Wertrationalität* and *Zweckrationalität* but an ideal-type of *Zweckrationalität* that promotes responsibility but precludes commitment to ultimate values, and this is why Weber demands that it be integrated with the value-rationality of the *Gesinnungsethik*. It is precisely the form of this integration of value and instrumental rationality, of an ethic of responsibility and an ethic of conviction, which Weber addresses in *Politics as a Vocation*, and which, moreover, gives an indication of how resistance to the rationalisation of the world, to the progressive reduction of value-rational to instrumentally rational social action, may proceed.

4.2 Towards a Practical Reconciliation

It is clear that, for Weber, some kind of practical reconciliation must take place between the *Gesinnungsethik* and the *Verantwortungsethik* and their corresponding rationalities as neither an ethic of conviction nor an ethic of responsibility can alone guide political leadership that is both passionate and responsible. The passionate conviction of the *Gesinnungsethik*, for example, cannot drive ambitious yet responsible political action, for it 'cannot stand up under the ethical irrationality of the world'.[17] This conviction ethic is unconcerned with the violent means of power, and thus for the consequences of political action.[18] If anything, the passionate conviction demanded by the *Gesinnungsethik* is likely to deprive the leader of the distance that a sense of political objectivity requires, leading perhaps to power regardless of consequences and even to personal vanity and "power for power's sake". The destructive nature of this rule by conviction without responsibility is disturbing, for the value-rationality underlying all passionate commitment to ultimate values is unconditional, and shows no bounds. This is a fact observed by Emile Durkheim: 'Passion leads to violence and tends to break all that hampers or stands in its way'.[19] In view of this, the political leader must constantly appraise and reappraise the means through which 'he can hope to do justice to the responsibility that power imposes upon him' whilst at the same time pursuing political values with conviction.[20]

In contrast, the ethic of responsibility, despite giving rational consideration to the means, ends and consequences of social action, lacks the passionate involvement that vitalises politics, and eliminates the risk of striving for success that is not readily attainable.[21] This, for Weber, is clearly a problem, as he notes: 'To take a stand, to be passionate - *ira et studium* - is the politician's element, and above all the element of the political leader.'[22] The ethic of responsibility, as an ideal-typical form of instrumentally rational social action which is characteristic of the rationalised world, ultimately eradicates this passion through rigid calculation of the chances and costs of political success. The *Verantwortungsethik* may thus be characterised as a realistic political ethic which, unlike the *Gesinnungsethik*, is able to recognise and take account of the "ethical irrationality" of the world. Indeed, Wolfgang Schluchter states:

> As a political ethic the ethic of responsibility is, in the first instance, critical insofar as it not only takes account of the ethical irrationality in the world but also recognises that the peculiar dilemma of realising values in politics consists in using power and force as means and therefore in leading to "a pact with diabolical powers". In a specific sense the ethic of responsibility is realistic.[23]

Whilst this *Verantwortungsethik* is realistic insofar as it takes account of the relation of political purposes and consequences, means and ends, it is too formal, too calculating to engender the passionate pursuit of ultimate values.[24] In this respect, it, like the *Gesinnungsethik*, may also be unable to cope with the irrationality of the world, for although it takes account of and responsibility for the consequences of this irrationality, it can never fully master its bearing on political life. For as Weber states:

> the early Christians knew full well the world is governed by demons and that he who lets himself in for politics, that is for power and force as means, contracts with diabolical powers and for his action it is *not true* that good can only follow from good and evil only from evil, but that often the opposite is true. Anyone who fails to see this is, indeed, a political infant.[25]

Politics thus demands conviction as well as responsibility, for '[p]olitics...without belief (*Glauben*) is impossible'.[26] Faith must here accompany instrumental reason, not least because ethics is a sphere of value-judgements, and therefore cannot be determined or prescribed by science.[27] Faith in the rightness of one's values and actions must thus be combined with a calculated vision of the means, ends and consequences of politics.[28] Weber hence argues: 'Surely, politics is made with the head, but it is certainly not made with the head alone. In this the proponents of an ethic of ultimate ends are right'.[29] The correlate of this statement is that, against the fabric of the rationalised world, value-rationality is to accompany instrumental rationality in the political sphere. Indeed, Weber proclaims: 'I, for my part, will not try to dissuade the nation from the view that actions are to be judged not merely by their instrumental value but by their intrinsic value as well'.[30] The answer seems clear: that passionate conviction and personal responsibility must clearly be brought to bear on each other, and must co-exist within the personality of the political leader.

In view of this, it thus wrong to argue that between the ethic of responsibility and ethic of conviction '[w]e must simply choose: there is no rationally justified middle path between these alternatives'[31], for these two political ethics are ideal-types that in reality demand an ethical reconciliation.[32] Stephen Turner and Regis Factor argue for

the incommensurability of these political ethics by recalling Weber's famous statement: 'It is really a question not only of alternatives between values, but of an irreconcilable death-struggle, like that between "God" and "Devil"'.[33] There are, however, two key points of difficulty in this argument. First, Weber's political ethics are ideal-types of social action which in reality do not exist in pure form. In reality, there is no strict either/or between the *Gesinnungsethik* and *Verantwortungsethik*, for as Weber shows neither of these two ethics can or do exist without the presence of the other. Second, within the struggle between God and the Devil, between the different value-spheres, there exist innumerable points of compromise which make everyday life possible, and it is precisely these points, and in particular those between ethics and politics, that the political leader must pursue in order to be both responsible and successful. Weber states: 'There are, of course, as everyone realises in the course of his life, compromises, both in fact and appearance, and at every point. In almost every important attitudes of real human beings, the value-spheres cross and interpenetrate'.[34]

The difficulty then lies not in making a choice between an ethic of responsibility and an ethic of conviction, but in establishing how these ethics can be reconciled in practice. This question is addressed at length by Weber in his 1919 speech *Politics as a Vocation*[35]:

> how can warm passion and cool judgement be forged together in one and the same soul? Politics is made with the head, not with other parts of the body or soul. And yet devotion to politics, if it is not to be frivolous intellectual play but genuinely human conduct, can be born and nourished from passion alone.[36]

The political leader must, for Weber, combine passion and responsibility in order to pursue politics as a vocation, and this very often may involve a compromise. The exact form that this compromise should take depends largely on the value to be pursued and the particular historical conditions faced by the political leader. In view of this, the form of leadership must be the focus of constant reappraisal. Weber states, for example: 'Each new fact may necessitate the re-adjustment of the relations between end and indispensable means, between desired goals and unavoidable subsidiary consequences'.[37] This process of re-adjustment is ultimately without resolution, for the political and ethical value-spheres are not only in constant opposition but also in permanent flux. It is the task of the politician to negotiate this value conflict and to be

decisive as the value to be pursued and the means to be employed. Weber states: 'the ultimately possible attitudes toward life are irreconcilable, and hence their struggle can never be brought to a final conclusion. Thus it is necessary to make a decisive choice'.[38] It is the right but also, and perhaps more importantly, the duty of the political leader to make this choice, and to be personally responsible for the consequences. It is this double responsibility that defines Weber's distinction between political leadership and *Beamtenherrschaft* ('civil-service rule'): 'The honour of the political leader, of the leading statesman...lies precisely in an exclusive *personal* responsibility for what he does, a responsibility he cannot and must not reject or transfer'.[39]

The success of political leadership thus depends on the responsible judgement of the political leader, and his/her ability not only to seek a practical reconciliation between politics and ethics but to actively take a stand for a particular ultimate value. This impossible demand entails a life of constant struggle, and Weber warns us that '[h]e who is inwardly defenceless and unable to find the proper answer for himself had better stay away from this career. For in any case, besides grave temptations, it is an avenue that may constantly lead to disappointments'.[40] To pursue politics as a vocation, to accept this life of torment, thus demands, for Weber, a particular personality; one who can incorporate personal charisma with an instrumental concern for both political success and ethical life.[41] David Owen depicts the spirit of this personality as follows:

> The distinctive feature of the charismatic politician is his capacity to ground "certain ultimate "values" and "meanings" of life" in his person. In contrast to bureaucratic politics in which decision-making is predicated on a utilitarian weighing of material interests, the politician with a calling bases decision-making on a *responsible* commitment to ultimate values.[42]

This form of sober heroism, which demands the political leader to constantly risk him/herself by taking a decisive stand and accepting the consequences, is clearly hard to bear. Weber does, however, indicate the primary qualities which the political personality must possess in order to pursue this vocation. He states: 'One can say that three pre-eminent qualities are decisive for the politician: passion, a feeling of responsibility, and a sense of proportion (*Augenmaß*)'.[43]

4.3 Weber and Aristotle

This idea of proportion, of a balance between passion *(Leidenschaft)* and responsibility (*Verantwortung*) seems, at first, to bear some comparison to the 'mean' of Aristotle's ethics. Consider, for example, the following:

> The man who shuns and fears everything and stands up to nothing becomes a coward; the man who is afraid of nothing at all, but marches up to every danger becomes foolhardy. Similarly the man who indulges in pleasure and refrains from none becomes licentious (*akolastos*); but if a man behaves like a boor (*agroikos*) and turns his back on every pleasure, he is a case of insensibility. Thus temperance and courage are destroyed by excess and deficiency and preserved by the mean.[44]

Whilst Weber's argument for a synthesis of conviction and responsibility would appear to mirror Aristotle's middle course between excess and deficiency it is worth noting, however, that, for Weber, the mean is a utopian concept that in practice is never attainable. There is, for Weber, ultimately no 'right way' or 'middle course' for modern existence is defined and vitiated by an irresolvable struggle between competing life-orders and their value-spheres. There are indeed points of compromise and convergence between these spheres but these are not defined by an absence of excess and deficiency but by the violence of a life-struggle. Weber thus does not pursue eudemonism but a practical ethics that takes account of the violence of this struggle and the violence of political power.[45] The problem is not, for Weber, of moderation between the extremes of excess and deficiency but of genuine human conduct that can reconcile two different ethics: conviction and responsibility.[46]

The point of difficulty here is the term *Augenmaß*, which is translated as proportion by Gerth and Mills and as judgement by Lassman and Spiers.[47] This term should not be understood in terms of a mathematical ratio or confused with Kantian judgement (*Urteil*) but read more literally as 'eye measure'. This is not to suggest that *Augenmaß* is a form of aesthetic judgement but a practical judgement based upon the immediate weighing up of historical circumstances. Christopher Adair-Toteff rightly notes that '[t]o translate this [*Augenmaß*] as judgement is simply misleading. By judgement we mean taking time to reflect, to consider, and then to render a verdict. Weber does not mean this; instead, he means the immediate sizing up, the quick

measuring of the situation. It also implies the appropriate distance'.[48] *Augenmaß* is thus not a proportion of conviction and responsibility but a sense of perspective which enables the political leader to remain at a distance from the reality in question, a distance which equips the leader with a degree of political objectivity. This sense of perspective, for Weber, is crucial: 'This is the decisive psychological quality of the politician: his ability to let realities work upon him with inner concentration and calmness. Hence his *distance* to things and men. "Lack of distance" *per se* is one of the deadly sins of every politician'.[49]

This sense of perspective, however, whilst crucial to the pursuit of successful political leadership, offers us little guide as to how the *Gesinnungsethik* and *Verantwortungsethik* and their corresponding rationalities are to be reconciled. Weber, in line with his own ethic of responsibility or value-freedom, claims to offer no such guide, for such value-judgements lie beyond the bounds of social science (a point discussed in chapter 2 and 3). One may note though that in *Politics as a Vocation* Weber frequently ranks the value of an ethic of responsibility over that of an ethic of conviction.[50] This leads Mommsen to conclude: 'In Weber's view the ethics of responsibility represented the ethic specific to the politician, and more particularly to the democratic politician'.[51] This is not to suggest that Weber argues that an ethic of conviction is in itself less worthy than that of an ethic of responsibility but that in view of the violence of political power responsibility must always prevail. The only possible synthesis between conviction and responsibility is thus one in which passion is subordinated to responsibility, so that political responsibility is the primary value to be pursued with passion. Weber states: 'To be sure, mere passion, however genuinely felt, is not enough. It does not make a politician, *unless passion as devotion to a "cause" also makes responsibility to this cause the guiding star of action*'.[52]

This sentence gives some indication of how the rationalities of the *Gesinnungsethik* and the *Verantwortungsethik* are to be reconciled. In *Economy and Society* Weber poses the relation of instrumental and value-rational action as follows:

> Value-rational action may...have various different relations to the instrumentally rational action. From the latter point of view, however, value-rationality is always irrational. Indeed, the more the value to which action is oriented is elevated to the status of an absolute value, the more "irrational" in this sense the corresponding action is. For, the more unconditionally

> the actor devotes himself to this value for its own sake, to pure sentiment or beauty, to absolute goodness or devotion to duty, the less is he influenced by the consequences of his action.[53]

In the light of this, integration of the *Gesinnungsethik*, characterised by value-rationality, and the *Verantwortungsethik*, characterised by instrumental rationality, must introduce an element of irrationality (from the viewpoint of instrumental rationality) into political life, for politics is guided by, and aims to realise, particular values. This irrationality, for Weber, is not to be eliminated, for it is crucial to political ambition, but is to be held in check by responsible action. In this sense, just as the ethic of ultimate ends is to be integrated with and subordinated to an ethic of responsibility, value-rational action is ultimately to be integrated with and subordinated to instrumental rationality. As a result, as Arthur Mitzman notes, even the passion that accompanies and directs political leadership is, for Weber, to be of a rational type, one imbued at all times with a sense both of *matter-of-factness* and of one's responsibility to humanity.[54]

4.4 Weber and Kant

Weber's pursuit of a rational politics based upon an ethical correspondence of political means and ends, purpose and consequences here seems to follow the directive of Kant's categorical imperative. This imperative, in one formulation, instructs us to '*Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end*'.[55] Rogers Brubaker, however, whilst noting the influence of Kant on Weber, rightly points out the difficulty of this reading:

> In Kant's classic formulation, autonomy is the condition of being subject to self-created and self-imposed obligations; heteronomy, in contrast, is the condition of being subject to obligations which one has not created. This morally charged opposition between autonomy and heteronomy persists in the moral thought of Weber and the existentialists, but the connection established by Kant between autonomy and rationality is severed...For Weber...autonomy resides not in the formulation of universal laws but in the value-creating activity unconstrained by any criteria - except in Weber's case, by the criterion of self-consistency.[56]

Kant's faith in human autonomy and the triumph of human reason is reflected in his deontological ethics, which state that the moral rightness of action is determined not by consequences but by the goodness of the rational will (practical reason). Moral rightness, for Kant, is thus defined not by action itself but by a formal principal of duty:

> An action done from duty has its moral worth, *not in the purpose* to be attained by it, but in the maxim according with which it is decided upon; it depends therefore, not on the realisation of the object of action, but solely on the *principle of volition* in accordance with which, irrespective of all objects of the faculty of desire, the action has been performed.[57]

The maxim that here determines the moral rightness of all actions is the categorical imperative, which demands that 'I ought never to act except in such a way *that I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law*'.[58] This maxim serves the rational will as its basic principle, and confers moral rightness on action according to its conformity to the moral law. Kant's ethics thus constitute a 'rule deontology', which, as Christian Lenhardt notes, claims that 'the moral rightness of an act lies not in the act itself (nor of course in its consequences), but in the maxim or rule from which the actor acts or intends to act'.[59]

Weber, in contrast to Kant, views the instrumental rationality engendered by rationalisation as defining a modern existence that is necessarily heteronomous. For Weber, faith in the categorical imperative is thus neither practical nor realistic but simply another form of the *Gesinnungsethik*[60], for autonomy is itself restricted on one hand by the continuing ethical irrationality of the world, and on the other by the instrumentalism of Enlightenment reason. Weber does not, however, completely give up Kant's struggle for rational autonomy, rather he recognises the problems of Kant's deontological ethics and argues that the political leader must necessarily commit him/herself to a series of obligations which are not self-imposed. Autonomy, as Brubaker notes, is thus, for Weber, not realised in a universal law, but in the self-imposed commitment to heteronomy. This self-imposed commitment, for the political leader, involves not simply the autonomous pursuit of ultimate values but an obligation to face the restrictions placed on political action by the ethical irrationality of the world. For Weber, it is this obligation to pursue an ethical correspondence of political means, ends and secondary consequences, to recognise the heteronomy of political life, which is of primary importance. He thus states: 'If one makes any concessions at all to

the principle that the end justifies the means, it is not possible to bring an ethic of ultimate ends and an ethic of responsibility under one roof or to decree ethically which end should justify which means'.[61]

In the light of this statement, it is clearly wrong to argue that, for Weber, '[m]oral strength, especially in the political actor, consists in giving up the ethic of conviction'.[62] As I have argued throughout this chapter, Weber proposes that the political leader, in order to follow politics as a vocation, must integrate an ethic of conviction with an ethic of responsibility. This integration, as is shown by the above comparison to Kant, demands that the politician must, above all, take personal responsibility for the pursuit of ultimate values.[63] This is the key to the reconciliation of the *Gesinnungsethik* and *Verantwortungsethik*:

> it is immensely moving when a *mature* man - no matter whether old or young in years - is aware of a responsibility for the consequences of his conduct and really feels such responsibility with heart and soul. He then acts by following an ethic of responsibility and somewhere reaches the point where he says: "Here I stand; I can do no other". That is something genuinely human and moving. And every one of us who is not spiritually dead must realise the possibility of finding himself at some time in that position. In so far as this is true, an ethic of ultimate ends and an ethic of responsibility are not absolute contrasts but rather supplements, which only in unison constitute a genuine man - a man who *can* have the "calling for politics".[64]

4.5 Conclusion

This definition of political maturity, of an individual feeling a passionate responsibility for the consequences of his conduct, is the closest Weber comes to formulating a concept of human virtue.[65] This concept, which is not found in postmodern political theory, places an impossible burden on the political leader, but as Karl Jaspers rightly states: 'If Max Weber's demands were excessive, the human situation was to blame, not his lack of realism'.[66] It is precisely this realism which leads Weber to call for the political leader to integrate the *Gesinnungsethik* and *Verantwortungsethik*, and to face the disenchantment of the world and not be disenchanted. This call demands the politician to work against the fabric of modern life itself and to reconcile principles that are formally irreconcilable.[67] Weber argues that

the political leader must, in view of the ethical irrationality of the world, subordinate the *Gesinnungsethik* to *Verantwortungsethik* and thus value- to instrumentally rational action, but must at the same time guard against the reduction of all ultimate values to achievable ends. This constitutes the basis of a possible form of resistance to the rationalisation of the world, for ultimate values are to be recognised and upheld whilst at the same time action is to be guided by an acute sense of responsibility. This position, which in many ways is similar to that espoused in *Science as a Vocation* (see chapter 3), involves a constant struggle against the instrumental nature of modern culture, but Weber is adamant that one should not give up or lose faith in the face of this struggle. Indeed, Weber calls for us to engage in, rather than withdraw from, the problems of this world. He reminds us, for example, that whilst 'successful political action is always the "art of the possible"...the possible is often reached only by striving to attain the impossible that lies beyond it".[68] It is precisely through such active engagement in this-worldly but value-orientated work that resistance to the progressive rationalisation and disenchantment of the world, for Weber, may proceed.

Notes

[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Of Self-Overcoming', *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p.137.

[2] I will here consider Weber's theory of the vocation of politics and not the political views he held. For a detailed analysis of Weber's politics see David Beetham, *Max Weber and the Theory of Modern Politics*, and Wolfgang Mommsen, *Max Weber and German Politics 1890-1920.*

[3] Max Weber, 'Politics as a Vocation', *From Max Weber*, p.128.

[4] *Ibid.*, p.121.

[5] Wolfgang Schluchter draws attention to the difficulty of translating *Gesinnungsethik.* He states: '"Ethic of responsibility" is a literal rending of *Verantwortungsethik*, but there is no equally easy translation for *Gesinnungsethik*, for which I have chosen "ethic of single-minded conviction" instead of the more familiar "ethic of ultimate ends"', 'Value-Neutrality and the Ethic of Responsibility', *Max Weber's Vision of History*, footnote 1, p.66. I will, whilst noting this difficulty, refer to *Gesinnungsethik* simply as an 'ethic of conviction' for ease of use.

[6] Löwith here cites Voegelin's early (1925) paper entitled 'Max Weber'.

[7] Karl Löwith, *Karl Marx and Max Weber*, p.68.

[8] Weber, *Economy and Society Volume One*, p.26.

[9] Max Weber, 'The Meaning of "Ethical Neutrality" in Sociology and Economics', *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, p.16. On the question of political responsibility Ralph Schroeder rightly notes that: 'The assertion of the politician is therefore doubly constrained: the ends must justify the means, and the means must be effective in a world of ceaseless struggle', *Max Weber and the Sociology of Culture*, p.129.

[10] Weber, *Economy and Society Volume One*, p.25.

[11] Wolfgang Schluchter, 'Value-Neutrality and the Ethic of Responsibility', *Max Weber's Vision of History*, footnote 64, p.89. This task forms the basis of *The Rise of Western Rationalism* in which Schluchter outlines these three ethics in relation to the substantive content of Weber's sociology. See *The Rise of Western Rationalism*, see pp.39-59.

[12] Weber, 'The Meaning of "Ethical Neutrality"', p.16.

[13] Weber, 'Politics as a Vocation', p.120.

[14] On this point see also Charles Turner, *Modernity and Politics in the Work of Max Weber*, pp.146-170. Turner here arrogantly dismisses the complexity of the relationship between the *Gesinnungsethik* and the *Verantwortungsethik*: 'The precise relationship between these two distinctions has given rise to a good deal of unnecessary head-scratching and tortuous scholasticism in the literature, but it is in fact fairly straightforward', p.159. Despite this claim for the simplicity of Weber's position Turner draws no concrete conclusions as to the relation of these two ethics and their relation to value and instrumental rationality.

[15] Rogers Brubaker, *The Limits of Rationality*, p.108.

[16] Weber, 'Politics as a Vocation', p.127.

[17] *Ibid.*, p.122.

[18] Weber argues, following Burckhardt, that power is of a diabolical nature, see 'Between Two Laws', *Weber: Political Writings*, p.75. The affinities between Weber and Burckhardt's work are discussed at some length by R. Bendix and G. Roth in *Scholarship and Partisanship*, chapter 14.

[19] Emile Durkheim, *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*, p.117.

[20] Weber, 'Politics as a Vocation', p.115.

[21] For Weber, this is a very real problem: 'On the whole, people are strongly inclined to adapt themselves to what promises success, not only - as is self evident - with the respect to the means or to the extent that they seek to realise their ideals, but even to the extent of giving up these very ideals. In Germany this mode of behaviour is glorified by the name *Realpolitik*', 'The Meaning of "Ethical Neutrality"', p.23. Here, one may note in passing a possible connection between Weber's two political ethics and the ideals of politics (nationalist conviction) and culture (humanist/liberal moralism) which divided the German middle-class immediately after 1871. On the history of this split, and on the subsequent shift of the middle-class from a humanist to a nationalist elite, see Norbert Elias, *The Germans*, pp.121-170. For a summary of this work see my review, *Acta Sociologica*, 40, 3, 1997, pp.318-321. On the conflict between nationalist and liberal ideals in the work of Weber see also

Wolfgang Mommsen, 'The Antinomical Structure of Max Weber's Political Thought', *The Political and Social Theory of Max Weber*, pp.24-43.

[22] Weber, 'Politics as a Vocation', p.95.

[23] Wolfgang Schluchter, 'Value-Neutrality and the Ethic of Responsibility', *Max Weber's Vision of History*, p.89.

[24] Anthony Kronman is one of the few commentators to have emphasised the importance of passion in Weber's theory of political leadership. He argues, for example: 'Courage and passion are qualities that must be bought *to* the choices we make...', *Max Weber*, p.179.

[25] Weber, 'Politics as a Vocation', p.123.

[26] J.P. Mayer, *Max Weber and German Politics*, p.115.

[27] This is the basis of Weber's doctrine of value-freedom in social science. He states: 'Even such simple questions as the extent to which end should sanction unavoidable means, or extent to which undesired repercussions should be taken into consideration, or how conflicts between several concretely conflicting ends are to be arbitrated, are completely matters of choice or compromise. The social sciences, which are strictly empirical sciences, are the least fitted to presume to save the individual the difficulty of making a choice, and they should therefore not create the impression that they can do so', 'The Meaning of "Ethical Neutrality"', pp.18-9.

[28] The Lutheran overtone of this emphasis on the importance of faith in politics is clearly at odds with Nietzsche's ridicule of Luther: 'Faith is a *pons asinorum* ['bridge of asses']', *Will To Power*, § 192, p.114. The question of the relation of "Faith" or "Works" here raised by Nietzsche is particularly interesting, as Weber seems to imply that they must co-exist in order for successful political leadership. He states of the political leader, for example: 'If he is more than a narrow or vain upstart of the moment, the leader lives for his cause and "strives for his work"', 'Politics as a Vocation', p.79.

[29] *Ibid.*, p.127.

[30] Weber, 'The Meaning of "Ethical Neutrality"', p.24.

[31] Stephen Turner and Regis Factor, *Max Weber and the Dispute Over Reason and Value*, p.32.

[32] Turner and Factor are not alone in presenting these two political ethics in terms of an either/or. Paul Honigsheim, for example, argues that 'the radical ethic [*Gesinnungsethik*] is oriented toward the image of the saint; the ethic of responsibility toward that of the hero. The individual must choose between the two, and, by deciding for the one, the individual inevitably sins against the other precept', 'Max Weber: His Religious and Ethical Background and Development', *Church History*, 19, 1950, p.232. Wolfgang Schluchter, by contrast, recognises the demand for a practical reconciliation of these ethics but refuses to move beyond a consideration of their formal opposition. He states: 'the ethical life-style adequate to the disenchanted world seems to lie, as it were, *between* the two ethics. Both are in tune with the times, but only if they are combined. Weber has given some hints that would seem to justify such an interpretation. But I believe that this would be logically unsatisfactory, and would besides be at odds with his own premises', *Max Weber's Vision of History*, p.55.

[33] Weber, 'The Meaning of "Ethical Neutrality"', p.17. This metaphor of the struggle between God and the Devil appears to come from Luther, who states: 'For what is not of God must of necessity be of the devil', 'Preface to Latin Writings', *Martin Luther: Selections From His Writings*, p.9. Turner and Factor's account is here confusing for they argue that this statement 'does *not* imply that one must choose between the alternatives, for there is no contradiction in claiming, for example, that an act is good by virtue of its conscience *and* by virtue of its good consequences', *Max Weber and the Dispute Over Reason and Value*, p.33, but still they reject a position between the two political ethics: 'Weber's view seems closer to Otto Baumgarten's, in which the separation of the two types of demands is the dominant theme', p.49.

[34] Weber, 'The Meaning of "Ethical Neutrality"', p.18.

[35] Gerth and Mills, following the guidance of Marianne Weber, state that the speeches 'Science as a Vocation' and 'Politics as a Vocation' date from 1918, *From Max Weber*, p.77, p.129. In fact, according to the research of Wolfgang Schluchter, Max Weber gave the speech 'Science as a Vocation' at Munich University on November 7, 1917, and 'Politics as a Vocation' on January 16, 1919. Both speeches were published, with revisions, in 1919. On the question of the dating of these speeches see Wolfgang Schluchter, 'Value-Neutrality and the Ethic of Responsibility', *Max Weber's Vision of History*, pp.113-16, and *Paradoxes of Modernity*, pp.46-7.

[36] Weber, 'Politics as a Vocation', p.115.

[37] Weber, 'The Meaning of "Ethical Neutrality"', *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, p.23. As Charles Turner rightly notes, the main difficulty that the politician here must face, and, I believe, guard against, is the 'degeneration of [political] means into ends', *Politics and Modernity in the Work of Max Weber*, p.150.

[38] Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', *From Max Weber*, p.152.

[39] Weber, 'Politics as a Vocation', p.95.

[40] *Ibid.*, p.114.

[41] Luciano Cavalli is here right to note that to 'become an effective leader...one has to possess specific qualities (*Fuhrereigenschaften*), which Weber seems to consider innate', 'Charisma and Twentieth-Century Politics', p.318.

[42] David Owen, *Maturity and Modernity*, p.131.

[43] Weber, 'Politics as a Vocation', p.115. This is Gerth and Mills's translation of 'Man kann sagen, daß drei Qualitäten vornehmlich entscheidend sind für den Politiker: Leidenschaft - Verantwortungsgefühl - Augenmaß', *Max Weber: Gesammelte Politische Schriften*, p.545. This passage is translated by Lassman and Speirs as: 'One can say that three qualities are pre-eminently decisive for a politician: passion, a sense of responsibility, judgement', 'The Profession and Vocation of Politics', *Weber: Political Writings*, p.352.

[44] Aristotle, *Ethics: The Nicomachean Ethics*, p.94.

[45] Weber's critique of eudemonism is clearly stated in his Inaugural (Freiburg) Address. He states: 'there can...be no real work in political economy on the basis of optimistic dreams of happiness. Abandon hope all ye who enter here: these words are inscribed above the portals of the unknown future history of mankind. So much for the dream of peace and happiness', 'The National State and Economic Policy (Inaugural Lecture, Freiburg, May 1895), *Reading Weber*, p.197.

[46] Robert Eden rightly notes: 'Neither Weber nor Nietzsche is concerned with "ethics" in the Aristotelian sense of the rational apprehension of and habituation to justice, moderation, *enkratia*, or prudence', *Political Leadership and Nihilism*, p.195.

[47] *Augenmaß* is also translated as judgement by J.P. Mayer, *Max Weber and German Politics*, p.115.

[48] Christopher Adair-Toteff, '*Wissenschaften Waffen*: Contrasting Concepts of Epistemological Power in Kant and Weber', p.8.

[49] Weber, 'Politics as a Vocation', p.115, *emphasis original.*

[50] Throughout *Politics as a Vocation* Weber shows complete disdain for the unconditional conviction demanded by revolutionary politics. This disdain is born out by his meeting with Austrian economist Josef Schumpeter in Vienna, 1918, a meeting described by Karl Jaspers as follows: 'Schumpeter remarked how pleased he was with the Russian Revolution. Socialism was now no longer a discussion on paper, but had to prove its viability. Max Weber responded in great agitation: Communism, at this stage in Russian development was virtually a crime, the road would lead over unparalleled human misery and end in a terrible catastrophe. "Quite likely", Schumpeter answered, "but what a fine laboratory". "A laboratory filled with mounds of corpses", Weber answered heatedly', Karl Jaspers, *Leonardo, Descartes, Max Weber*, p.222.

[51] Wolfgang Mommsen, *The Political and Social Theory of Max Weber*, p.19.

[52] Weber, 'Politics as a Vocation', p.115, *emphasis mine.*

[53] Weber, *Economy and Society Volume One*, p.26.

[54] Arthur Mitzman, *The Iron Cage: An Historical Interpretation of Max Weber*, p.249.

[55] Immanuel Kant, *The Moral Law: Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, p.91, *emphasis original.*

[56] Rogers Brubaker, *The Limits of Rationality*, p.100-1.

[57] Kant, *The Moral Law*, p.65.

[58] *Ibid.*, p.67.

[59] Christian Lenhardt, 'Max Weber and the Legacy of Critical Idealism', p.31.

[60] This is rightly suggested by Christian Lenhardt 'Kant's is an ethic of conviction (*Gesinnungsethik*), to use Weber's terminology, insofar as it enables the moral agent to hold norms unconditionally', *Ibid.*, p.30.

[61] Weber, 'Politics as a Vocation', p.122.

[62] Lenhardt, 'Max Weber and the Legacy of Critical Idealism', p.33.

[63] The only commentator to have picked up on the need for a synthesis of the ethics of conviction and responsibility is H.H. Bruun, who argues for a 'responsible ethic of conviction'; a rather obscure combination of what he terms the 'passive ethic of responsibility' and an 'active ethic of conviction'. Bruun, however, fails to make any connection between Weber's analysis of the vocation of politics and his more general theory of rationalisation and disenchantment. See *Science, Values, and Politics in Max Weber's Methodology*, pp.240-88.

[64] Weber, 'Politics as a Vocation', *From Max Weber*, p.127.

[65] One may note, however, that human virtue or value is not, for Weber, simply confined to the realm of successful (political) leadership. He states, for example: 'Please, consider that a man's value does not depend on whether or not he has leadership qualities', 'Science as a Vocation', *From Max Weber*, p.150.

[66] Karl Jaspers, *Leonardo, Descartes, Max Weber*, p.225.

[67] Weber's call for the politician to work within the irreconcilable contradictions of *this* world here rings of the Lutheran calling. One may note, for example, that the political leader too has 'a fate to which he must submit and make the best of', *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, p.160.

[68] Weber, 'The Meaning of "Ethical Neutrality"', p.23-4.

PART TWO

Postmodern Challenges

Chapter V

Intermediate Reflection

The three previous chapters (part 1 of the thesis) analysed first, Weber's theory and critique of the rationalisation and disenchantment of the world (chapter 2), and then two possible forms of resistance to this process, namely the pursuit of science (chapter 3) and of politics (chapter 4) as a vocation. The second half of this thesis now turns to the attack on Western culture advanced in the work of three postmodern 'theorists': Jean-François Lyotard (chapter 6), Michel Foucault (chapter 7), and Jean Baudrillard (chapter 8).[1] There are two main points of interest here: first, the way in which the work of these three postmodern theorists develops (albeit implicitly rather than explicitly) Weber's analysis of the nature and trajectory of modern culture, and second, the way in which postmodern theory offers a possible escape route from the drive of modern rationalism, and thus from the further rationalisation and disenchantment of the world. These questions, however, are more complex than they may at first appear, for one is immediately confronted with three points of difficulty: first, what is meant by the term 'postmodern'; second, in what sense are Lyotard, Foucault, and Baudrillard 'postmodern' theorists, and third, on what grounds may a reading between Weber and postmodern theory proceed? I will briefly reflect on these three questions.

First, the term 'postmodern', by its very nature, defies simple definition.[2] The most basic definition of the term renders it literally as the union of the terms post- (after) and modern (present or recent times), and as thereby signifying an order that is in some way beyond that of contemporary life. The 1982 supplement to the *Oxford English Dictionary* follows this line of interpretation, defining the postmodern as '[s]ubsequent to, or later than, what is "modern"...a movement in reaction against that designated "modern"'.[3] This definition, however, is not employed in this thesis, for any definition of the postmodern as subsequent to or later than the modern is itself caught within a modern order of linear time, an order which is strongly tied to grand

narratives of historical progress and universal freedom which themselves define the orientation of the modern project. Rather, one may note that the postmodern does not break completely from the modern[4], but works to expose and transgress the limits of the modern order by embracing the experimental moment which is concealed within this order. This practice works to disrupt the modern order and its related narratives, and posits new forms of historical time which contain their own strategic potential: the future anterior (Lyotard), genealogy or historical difference (Foucault), and symbolic exchange or cyclical time (Baudrillard). This practice is tied to an new experimental ethos, which is outlined by Lyotard as follows:

> A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by pre-established rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgement, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for. The artist and the writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what *will have been done*. Hence the fact that work and text have the characters of an *event*; hence also, they always come too late for their author, or, what amounts to the same thing, their being put into work, their realisation (*mise en oeuvre*) always begin too soon. *Post modern* would have to be understood according to the paradox of the future (*post*) anterior (*modo*).[5]

It is this definition of the postmodern which will be employed in this thesis. This definition seeks to evade the modern concept of linear time by working concurrently in the future (post) and past (anterior), combining the past and future in the form of the 'what will have been'. The possibility of this temporal paradox lies in an exploration of tradition which works historically towards an undefined future. The postmodern here does not simply break from either tradition or modernity, but proceeds through the historical deconstruction of the modern order.[6] This practice, Lyotard argues, wages war on the totalising instinct of the modern, and seeks the dissolution of all grand narratives. This war on totality targets all historical narratives which claim a universal end (including Hegel's speculative proposition and Marx's scientific socialism), even if this end is freedom.[7]

This call to abandon the modern narratives of progress and 'enlightenment', which still tend to define the sociological tradition today, asks us to embrace the particular over totality, and calls for a return to the elements which have been captured and unified by the modern. This return, for Lyotard, is to proceed through the

unlearning of modernity itself, a practice which works against the didactic ethos of modern philosophy through affirmation of the endless possibilities contained within the childhood of thought. To seek this childhood, which has yet to be captured by the modern quest for authority and totality, Lyotard argues that one must learn to unlearn the modern ideals of clarity, progress, and universality. This process, which calls one to form oneself in reverse, is the antithesis of the teleology of the modern project, for it proceeds through experimentation to an undefined end. This experimental or 'paralogical' ethos, which is present, for example, in the work of Aristotle (the rule of the undetermined)[8], Kant (reflective judgement)[9], Wittgenstein (the learning of the rules of language)[10], Freud (the idea of 'working through' (*Durcharbeitung*))[11], and even in the idea of deferred understanding found in Talmadic law[12], is the key to the future anterior of the postmodern, for it entails that thought is not restricted by the imposition of familiar concepts, categories, or definition. The postmodern is thus always in advance of itself, for it works through experimentation in order then to establish the rules of what will have been done. On this basis, the future anterior defines the postmodern in two inter-related senses. First, it defines the opening of an unknown future through a return to the elements of what will have been modern through a process of unlearning. Second, it defines an aporetic mode of experimentation that operates without pre-established rules in order to retain the open possibility of work that will have been done.

In the terms of this dual definition of the future anterior it is possible to define the work of Michel Foucault as postmodern.[13] Foucault, like Lyotard, is highly critical of the totalising ethos of modern thought, which, he argues, expurgates alterity through the historical reduction of difference to the same. He argues: 'modern thought is one that moves no longer towards the never-completed formation of Difference, but towards the ever-to-be-accomplished unveiling of the Same'.[14] This elimination of difference, he argues, is a product of the anthropological bias of modern culture, which creates and sustains 'Man' both as a subject and object of knowledge whilst disregarding the limits of thought itself. This bias of modern thought, for Foucault, lends itself to a humanist narrative of historical progress, a narrative which understands and evaluates history according to the status of its own anthropological construct: 'Man'. This narrative reconstructs history as an order of linear progress through the

retrospective imposition of its own modern (anthropological) norm. This form of 'Whiggish' history elevates the present over the past by reading the past in terms of a present ideal, a practice which ultimately reduces historical otherness to a comparable but lesser form of the same.

Foucault attempts to unlearn this movement towards the sameness of modern culture (which is also outlined by Weber, see chapter 2) and belief in historical 'progress' through the genealogical exposition of difference within history (see chapter 7.1). This practice seeks to reveal the historical limits of power and knowledge through the counter-historical dissipation of modern identity, a practice that disrupts the linear history of modern 'progress' through exposition of the disparity of historical origins and historical descent. This form of history operates at a micro-level, working against all grand narratives to reveal the limits of the modern order. Foucault states: 'Genealogy does not oppose itself to history as the lofty and profound gaze of the philosopher might compare to the molelike perspective of the scholar; on the contrary, it rejects the meta-historical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies'.[15] The aim of this experimental history is to disturb the ontological security of modern identity and hence to provoke the possibility of otherness through exposition of the cultural difference concealed by, and within, the order of modern rationalism. This practice may be deemed an exercise in the future anterior insofar as it seeks the possibility of a different but undefined future through the experimental unlearning of grand narratives, and through a return to the elements which are concealed within, but excluded from, modern culture.

It is also possible to define Jean Baudrillard as a postmodern thinker. Baudrillard, like Lyotard and Foucault, teaches us to unlearn history as an order of linear progress. He argues, against the accepted Enlightenment view, that Occidental history is in fact a fall from a 'primitive' (in fact highly complex) order, based upon a principle of symbolic exchange, to a modern order of value, based on a principle of equivalence and sameness (see chapter 8.1). This fall, however, is not a strictly linear descent, but is the temporary outcome of an agonistic relation between two mutually exclusive orders: the symbolic order and the order of value. These two orders, precisely because they exist on radically different principles (linearity versus cyclical exchange), can never efface the other. The order of value thus always remains

vulnerable to the threat of symbolic exchange, and it is on this basis that the reversal of rationalisation always remains a possibility. In view of this, Baudrillard adopts a strategy which seeks to reactivate symbolic exchange within contemporary life. This experimental practice plays on the radical power of symbolic exchange, which continues to haunt modernity in the form of its death, and threatens to annul the accumulation of value through its principle of reversibility (see chapter 8.5). It is, Baudrillard argues, through the strategic deployment of this principle, through the empowerment of the archaic within the modern, that the hegemony of the modern order of value may be overturned. He states: 'everything which is symbolically exchanged constitutes a mortal danger for the dominant order'.[16]

It can be argued from the above that Lyotard, Foucault and Baudrillard, despite the clear differences that exist between their work, share a mutual concern for a postmodern unlearning of Western narratives of progress, and for the development of experimental practices to enable this process.[17] The question which remains is of the grounds on which it is possible to read between this strand of postmodern thought and the work of Max Weber, for not only do Lyotard, Foucault, and Baudrillard make little reference to his work[18], but Weber, as a theorist of grand narratives such as intellectualisation and rationalisation, would appear to be a target rather than a source of postmodern critique.[19] In answer to this question, this thesis will read between Weber and these three postmodern theorists in terms of what Barry Smart calls their 'disenchantment *with* modernity'.[20] The aim here is not to analyse contemporary forms of rationalisation and disenchantment, or to consider the nature of what may be termed 'postmodernity', for these tasks lie beyond the scope of this work, but rather to focus on the analyses and criticisms of modern culture which are advanced in the work of Weber and in the postmodern theory of Lyotard, Foucault, and Baudrillard. There are two main aims of this work. First, to show that Weber's work shares a number of the same concerns as postmodern theory (for example, the nature and trajectory of modern rationalism; the differentiation of modern culture, and the question of cultural rationalisation and disenchantment), and further to this that postmodern theory, implicitly rather than explicitly, develops and extends Weber's account of the rise, nature, and trajectory of modern culture. Second, to examine the possible forms of resistance to modern (instrumental) rationalism which may be developed from the

work of Lyotard, Foucault, and Baudrillard. This work will centre on three of Weber's value-spheres as possible sites for this resistance, namely the aesthetic (Lyotard), the political (Foucault), and the erotic (Baudrillard) spheres.[21]

Notes

[1] I here use the term 'theorist' with some caution as each of these writers are highly critical of both the form and purpose of modern theory. Lyotard, for example, is particularly sceptical of the dogmatic and teleological nature of theoretical work, and argues that 'theorists' should draw from the deconstructive and experimental practices of art. See, for example, Lyotard 'On Theory: An Interview', *Driftworks*, pp.19-33, and 'Theory as Art', *Image and Code*, pp.71-77. This leads Bill Readings to conclude that 'Lyotard is not a theorist. Lyotard's decisive entry into the French academic scene is an insistence that, after 1968, theory ought to be recognized as part of the problem, not as a potential solution', *Introducing Lyotard*, p.xxix. The key point, however, is that Lyotard attempts to develop a form of (postmodern) theory that is based on experimentation and difference and free from teleology and binary opposition. I here concur with David Carroll's argument that Lyotard and Foucault's 'awareness of the limitations of theory has led them not to reject theory but rather to work at and on the borders of theory in order to stretch, bend, or exceed its limitations', *Paraesthetics*, p.xi.

[2] There is even controversy over the writing of the term postmodern. Pauline Rosenau notes, for example, that 'how one writes the word - "postmodern" or "post-modern" - signals a position, a bias. The absence of the hyphen has come to imply a certain sympathy with post-modernism and a recognition of its legitimacy, whereas the hyphen indicates a critical posture', *Post-modernism and the Social Sciences*, p.18. The resistance of the postmodern to simple definition has been the focus of much criticism. Ernest Gellner, for example, argues that '[p]ostmodernism is a contemporary movement. It is strong and fashionable. Over and above this, it is not altogether clear what the devil it is. In fact, clarity is not conspicuous amongst its marked attributes', *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*, p.22. This type of critique, however, largely overlooks the fact that postmodern theory seeks to be both heterogeneous and aporetic in form. For a clear account of the emergence and usage of the term 'postmodern', see Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory*, pp.5-16.

[3] *The Oxford English Dictionary Supplement*, Oxford, 1982, volume III, p.698, quoted by Margaret Rose, *The Post-modern and the Post-industrial*, p.5.

[4] Lyotard argues that the idea of a break from modernity is itself tied to an order of linear time which is quintessentially modern in nature. He states: 'the idea of a linear chronology is itself perfectly "modern". It is at once part of Christianity, Cartesianism and Jacobinism: since we are inaugurating something completely new, the hands of the clock should be put back to zero. The very idea of modernity is closely correlated with the principle that it is both possible and necessary to break with

tradition and institute absolutely new ways of living and thinking', *The Postmodern Explained to Children*, p.90. Zygmunt Bauman also supports the argument that there is no clear break between modernity and postmodernity, but on different grounds. He argues: 'The most conspicuous features of the postmodern condition: institutionalised pluralism, variety, contingency and ambivalence - have been all turned out by modern society in ever increasing volumes; yet they were seen as signs of failure rather than success, as evidence of the insufficiency of efforts so far, at a time when the institutions of modernity, faithfully replicated by the modern mentality, struggled for *universality*, *homogeneity*, *monotony*, and *clarity*. The postmodern condition can be therefore described, on the one hand, as modernity emancipated from false consciousness; on the other, as a new type of social condition marked by the overt institutionalisation of the characteristics which modernity - in its designs and managerial practices - set about to eliminate and, failing that, tried to conceal', *Intimations of Postmodernity*, pp.187-8.

[5] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p.81.

[6] Charles Jencks argues that Lyotard, along with Jacques Derrida and Ihab Hassan, is in fact a late modernist as he elides deconstruction with postmodernism and thereby simply takes modernist principles to an extreme. Jencks argues that the postmodern differs from deconstruction in that it operates through a double coding of the modern and the traditional, giving rise to pairings such as elite/popular, accommodating/subversive and new/old, and, further to this, that 'the post-modern is the continuation of modernity and its transcendence', *What is Postmodernism?*, (Fourth Edition), p.15. This argument, however, is rather misleading for it overlooks first, Lyotard's critique of the 'textualism' of deconstruction, and second, his attempt to return to *and* reactivate the experimental moment which lies buried within the modern order. One may here note that this latter practice, which is found in different forms in the work of the three postmodern theorists analysed in this thesis, seeks not the 'continuation of modernity', but the overcoming of the modern order through the use of elements, in particular forms of historical difference or otherness, which are concealed within and effaced by modernity. For an excellent account of Lyotard's position on the question of deconstruction, see Bill Readings, *Introducing Lyotard*, chapter 1.

[7] Lyotard justifies this war against teleology in terms of the concrete failure of universal emancipation: 'In the course of the past fifty years, each grand narrative of emancipation - regardless of the genre it privileges - has, as it were, had its principle invalidated', *The Postmodern Explained to Children*, p.40.

[8] See the Aristotelian epitaph to Lyotard and Thébaud's *Just Gaming*: 'The rule of the undetermined is itself undetermined', *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1137b, 29-30.

[9] Lyotard refers to Kant's idea of reflective judgement as: 'the ability of the mind to synthesize data, be it sensuous or socio-historical, without recourse to a predetermined rule', *Peregrinations*, p.20.

[10] Lyotard argues: 'Wittgenstein explains that the rules regulating games are unknown to the players and that no one learn to use language by acquiring a knowledge of its grammatical or lexical aspects

as such. Rather everyone learns by groping around in a stream of phrases like children do', *ibid.*, p.6.

[11] Lyotard here refers to Freud's notion of 'working through', which is close to the notion of 'free association', and is based on the following dictum: 'do not prejudge, suspend judgement, give the same attention to everything that happens as it happens...let speech run, give free rein to all the "ideas", figures, scenes, names, sentences, as they come onto the tongue and the body, in their "disorder", without selection or repression', *The Inhuman*, p.30. Lyotard also refers to the connected idea of 'equally floating attention', which is based on 'the power to be able to endure occurrences as "directly" as possible without the mediation or protection of a "pre-text"', *Peregrinations*, p.18.

[12] Lyotard, following Lévinas, makes reference to the following passage of the Talmud: 'Do before you understand, and the Jews did, and then they understood', *Just Gaming*, p.41.

[13] There is, to my knowledge, only one reference to the postmodern in Foucault's work (excluding interviews). This is in the essay 'What is Enlightenment?', in which he states: 'Rather than seeking to distinguish the "modern era" from the "premodern" or "postmodern", I think it would be more useful to try to find out how the attitude of modernity, ever since its formation, has found itself struggling with attitudes of "countermodernity"', 'What is Enlightenment?', *The Foucault Reader*, p.39. It is precisely this strategy of revealing narratives which run counter to modernity, however, which leads me to term Foucault's work postmodern.

[14] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p.340.

[15] Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, p.140.

[16] Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, p.188, note 7.

[17] I do not wish to over-emphasise the homogeneity of postmodernism. There are, as I have argued, similarities between Lyotard, Foucault and Baudrillard which lead me to define them as postmodern theorists. There are also fundamental differences between them, differences which will become clear in the following chapters, and which illustrate the heterogeneous nature of postmodernism itself. For an illustration of the differences between Lyotard, Foucault and Baudrillard see, for example, Baudrillard's critique of Foucault *Forget Foucault*; Lyotard's critique of Baudrillard in *Libidinal Economy*, chapter 3, and *The Postmodern Condition*, p.15, and Lyotard's critique of Foucault in *The Postmodern Explained to Children*, p.86.

[18] There is, to my knowledge, only one minor reference to Weber in Lyotard's work, see *Just Gaming*, p.27. Foucault and Baudrillard also appear to have read Weber in some detail but make little reference to his work. See, for example, Foucault, 'What is Enlightenment?', *The Foucault Reader*, p.1 and 'Questions of Method', *The Foucault Effect*, pp.78-80, and Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, p.145 and p.163.

[19] Peter Lassman and Irving Velody, drawing on the work of Sheldon Wolin, argue that the postmodern attack on metanarratives may in fact be found in the work of Weber. They state: 'The strange and paradoxical quality of Weber's thought seems to reside in the fact that what we are presented with is the construction of an 'epical' denial of the possibility of an 'epical' theory for the

modern age. Meanwhile, Weber's insight, unacknowledged, has been rediscovered in the current debates concerning the 'post-modern' condition. Weber's account of the modern world is not dissimilar to that of Lyotard in his diagnosis of the loss of credibility of the 'grand narratives' that formerly claimed to legitimate knowledge', 'Max Weber on Science, Disenchantment, and the Search for Meaning', p.172. One may note, however, first, that 'epical' theory - a 'style of theorising which is "inspired mainly by the hope of achieving a great and memorable deed through the medium of thought"' - is quite different to what Lyotard terms a grand narrative, which, to the exclusion of all other narratives, makes an all-encompassing claim to a universal truth. Second, whilst Weber is critical of a number of the modern grand narratives which legitimate knowledge, those, for example, found in the work of Hegel and Marx, he offers an alternative metanarrative of Western development, one which centres on the world-historical meta-process of rationalisation. For further analysis of the respective positions of Lyotard and Weber on this question see chapter 6 of this thesis.

[20] Barry Smart, *Postmodernity*, p.86.

[21] The work of these three postmodern theorists is clearly not confined to three separate spheres. The work of Baudrillard, for example, addresses questions of aesthetics, just as the work of Lyotard is highly political in orientation, and the work of Foucault addresses questions relating to the erotic sphere. For the purposes of this thesis, however, the work of each of these thinkers will be analysed in connection to one particular value-sphere: Lyotard, the aesthetic sphere; Foucault, the political sphere, and Baudrillard, the erotic sphere.

Chapter VI

Weber and Lyotard: Postmodern Paralogy and the Aesthetic Sphere

> Being prepared to receive what thought is not prepared to think is what deserves the name of thinking' (Lyotard).[1]

The writings of Max Weber and Jean-François Lyotard at first glance appear worlds apart.[2] The work of Weber, on one hand, seems typically modern, focusing, for example, on the power politics of the nation-state, the meaning of social action, and the affinity between religious ethics and the rationalisation of the world, whilst the work of Lyotard, on the other hand, seems typically postmodern, attacking, for example, modern forms of representation, authority, power, and justice. In spite of this apparent divergence of interests, there are, however, a number of points at which the work of Lyotard develops and extends that of Weber. These points will be addressed in the present chapter through an analysis of Weber and Lyotard's respective positions on three key issues: the nature of modern and postmodern science, the nature and consequences of cultural differentiation, and the 'aesthetic' as a possible site of resistance to, and even escape from, the course of Western rationalism.

6.1 Lyotard on Modern and Postmodern Science

Weber's most explicit statement on science and rationalisation is to be found in his 1917 lecture 'Science as a Vocation'. Here, as discussed in chapter 3, Weber addresses the 'external' and 'inward' conditions of the scientific vocation, and beyond this questions the presuppositions, meanings, historical values, and limits of science.

His argument, to briefly recapitulate, is that scientific work presupposes its own value and contributes directly to the rationalisation and disenchantment of life, but that in spite of this, such work may offer a limited form of resistance to rationalisation if it proceeds within certain limits. Weber here argues, for example, that science is not to enter into the realm of value-judgements (ethics), and should be restricted to answering questions of a technical or practical nature, and that on this basis it may be used to inform, and not arbitrate between, value-judgements.

Lyotard's analysis of science by contrast proceeds, at least initially, on a different basis. In *The Postmodern Condition* [1979], which may be read as a postmodern development of, and response to, Weber's *Science as a Vocation*, Lyotard addresses a key question that is neglected by Weber: what constitutes 'science'? He answers this question by drawing a distinction between the pragmatics of 'science' and the wider realm of 'knowledge'. He argues:

> Knowledge [*savoir*] in general cannot be reduced to science, nor even to learning [*connaissance*]. Learning is the set of statements which, to the exclusion of all other statements, denote or describe objects and may be declared true or false. Science is a subset of learning. It is also composed of denotative statements, but imposes two supplementary conditions on their acceptability: the objects to which they refer must be available for repeated access, in other words, they must be accessible in explicit conditions of observation, and it must be possible to decide whether or not a given statement pertains to the language judged relevant by the experts.[3]

In distinction to science, Lyotard argues that 'knowledge' comprises not only of denotative statements but also of notions of 'know-how', 'knowing how to live', and 'knowing how to listen'. Lyotard argues that knowledge is thus different to science for it involves 'a question of competence that goes beyond the simple determination and application of truth, extending to the determination and application of criteria of efficiency (technical qualification), of justice and/or happiness (ethical wisdom), of the beauty of a sound or colour (auditory and visual sensibility) etc.'.[4] The key point here, for Lyotard, is that knowledge, unlike science, is based not only on the formation of denotative statements but also on the formation of prescriptive and evaluative utterances.[5]

Further to this, Lyotard, again unlike Weber, also distinguishes between the nature of myth and science, or, in his terms, between the different pragmatics of

'narrative' and scientific knowledge. He argues that narration is the quintessential form of 'customary' or 'traditional' knowledge, and identifies five main aspects of the narrative form. He argues, first, that narratives 'allow the society in which they are told...to define its criteria of competence and...to evaluate according to those criteria what is performed or can be performed within it'.[6] Narrative knowledge is thus immediately tied to the social bond. Second, that the narrative form lends itself to a wide variety of language games, and comprises of a combination of denotative, deontic, and evaluative statements. Third, that popular narratives often follow a particular pragmatic rule, one which, Lyotard argues, 'determines in a single stroke what one must say in order to be heard, what one must listen to in order to speak, and what role one must play (on the scene of diegetic reality) to be the object of a narrative'.[7] Fourth, that there is a connection between narrative knowledge and time, for the narrative form follows a particular rhythm, and is 'the synthesis of a meter beating time in regular periods and of accent modifying the length or amplitude of certain of those periods'[8], and, finally, Lyotard argues that legitimation is immanent within the narrative form, for authority itself is tied to the very recounting of narrative knowledge.

The pragmatics of scientific knowledge, for Lyotard, are quite different. He here argues, like Weber, that scientific knowledge is based upon the language game of denotation, and that this game necessarily excludes all others. He states:

> A statement's truth-value is the criterion determining its acceptability. Of course, we find other classes of statements, such as interrogatives...and prescriptives...But they are only present as turning points in the dialectical argumentation, which must end in a denotative statement. In this context, then, one is "learned" if one can produce a true statement about a referent, and one is a scientist if one can produce verifiable or falsifiable statements about referents accessible to the experts.[9]

In view of this, Lyotard argues that scientific knowledge, unlike narrative knowledge, is set apart from the social bond, for it refers instead to an objective reality (referent) which is seen to exist independently of the 'social'.[10] In addition, he notes that scientific knowledge, again in contradistinction to narrative knowledge, is only seen to be legitimate once verified through argumentation and proof, and that its search for new facts is a cumulative process which proceeds at a variable rhythm. Lyotard argues that these differences between narrative and scientific knowledge are well known, but

are important for they indicate that it is impossible to judge the validity of narrative knowledge on the basis of scientific knowledge, or vice versa, because these two types of knowledge rest upon fundamentally different criteria. He notes, however, that in spite of this, scientists nevertheless question the validity of narrative knowledge, and regard this knowledge as illegitimate insofar as it is not derived through argumentation or proof. Lyotard is particularly scathing of this practice, and of the hierarchical relationship it establishes between myth and science. He argues:

> This unequal relationship is an intrinsic effect of the rules specific to each game. We all know its symptoms. It is the entire history of cultural imperialism from the dawn of Western civilisation. It is important to recognise its special tenor, which sets it apart from all other forms of imperialism: it is governed by the demand for legitimation.[11]

Lyotard analyses this demand for the legitimation of knowledge at some length in *The Postmodern Condition*. He argues first that science raises rather than obscures the problem of its own legitimacy.[12] This position immediately places him at odds with Weber, who argues that science presupposes rather than raises the question of its own value (see chapter 3). Lyotard argues, in regards to this question of legitimacy, that with the transition to the world of modern science, two new features appear in the 'problematic of legitimation'. First, science leaves the metaphysical search for a transcendental authority behind, and instead establishes the conditions of truth through the rules of its own game. Second, it becomes clear that science, in spite of appearances, is in fact unable to free itself from narrative, for beyond the realm of argumentation and proof there exists a socio-political need to legitimate the validity of knowledge. In regards to this latter point, Lyotard argues that there are two main modern narratives (or grand narratives) of legitimation. The first is political in nature, and rests on the belief that 'all peoples have a right to science'. This narrative, which is found in the discourse of the French Enlightenment, ties knowledge to emancipation, and posits a connection between the state control of education, the training and freedom of the 'people', and the 'progress' of the 'nation'. The second is the 'speculative narrative', which, Lyotard argues, is more philosophical than political in nature, and involves a different relation between science, the nation, and the State. This narrative, as found in the work of Fichte and Hegel, suggests that 'knowledge first

finds legitimacy within itself, and it is knowledge that it is entitled to say what the State and what Society are'.[13]

Lyotard argues, however, that the legitimation of knowledge in post-industrial society and postmodern culture proceeds on a different basis. He here makes the following claim: 'The grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation'.[14] The implications of this claim will be discussed below in section 6.2, but here one may note that, for Lyotard, this decline of the grand narrative is accompanied by a fundamental change in the way that scientific knowledge is legitimated, and also by a transformation of the nature of science itself. In terms of the former, Lyotard argues that science is now legitimated through the 'little narrative' (*petit récit*), for science no longer possesses a general metalanguage but instead comprises of an infinite number of heteromorphous language games. The principle of this form of legitimation is dissensus rather than consensus, although Lyotard notes that for these games themselves to take place consensus over rules is to be achieved through the *local* agreement of its players (scientists). This, for Lyotard, is the basis of postmodern legitimation, or legitimation by what he terms 'paralogy': a form of legitimation which respects the heterogeneity of different language games but which also challenges existing games through the search for new rules, and which seeks to produce 'not the known, but the unknown'.[15]

Lyotard also argues that there are also two key changes in the nature of science in the postmodern world: first, a 'multiplication in methods of argumentation', and second, 'a rising complexity level in the process of establishing truth'.[16] In terms of the former, Lyotard argues that science no longer rests upon a single metalanguage but a plurality of languages, for science itself is the outcome of a pragmatic game in which the acceptability of the moves or propositions made depends on the contract drawn between scientists. Lyotard here notes, against the position forwarded by Weber (see below, section 3), that two types of progress arise from the linguistic practice of science: 'normal progress' or 'innovation', which results from the making of a new move (argument) within the established rules of an existing game, and 'revolutionary progress' or 'paralogy', which results from the invention of new rules and thus a new game. The second change in the nature of science, which involves the production of

scientific proof rather than argumentation itself, is that scientific truth is increasingly connected to expenditure and thus power. Lyotard argues that

> A new problem appears: devices that optimize the performance of the human body for the purpose of producing proof require additional expenditures. No money, no proof - and that means no verification of statements and no truth. The games of scientific language become the games of the rich, in which whoever is the wealthiest has the best chance of being right. An equation between wealth, efficiency, and truth is thus established.[17]

Lyotard notes, however, that from the end of the eighteenth century onwards a reciprocal equation between science and wealth is established, for just as there can be no science without wealth there equally can be no wealth without technology. Lyotard argues that in view of this science itself becomes a force of production, for technology optimises the performance of tasks, and hence optimises the capacity for the production of surplus-value. This marks the commodification of knowledge, which Weber clearly overlooks in his outline of the five historical values of science in *Science as a Vocation* (see chapter 3), and which, for Lyotard, is a key feature of post-industrial society. He states: 'Knowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold, it is and will be consumed in order to be valorised in a new production: in both cases, the goal is exchange'.[18] The production of knowledge is here subordinated to a principle of instrumental rationality, for knowledge itself is seen to be of value insofar as it contributes to the optimisation of the system's performance.[19] Lyotard, however, also notes a darker connection between scientific knowledge and power, and in particular between technological investment and state or military power, arguing first, that it is conceivable that nation-states may one day fight for the control of knowledge rather than territory, and second, that '[s]cientists, technicians, and instruments are purchased not to find truth, but to augment power'.[20]

Lyotard argues, however, that postmodern science itself stands against this identification of science with the system, and against the capitalist quest for 'perfomativity'. He argues that postmodern science, as a heterogeneous collection of local narratives which seek to transcend existing rules or games, exposes the fundamental instability of all systems. Lyotard here points, for example, to recent work by Benoit Mandelbrot (fractal theory) and René Thom (catastrophe theory) to suggest that both nature and the 'social' are founded upon a principle of radical uncertainty.[21]

He argues that postmodern science concerns itself with precisely this element of the unknown, and seeks to overturn the idea that a system may exhibit perfect control over itself. He states that '[p]ostmodern science - by concerning itself with such things as undecidables, the limits of precise control, conflicts characterised by incomplete information, "*fracta*", catastrophes, and pragmatic paradoxes - is theorizing its own evolution as discontinuous, catastrophic, nonrectifiable, and paradoxical'.[22] Postmodern science, for example, challenges the idea of a 'noiseless' society based upon the faultless logic of means-ends control, including the bureaucratic society which, for Weber, is characteristic of modernity. Lyotard here argues both that bureaucratic societies in fact contain the seeds of their own destruction insofar as they 'stifle the systems or subsystems they control and asphyxiate themselves in the process (negative feedback)'[23], and, perhaps more importantly, that postmodern science opens an experimental realm of uncertainty, even of freedom, which eludes any system's control. Lyotard notes, quite rightly, that this realm of freedom may be restricted by the instrumental control and repression of the ability to formulate new games (paralogy), but in spite of this maintains that science itself remains an 'open system' which is distinct from any one authority. It is with the aim of preserving science as such a system that Lyotard concludes the *Postmodern Condition* with an appeal for public free access to data banks, arguing that this would enable groups to make knowledgeable decisions, and, further to this, would preserve knowledge as a force against the instrumental rationalism and 'terror' of the modern order.

6.2 Cultural Differentiation and the Decline of the Grand Narrative

A key point of interest which arises from this analysis of the respective positions of Weber and Lyotard on the emancipatory potential of modern and postmodern science is the degree to which their accounts both converge and diverge on the question of cultural differentiation.[24] Weber, on one hand, argues that with the rationalisation of the world, modern culture separates out into a number of competing value-spheres, but that these spheres, whilst possessing a degree of autonomy, tend towards a logic of rationalisation, or, put simply, towards the rule of instrumental rationality (see chapter 2). Lyotard, on the other hand, argues that postmodernity

marks the collapse of the grand narrative, and that postmodern culture, whilst still resting upon a social bond[25], consists of an infinite number of competing local narratives or language games which are not necessarily tied to a quest for performativity. Weber and Lyotard here share a similar interest in the differentiation of culture, but depart over the nature and consequences of this process.

Charles Turner is the only commentator to have examined this issue in any detail. He argues, in his essay 'Lyotard and Weber: Postmodern Rules and Neo-Kantian Values', that Lyotard and Weber clearly diverge over the question of cultural differentiation, for whilst they both appear to share a rejection of totalising philosophies of history Lyotard's work, on one hand, is limited 'to the analysis of purposive-rational action', whereas Weber's, on the other, 'refuses pluralism, remains sensitive to the enduring power of value-rationality, and acknowledges the constitutive role of tragedy in history'.[26] Turner draws two further distinctions between Weber and Lyotard: first, that they employ different intellectual tools to 'fashion their analyses', the former employing neo-Kantian value-philosophy, the latter Wittgensteinian language games, and second, that Lyotard uses these language games to analyse an historical 'epoch', whilst Weber remains critical of this concept, arguing that it is 'the product of an unscientific need for a "feeling of totality"'.[27] On this basis, Turner proceeds to contrast Weber's *Zwischenbetrachtung* to Lyotard's *Postmodern Condition*. It is here worth briefly outlining the main points of Turner's analysis.

Turner argues, first, that whereas Lyotard embraces pluralism in the form of a multiplicity of local narratives, Weber rejects the pluralist moment of the rationalisation of the world (the differentiation of the value-spheres, see chapter 2) and instead searches for a universal cultural reality. He states: 'Weber's concern is directed to the manner in which individual value-spheres can become the sites for the construction of universalist claims, that is, foundations for the unity of culture'.[28] This difference between Weber and Lyotard, Turner argues, is essentially a methodological one, for Lyotard adopts a language games approach which asserts the existence of a plurality of linguistic practices and the absence of an overarching metalanguage, whilst Weber is committed to a neo-Kantian value-philosophy, which 'also asserts the absence of such a metalanguage but the presence in *each* sphere of a normative standard'.[29]

Turner here makes two further points which are of particular interest. The first is methodological, and involves the contrast between Wittgensteinian and neo-Kantian philosophy. Turner argues that the key point of this contrast, at least for the purpose of a comparison between Lyotard and Weber, is the difference between the analytic status of 'rules' and 'values'. He argues that rules, for Wittgenstein, are 'bound up with or immanent to the linguistic practices they constitute', whereas values, for neo-Kantians, have 'a validity wholly independent of the existence of the empirical reality they order in constituting an object domain'.[30] The second point is both methodological and political in nature. Turner argues that Weber and Lyotard both seem to advocate 'a principled resignation in the face of the non-existence of the unity of culture', and agree that cultural differentiation, which, for Weber, involves the separation of the value-spheres, and, for Lyotard, the collapse of the grand narrative, need not lead to barbarism.[31]

In spite of this latter point of convergence, however, Turner claims that the positions of Lyotard and Weber are fundamentally opposed. Lyotard, on one hand, he argues, understands postmodern culture as consisting of an infinite number of local narratives, and accepts the impossibility of elevating any one of these narratives to the status of a grand narrative. Weber, on the other hand, conceptualises modern culture in terms of a number of competing value-spheres, and argues, according to Turner, that a particular value-sphere can become the site for the construction of universalist claims. This means that the potential for the reconstruction of a meaningful social reality remains, and, on this basis, Turner argues that Weber 'refuses to substitute for an ethical "totality" a series of postmodern partial standpoints'.[32] Turner also argues that Weber, unlike Lyotard, here recognises the tragic nature of culture, for he notes that the pursuit of an ultimate value necessarily offends the claims of other values from both within and without the same value-sphere. The attempt to construct a universalist claim on the basis of a particular value or value-sphere thus rests on intense human commitment, for one must hold to a particular conviction whilst at the same time recognising the existence of other values, values which are 'held as firmly by others as ours are by us', and which may therefore block the actualisation of our beliefs. Turner argues that it is precisely this matter of human conviction, or value-rationality, and the related idea of tragedy that is lacking in Lyotard's postmodernism. He concludes:

> Without this desire, this 'Here I stand I can do no other', which Weber theorized as value-rationality, there can be no tragedy, only the comforting and bureaucratic purposive-rationality of game-playing. In 1952, Weber's friend and devotee Karl Jaspers wrote a little book called *Tragedy is Not Enough*. It seems that for many pluralist postmodernists, tragedy is too much.[33]

Turner's account provides a useful starting point for reading between Weber and Lyotard on the question of cultural differentiation, but overlooks a number of important affinities between their respective positions. First, one may note that, contrary to Turner's argument, both Weber *and* Lyotard are hostile to the concept of an historical epoch. Weber, as Turner notes elsewhere, is committed to a neo-Kantian form of perspectivism which acknowledges the existence of an infinite number of competing viewpoints or values, and which is thus hostile to the very idea of totality which underlies the concept of an epoch.[34] Lyotard's position is more complex. He argues, contrary to Turner's belief, against the presentation of modernity, and by extension postmodernity, as an epoch, because, he claims, modernity is not in itself an historical entity but the expression of a particular philosophical ethos. Lyotard states: '[m]odernity is not an epoch but a mode (the word's Latin origin) within thought, speech, and sensibility'.[35] The key point here, which is not to be found in the work of Weber, and which Turner misses, is that modernity and postmodernity are not, for Lyotard, historical periods that follow each other in succession, and which mark out the progression of linear time.[36] Rather the modern and the postmodern are inextricably bound, for the postmodern is the experimental moment of the modern, the moment which the modern must eventually efface in order to become truly itself (see chapter 1.2). Lyotard hence argues: '[a] work can become only become modern if it is first postmodern'.[37]

Lyotard is here also hostile, like Weber, to the idea of totality which grounds the concept of an 'epoch'. He argues instead for a general agonistics which affirms rather than unites the differences between opposing values or parties, and proclaims: 'Let us wage a war on totality...let us activate the differences and save the honour of the name'.[38] Turner fails to note this, and, furthermore, overlooks the fact that Weber and Lyotard are united in their attempt to move away from Hegelian and Marxist models of historical 'progress'. Weber's critique of historical progress and belief in the

incommensurability of values (see chapters 2 and 3) is here close to the postmodern agonistics which, Lyotard claims, offers an alternative to the two basic representational models for modern society: Parsonian functionalism and Marxist dualism. Weber, like Lyotard, is clearly indebted to the work of Nietzsche on this point, but at the same time one may note that Lyotard, like Weber, also embraces a number of the key tenets of neo-Kantianism. Lyotard argues, for example, that there is a hiatus between the subject and the object[39], that there is, as Rickert argues, an infinite horizon for investigation[40], and that prescriptives (the 'ought') can never be derived from descriptives (the 'is').[41] In view of this, Weber and Lyotard, at least methodologically, are not as far removed from each other as they may at first appear, and on this point even Turner eventually concedes that 'Lyotard seems to have rediscovered Weber's version of neo-Kantian value-philosophy and simply expressed it in a postmodern idiom'.[42]

Weber and Lyotard also share common ground in their respective criticisms of instrumental rationality. Weber argues that the rationalisation of the world entails the progressive subordination of value-rationality to instrumental rationality, and with it the curtailment of individual freedom (see chapter 2). His answer to this process is to place limits on the rule of instrumental rationality, thereby protecting the realm of ultimate values whilst at the same time enabling the possibility of informed, and thus responsible value-judgements (chapters 3 and 4). Lyotard, whilst never actually using the term 'instrumental rationality', is equally critical of the instrumentally rational nature of Western culture. He is critical, in particular, of the tendency for plurality and difference to be dissolved by the rationalistic drive for order and efficiency, and thus the movement towards the sameness of modern culture. He argues that this process occurs at the level of thought, in terms of the quest for order through systematic representation (see below, section 3), but also at the level of the institution. He states, for example, in a passage that bears some resemblance to the work of Foucault (see chapter 7): 'The plural, the collection of singularities, are precisely what power, kapital, the law of value, personal identity, the ID card, responsibility, the family and the hospital are bent on repressing'.[43]

Lyotard responds to this process of repression by attempting to reactivate the multiple singularities, differences, and aporias that are effaced by the rule of

instrumental rationality. This practice takes a number of different forms. First, as noted above, Lyotard embraces the idea of the future anterior, the 'what will have been', which celebrates the aporetic moment of the modern, and thus works directly against the means-ends logic of instrumental rationality. Second, Lyotard invokes the paralogical search for instabilities against the modern drive for efficiency and performance (see above, section 1), and suggests that any system, including that of an instrumentally rational bureaucracy, is fundamentally unstable. Third, he employs the notion of the *différend*, and seeks to honour the differences between values, phrases, or language-games rather than seeking to unite them under the authority of a single rule. He states: 'As distinguished from a litigation, a differend [*différend*] would be a case of conflict, between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgement applicable to both arguments'.[44] This, like Weber's theory of value-incommensurability, provides the basis for a form of cultural pluralism which resists the drive towards the rationalisation of both cultural and social forms (a process outlined in chapter 2). Fourth, following on from this, Lyotard celebrates the collapse of the grand narrative and embraces an agonistics comprising of a multiplicity of local narratives or language games. One may note that Charles Turner argues that Lyotard here extols 'the comforting and bureaucratic purposive-rationality of game-playing'. Turner, however, gives little indication of why language games are comforting, bureaucratic, and instrumentally rational in nature, for in fact, quite the opposite would seem to be true.[45] Lyotard notes, for example, that language games, like all games, possess an intrinsic value (value-rationality), and are thus not necessarily played in order to win. He states: 'A move can be made for the sheer pleasure of its invention: what else is involved in that labour of language harassment undertaken by popular speech and by literature?'.[46] Further to this, Lyotard argues that language games are thus also neither comforting nor bureaucratic, for like Adorno's 'micrologies' they form the basis of a 'strategy of thought that is not merely defensive' but that is creative, and which by its very nature therefore attacks the instrumental logic of performativity.[47]

Whilst Weber and Lyotard are both critical of the bearing of instrumental rationality on modern culture, they diverge, however, over the nature and value of cultural differentiation. Weber, on one hand, views the differentiation of culture as a

tragic process (see chapter 2), for with the rationalisation of the world the unity of pre-modern culture is lost as the modern life-orders and their value-spheres separate out and enter into irreconcilable conflict with each other. This process, for Weber, is tragic in three main senses (see chapter 2.3). First, even if it were desirable, there is no foreseeable value-standard upon which the unity of culture may be restored. The key point here is that science, which has replaced religion as the primary source of societal legitimation in the rationalised world, is, for Weber, unable to resolve conflicts between opposing values, and is thus unable to issue a metanarrative that can restore unity to mutually antagonistic value-spheres. This said, however, scientific rationalism does lend modern culture a degree of unity for it offers a model of instrumental rationalism which, with the rationalisation of the world, permeates and homogenises each value-sphere. Second, following on from this point, whilst the process of cultural differentiation appears, like modernity itself, to offer the individual the freedom to confer the legitimacy of values, in fact each value-sphere tends towards rationalisation, and this necessarily restricts the potential for creative action, reduces the scope of legitimate values, and denigrates the pursuit of ultimate values. Third, cultural differentiation is also tragic, for Weber, as places the individual in an impossible position, for one is forced to choose between opposing values, and to adhere to a value-position which is necessarily compromised and thus partial.

Lyotard, on the other hand, argues that the differentiation of culture is not a tragic process. This is not, as Turner argues, because his work *lacks* a theory of tragedy and because he is simply 'resigned' to the disunity of culture, but because Lyotard views the collapse of the grand- or metanarrative as a distinctly positive event.[48] Geoffrey Bennington rightly notes:

> It is important, and characteristic of all of Lyotard's thought, that such a break-up of large-scale narratives (the "grand" or "meta-narratives" of *The Postmodern Condition*) is not the object of lamentation but of affirmation - that intellectuals assign the increasing lack of respect for such narratives to a disenchantment or depression...is simply a "pure projection of the disappointment they feel in their need to believe in a major narrative".[49]

For Lyotard, the differentiation of culture into a plurality of competing narratives or language games is to be welcomed for it signals the end of the modern quest to unite opposing singularities under a single authority. This quest, he argues, is by its very

nature violent, for it effaces difference in the name of the 'One', and at the same time silences all forms of otherness (a process which has also been analysed by Foucault (see chapter 7) and Baudrillard (see chapter 8)). Lyotard cites a number of examples of this process: 'Auschwitz', 'Berlin 1953', 'Budapest 1956', 'Czechoslovakia 1968', and 'Poland 1980'.[50] Lyotard argues that each of these events involve the rule of 'terror' (the use of force to eliminate the opposing player of a game), and that they illustrate the intimate connection between violence and the quest for totality.[51] In view of this connection, which has recently been reasserted by Zygmunt Bauman, Lyotard celebrates the collapse of the modern metanarrative, and the new-found heterogeneity of postmodernity.[52] He reflects: 'The nineteenth and twentieth centuries have given us as much terror as we can take. We have paid a high enough price for the nostalgia of the whole and the one...'.[53]

It would be wrong to accuse Weber of such nostalgia. Weber, whilst seeing the differentiation of culture as a tragic consequence of the rationalisation of the world, neither seeks a return to the organic unity of pre-modern culture (see chapter 8) nor attempts to find a basis for the construction of a new social totality, but instead takes a pragmatic stand against rationalisation itself (see chapters 3 and 4). This, however, still places Weber at odds with Lyotard. For Lyotard, concepts such as rationalisation, bureaucratisation, intellectualisation, and modernisation, are nothing more than equivalent metanarratives which give a sense of totality by subordinating cultural difference to a single historical movement. Lyotard here argues, whilst noting the modern tendency for plural singularities to be repressed by the play of instrumental rationality, both at the level of thought and the institution, that in the postmodern world there is no overriding metanarrative of instrumental rationalism. Rather, he argues that the postmodern differentiation of culture into a plurality of local language games both reinforces the fluidity of the social bond, and reaffirms the 'complex and mobile' potentiality of the self.[54] He states, as if in reply to Weber's theory of the rationalisation of the world:

> This "atomization" of the social into flexible networks of language games may seem far removed from the modern reality, which is depicted, on the contrary, as afflicted with bureaucratic paralysis. The objection will be made, at least, that the weight of certain institutions imposes limits on the games, and thus restricts the inventiveness of the players in

> making their moves. But I think this can be taken into account without causing any particular difficulty.[55]

Lyotard's answer is to stress the open nature of language games, which, he claims, always rest upon a set of rules whilst at the same time encouraging 'the greatest flexibility of utterance'. He argues that this flexibility is also present at the level of the institution, for whilst, as Foucault notes (see chapter 7), the institution privileges certain classes of statements and places certain constraints upon communication, the limits it imposes on language 'moves' are, for Lyotard, never established once and for all. 'Rather', he argues, 'the limits are themselves the stakes and the provisional results of language strategies, within the institution and without', and '[r]eciprocally, it can be said that the boundaries only stabilize when they cease to be stakes in the game'.[56] Lyotard here dissolves the constraints of instrumental rationality into a war of individual determination, and on this point he clearly stands in marked opposition to Weber, for whom there could be no such solution to the rationalisation of culture, and to the constraints this process places on individual autonomy. Indeed, Weber argues that individual freedom is clearly limited by the rule of instrumental rationality, and, in view of this, that the grounds for self-determination always remain compromised (see chapter 4).

6.3 Art, Figure, and the Aesthetic Sphere

In view of the above, one may draw the conclusion that Weber and Lyotard, despite sharing a number of common concerns, ultimately diverge over the value and consequences of cultural differentiation, and, in particular, over the bearing of instrumental rationality on individual autonomy. This point of divergence, which is essentially a disagreement over the freedom of the individual to subvert the instrumental rationalism of modern culture, is here to be analysed further through reference to Weber and Lyotard's writings on art (the 'aesthetic sphere'). One may note, first, that there are a number of important points of convergence between the two thinkers on this subject: they advance, for example, similar accounts of the historical transformation of the value of art, and also suggest that aesthetics possesses the capacity to disrupt the order of Western rationalism. In view of this, the final section

this chapter will elucidate the respective positions of Weber and Lyotard on the aesthetic sphere, and will examine these points of convergence before turning finally to the fundamental differences which, I believe, divide their work.

The first point of convergence between Weber and Lyotard on the question of aesthetics arises from their similar views of the historical transformation, or disenchantment, of the value of art. Weber argues in the *Zwischenbetrachtung* (see chapter 2 for an analysis of this essay) that early forms of art are primarily of religious value. He states: 'Magical religiosity stands in a most intimate relation to the aesthetic sphere. Since its beginnings, religion has been an inexhaustible fountain of opportunities for artistic creation, on the one hand, and of stylizing through traditionalization, on the other'.[57] Weber argues that this relationship between magical religiosity and art remains constant as long as art itself continues to be the result of the 'spontaneous play' of either charismatic or magical forces, but that this changes with the rationalisation of the world, as art, in similar fashion to other value-spheres, becomes intellectualised, and develops into 'a cosmos of more and more consciously grasped independent values which exist in their own right'.[58]

Lyotard also views the historical transformation of art in terms of a developmental logic of rationalisation and disenchantment. He argues, for example, that

> Art no longer plays the role it used to, for once it had a religious function, it created good forms, some sort of myth, of a ritual, of a rhythm, a medium other than language through which the members of a society would communicate by participating in a same music, in a common substratum of meaning...And this generally went on in churches. Daily life was the realm of discourse, but the sacred was that of form, i.e. that of art. This has now become impossible. Why? Because we are in a system that doesn't give a rap about sacredness.[59]

Lyotard, like Weber, argues that with the rationalisation and disenchantment of Western culture art is progressively stripped of its ritual function. The outcome of this process, he argues, is that religious or naive art is superseded both by a rational discourse of aesthetics[60], and by the needs of capitalist production. This process of rationalisation, which is not dissimilar to that depicted by Walter Benjamin in his essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Technical Reproducibility', involves, for Lyotard, the progressive repression of 'figure' (the singular form which cannot be represented in

discourse, see below) by the rationalistic drive of modern culture. He argues, for example, that

> figural forms have been destroyed by the system which has predominated in the West from the nineteenth century on; these figural forms could not resist the requirements of the reproduction of capital. In this sense, religion has been destroyed, and its forms of coexistence, its communications through figures, have become impossible.[61]

Lyotard here develops and extends Weber's argument regarding the disenchantment of art to suggest that the instrumental rationalism of Western culture imposes order on the free play of the imagination. The effects of this process, which essentially is one of rationalisation, are consistent, however, with those outlined in Weber's work, namely: the restriction of creative forms by an instrumental (capitalist) rationality, the progressive elimination of ritual or religious forms of art, and with this the denigration of value-rationality.

The second point on which Weber and Lyotard converge, which is of particular interest here, is that both see art or the aesthetic sphere as offering a potential means of escape from the rationalised world. Weber here argues that art has a different fate to that of science insofar as it stands outside of the course of historical 'progress' (see chapter 3), and thus the course of rationalisation. He states:

> Scientific work is chained to the course of progress; whereas in the realm of art there is no progress in the same sense. It is not true that a work of art of a period that has worked out new technical means...stands therefore artistically higher than a work of art devoid of all knowledge of those means and laws...[62]

On this basis, Weber argues that the aesthetic is a 'non-rational' or 'anti-rational' value-sphere which offers, at least in theory, a means of escape from the rationalised world. He claims that art here offers a 'redemptory function', a form of 'inner-worldly, irrational salvation' that competes directly with claims of salvation religion. He states: 'Art takes over the function of a this-worldly salvation, no matter how this may be interpreted. It provides a *salvation* from the routines of everyday life, and especially from the increasing pressures of theoretical and practical rationalism'.[63]

Lyotard's position on art and aesthetics is more complex. First, one may note that Lyotard holds a different view to Weber of the nature of 'progress' in science, and, consequently, of the connection between art and science. He argues, against Weber, that there are in fact two forms of progress in science (see above, section 1).

The first is 'normal progress', or in Lyotard's terms 'innovation', which involves the making of a new move within an existing set of rules, whilst the second is 'revolutionary progress', or 'paralogy', which is based on experimentation and the formulation of an entirely different set of rules and thus a new game. This latter form of paralogical 'progress', for Lyotard, forms the basis of postmodern science, in which the rules of an experiment are not laid down *a priori* but are searched for after the event. Lyotard, unlike Weber, here argues that the fates of art and science are not necessarily different, for in both there exists an aporetic moment which seeks the potentiality of the unknown. He argues, for example, that postmodern science applies the principle of the future anterior in its paralogical pursuit for instabilities which challenge the existing set of rules, and here cites the mathematical principles of chance, risk, and uncertainty found in the work of Thom and Mandelbrot. On this basis, Lyotard argues that there can be no simple separation between art and (postmodern) science, for they share a similar ethos of experimentation. It would even appear, for Lyotard, that the experimental basis of art may actually inform the nature of postmodern science, which is itself close to becoming an art form. Lyotard's position on the connection of science, art, and rationalisation is thus different to that held by Weber. In spite of this, however, both theorists note the radical potentiality of art to disrupt the order of Western rationalism, indeed, this is a theme which runs through the entirety of Lyotard's work, the main features of which I will now outline.

Lyotard's basic position on aesthetics, or, to use David Carroll's term, *paraesthetics*[64], is contained within his doctoral thesis *Figure, Discours* [1971], in which he presents 'figure' as the unrepresentable other of discursive signification.[65] Lyotard here argues that whilst discourse operates as a system of representation which defines meanings according to their relation to other concepts in that system, figure is the realm of the singular, of that which refuses to, or simply cannot be captured and systematised by the concept. This realm of figure does not lie, however, in simple opposition to discourse, but is the dangerous other which disrupts and subverts the logocentric rule of discursive signification (the rule of the concept). Bill Readings rightly notes: 'If the rule of discourse is primarily the rule of representation by conceptual *oppositions*, the figural cannot simply be opposed to the discursive. Rather, the figural opens discourse to a radical heterogeneity, a singularity, a difference which

cannot be rationalised or subsumed within the rule of representation'.[66] On this basis, Lyotard argues for the radical capacity of the figural to disrupt discourse from within its own space, and, further to this, establishes a connection between the repressed potential of both desire and of figure. He argues, drawing on the work of Freud, that figure operates through the free play of unconscious energy, and on this basis offers the possibility of overturning all forms of rational closure, enabling above all the 'transgression of the object, transgression of form, transgression of space'.[67]

Lyotard extends this position in a series of essays published in the early 1970s, a number of which are collected in the volume *Driftworks* [1984]. This collection, which attempts to disrupt the artificial unity of thought by 'drifting' between the work of Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud, is important in three main respects. First, it reaffirms the radical potentiality of figure. Lyotard here claims to follow Kandinsky, Klee, Itten, and Albers in seeking to affirm figures which do not acquire their value through their position within an oppositional system, such as language (discourse), but which have an immediate value in and of themselves. He argues that figure belongs neither to the realm of language nor to that of 'practical transformation' but to an order of sense, and as such stands outside of the systematic order of representational thought. Lyotard attempts to develop a radical politics on the basis this alterity of figure, a politics based not on critique, which, he argues, not only rests upon a hierarchical relation between the critic and the criticised but inevitably gets drawn into the oppositional system it seeks to attack[68], but on the affirmation of disruptive forms which refuse to be captured by any system.[69] This attempt to formulate a politics of affirmation is the basic task of *Libidinal Economy* [1974], in which Lyotard eschews the idea of critique in favour the of affirmation of singular 'intensities'.[70] Lyotard here takes a position of Nietzschean affirmation against what he sees as the nihilism of semiotics[71], and develops a theory of the 'tensor', which unlike the sign does not reduce the event to a series of structural oppositions within a representational system but instead affirms it in its singular intensity. The concluding section of this work summarises Lyotard's intention here: 'No need for declarations, manifestos, organizations, provocations, no need for *exemplary actions*. Set dissimulation to work on behalf of intensities. Invulnerable conspiracy, headless, homeless, with neither programme nor project,

deploying a thousand cancerous tensors in the bodies of signs. We invent nothing, that's it, yes, yes, yes, yes'.[72]

Second, *Driftworks* reasserts the connection of art and desire. Lyotard argues that 'desire baffles knowledge and power' and that art, or at least figure, involves the free play of the unconscious. In view of this, the work of the artist is, for Lyotard, immediately radical. He states, for example: 'the artist does not externalize systems of internal figures, he is someone who undertakes to free *from* phantasy, *from* the matrix of figures whose heir and whose locus he is, what really belongs to the primary process'.[73] This play between art and the primary processes is important, for art, Lyotard argues, works against prohibition at all levels, and thereby lends itself to a politics which attacks all forms of libidinal and institutional repression. This form of politics, which is based on the '*letting go* of consciousness', is, for Lyotard, both disruptive and effective. Indeed, he argues, referring to May 1968, that whilst 'twenty or ten years of secondary discourse...had changed nothing, one night of primary process changed many things'.[74]

Third, Lyotard considers, on the basis of the above, the broader connection of art and politics. He here argues that the work of art has a deconstructive role, as, in the words of Roger McKeon, it is both 'an instrument allowing us to *see* through the gaps of dominant ideologies, and the source from which new methods could be drawn in the struggle against the system(s)'.[75] This role, he argues, is in itself highly political, and also offers a model for political activity. Lyotard argues, in particular, that the artistic deconstruction of representation and form should be transferred into everyday social and political practice.[76] This move, he claims, constituted the basic strategy of the March 22 Movement, and formed the basis of the May 1968 'revolution'.[77] The key point of Lyotard's argument here is that aesthetics can and should inform politics and not vice versa. He states, for example, that art must not be subordinated to the requirements of political discourse, as is the case with 'revolutionary' art, but should be free to deconstruct on its own terms. This necessarily leads to a separation of art and (political) theory, but, for Lyotard, this separation is healthy, for art subsequently is able to retain its autonomy, whilst politics in turn is able to draw upon the deconstructive practices of aesthetics. On this basis, art always remains an important source for the political imagination. Lyotard states:

> I imagine there will always be a difference between artists and theorists, but that is rather a good thing, for theorists have everything to learn from the artists, even if the latter won't do what the former expect...; so much the better in fact, for theorists need to be practically criticized by works that disturb them.[78]

Lyotard's later work on art and politics (from the late 1970s onwards) continues to assert the potentiality of the unrepresentable and remains critical of the politics of representation, but drifts from a Nietzschean commitment to pure affirmation, which he was subsequently to term 'evil' and 'naive'[79], to a more measured analysis of Kant's analytic of the sublime.[80] Lyotard here turns to Kant's 'third Critique', *The Critique of Judgement*, and in particular to the first part of this work, the 'Critique of Aesthetic Judgement'.[81] Lyotard's interest in this work is manifold, but I will here only focus on his particular interest in the Kant's theory of the sublime.[82] I will first briefly elucidate the main points of this theory.

In the first part of *The Critique of Judgement* Kant draws a distinction between the beautiful and the sublime. He argues that the beautiful, on one hand, involves an agreement between the faculties of imagination and understanding, and, as a judgement relating to taste, is induced by the form of its object. The sublime, on the other hand, involves a 'cacophonous' relation between the faculties of imagination and reason, and arises from that which is without form. In view of this, whilst the beautiful and the sublime are both indeterminate forms of judgement and please by their own account, they are fundamentally different, for whereas the beautiful is connected to the form of its object and is thus limited, the sublime, by contrast, arises from the without-form and is thus limitless. The key point that follows from this is that whereas the beautiful involves simply pleasure, as 'the powers of imagination and understanding engage with each other according to a suitable "ratio"', the sublime is a moment of excess that involves both pleasure and pain.[83] Lyotard argues that the pain of this moment arises from an inability of the mind or senses to represent objects that are 'too big according to their magnitude or too violent according to their power'.[84] This occurs, for example, when the imagination is called upon to comprehend an exceptionally large or indefinite series, and Lyotard argues: 'Beyond its absolute of presentation, thinking encounters the unpresentable, the unthinkable in the here and now, and what Burke calls horror takes hold of it'.[85]

The sublime feeling, however, is also pleasurable.[86] This pleasure comes, Lyotard argues, from the use of reason, for with the failure of the imagination to present form the mind discovers that it has the capacity to conceive of the infinite, and thus has the power to transcend everything that sense can measure and thus present. The sublime feeling here arises from the play between the finite nature of the senses and the infinite capacity of reason. Lyotard states: 'The object that is presented to reason in the phenomenon is never "big" enough with respect to the object of its Idea, and for the imagination the latter is always too "big" to be presentable'.[87] The outcome of the resulting *différend* between the faculties of presentation and conception is, Lyotard argues, that the immediate apprehension of forms retreats as ideas of reason begin to dominate the imagination, and this gives rise to a feeling of pleasure. This process, he claims, does not, however, signify the instrumental suppression of imagination by reason, but rather that reason is forced to find new forms of presentation in order to represent that which is without-form or without-limit. Lyotard here draws the important distinction between modern and postmodern approaches to the sublime. The former, he argues, merely attempt to present the fact that the unpresentable exists. He here cites the example of modern art, which, he argues, avoids representation by presenting things negatively: 'it will enable us to see only by making it impossible to see; it will please only by causing pain'.[88] In contrast to this, the postmodern approach to the sublime seeks to present rather than to conceal the unpresentable, and thus to put forward 'the unpresentable in presentation itself'.[89] Best and Kellner note, for example, that '[t]he sublime for Lyotard is precisely that which cannot be put into words, that which resists presentation in conventional forms and words, that which requires new language and forms'.[90] It is this pursuit of new language and forms which, for Lyotard, is postmodern or paralogical, as it involves the experimental search for new forms of presentation, and hence the quest to move beyond the rules of the existing (language) game.

A number of important points may be drawn from this analysis of Lyotard's work on art and aesthetics. One may note that Lyotard's work here is far more detailed and complex than that of Weber, whose theory of the aesthetic sphere remains largely undeveloped. In spite of this, however, both theorists share a similar view of the rationalisation and disenchantment of art in particular, and culture, more generally, and

both also see that art, at least in principle, offers a possible means of escape from the drive of modern rationalism. This latter point is of particular interest, for whilst Weber and Lyotard appear to be in agreement here, they are in fact divided over the actual possibility of this form of escape.

For Lyotard, as argued above, radical artistic practice offers a fundamental challenge to the order of Western rationalism. In his early work, Lyotard stresses, first, the potential of figure to disrupt rational systems from within their own space, and second, the connection of art and the unconscious, which, he claims, 'baffles power and knowledge'. This radical potentiality of the aesthetic also surfaces in Lyotard's later work on the sublime. First, Lyotard argues that the indeterminacy of the sublime offers a form of otherness that may disrupt the instrumental nature of contemporary culture. He states:

> To Wall Street and to NASA, the question of the sublime is not critical, to be sure. Not only is it necessary to represent, but one must also calculate, "estimate" in advance the represented quanta and the quanta of the representatives. This is the very definition of economic knowledge. The understanding, which figures and counts (even if only approximately), imposes its rule on to all objects, even aesthetic ones. This requires a time and a space under control.[91]

Second, he argues that the sublime forces the mind to search for new forms of presentation, thereby forcing reason away from a means-ends model of control and towards an engagement with the unknown. Lyotard's postmodern approach to the sublime here stands firmly against the logic of instrumental rationalism.

Weber, by contrast, is more circumspect in regards to the capacity of the aesthetic sphere to either resist or disrupt the rationalisation of the world. He argues, as noted above, that the aesthetic sphere is essentially 'non-rational' or 'anti-rational', and that it offers a form of salvation from the 'increasing pressures of theoretical and practical rationalism'. Here, like Lyotard, Weber recognises the radical potential of aesthetics. This said, however, if one searches outside of the *Zwischenbetrachtung* for further confirmation of this fact, a more cautious argument is to be found. In *Science as a Vocation*, for example, Weber, in reply to what he terms the 'craving for experience' of the German youth, argues that

> the spheres of the irrational, the only spheres that intellectualism has not yet touched, are now raised into consciousness and put under its lens. For in practice this is where the modern

> form of romantic irrationalism leads. This method of emancipation may well bring about the very opposite of what those who take to it conceive as its goal.[92]

This may be read as an argument against the potentiality of the aesthetic. Weber here suggests that even the 'non-rational' value-spheres tend towards rationalisation, and that engagement in 'romantic irrationalism', one could equally read 'aestheticism' or 'eroticism' here, results in simply another form of rationalism. This reading concurs with Weber's more general theory of the rationalisation of culture (see chapter 2), including, for example, the rationalisation of music.[93] One may note that on this point Weber and Lyotard depart, and here we return to the conclusion drawn in section 2 of this chapter. For whereas Weber sees the differentiation of culture as being accompanied by a movement towards instrumental rationality in all spheres of life, including the aesthetic, Lyotard, in contrast, sees an emancipatory moment in this process, and argues that there is a space in every system which is other to the rule of instrumental rationalism. This is not to suggest, however, that Weber views resistance to this process as an impossibility, but rather that this resistance, against Lyotard's belief, is likely to be contaminated by precisely the rationalism it seeks to oppose. In view of this, Weber chooses not to commit himself to aesthetic practice but instead pursues a pragmatic form of (neo-Kantian) critique which works within but against the limits of the modern world (see chapters 3 and 4).

6.4 Conclusion

One may conclude from the above that, on the whole, Lyotard views the possibility of subverting the instrumental rationalism of Western culture with greater optimism than Weber. For Lyotard, both postmodern science and radical artistic practice, which are not far removed from each other, contain an emancipatory moment which stands against the instrumental nature of the modern order, as does the postmodern differentiation of culture (the collapse of the grand narrative). For Weber, the emancipatory moment of each of these cases is effaced at the very point of its inception: science offers the potential to master life but at the same time gives rise to new technologies of domination, art offers a means of escape from the rationalised world but is likely to be seduced by the very rationalism it seeks to oppose, and the

differentiation of culture (the separation of the life-orders and value-spheres) promises individual autonomy but at the same time places limits on the scope of modern individuality. In view of this, one may conclude that whilst Weber and Lyotard share a number of similar concerns the tenor of their work is very different, for whilst Weber's analysis of the modern world is imbued with a sense of tragedy, Lyotard's work, whilst recognising the instrumental rationalism of modern culture, focuses upon the freedom to be found in the postmodern world, a freedom which, he argues, lies paradoxically in the nascent state of the modern. It may be argued that Lyotard, against his voiced intention, here succeeds only in establishing a new narrative of emancipation (paradoxically, a meta-narrative of the collapse of meta-narratives), or, a new form of Utopianism, both of which are rejected by Weber. This, in turn, however, raises a further question, namely whether the work of Lyotard, and more generally postmodern theory, reproduces the (modern) political forms it seeks to attack. This is a key point of interest, and is to be pursued further in the following chapter, which focuses on the work of Michel Foucault and raises the question of the authority of postmodern discourse.

Notes

[1] Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, p.73.

[2] Chris Rojek and Bryan Turner make this same point: 'Compared with Weber, Lyotard appears to inhabit a different moral and social universe', see 'Introduction: Judging Lyotard', pp.1-2.

[3] Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*, p.18.

[4] *Ibid.*, p.19.

[5] This is rather an over-simplification of Lyotard position as he later adds: 'even discussions of denotative statements need to have rules. Rules are not denotative but prescriptive utterances, which we are better off calling metaprescriptive utterances to avoid confusion (they prescribe what the moves of language games must be in order to be admissible)' , *ibid.*, p.65. Lyotard argues that it is the task of postmodern science (paralogy) to unmask and transcend these prescriptives.

[6] *Ibid.*, p.20.

[7] *Ibid.*, p.21.

[8] *Ibid.*.

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

[10] Lyotard does note, however, that scientific knowledge is indirectly a component of the social bond insofar as it 'develops into a profession and gives rise to institutions, and in modern societies language games consolidate themselves in the form of institutions run by qualified partners (the professional class', *ibid.*.

[11] *Ibid.*, p.27.

[12] See *Ibid.*, p.18.

[13] *Ibid.*, p.34.

[14] *Ibid.*, p.37. I here do not have the space to discuss the validity of this claim. For a critique of Lyotard on this point, see M. Conroy, 'Review of the Postmodern Condition', p.376.

[15] Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*, p.60.

[16] *Ibid.*, p.41.

[17] *Ibid.*, p.44-5.

[18] *Ibid.*, p.4.

[19] Lyotard argues that this logic is applied to the realm of education: 'The desired goal becomes the optimal contribution of higher education to the best performativity of the social system', *Ibid.*, p.48.

[20] *Ibid.*, p.46.

[21] One may note in passing Lyotard's conception of postmodern 'nature': 'Data banks are the Encyclopedia of tomorrow. They transcend the capacity of their users. They are "nature" for postmodern man', *ibid..*, p.51.

[22] *Ibid.*, p.60.

[23] *Ibid*, pp.55-6.

[24] I here use the term 'cultural differentiation' rather than 'cultural fragmentation' as both Weber and Lyotard see the existence of a degree of order underlying modern and postmodern culture. For Weber, for example, whilst the life-orders and their value-spheres separate out from each other with the transition to modernity, they remain tied together to some extent by the rationalisation of the world, and, in particular, by the general movement towards the rule of instrumental rationality. For Lyotard, underlying the general agonistics of postmodern society there remains a rather traditional conception of the social bond. See, for example, *The Postmodern Condition*, p.15.

[25] Lyotard argues: 'Language is the whole social bond (money is only an aspect of language, the accountable aspect, payment and credit, at any rate a play on differences of place or time)', 'A Svelte Appendix to the Postmodern Question', *Political Writings*, p27.

[26] Charles Turner, 'Lyotard and Weber', p.108.

[27] *Ibid.*, p.109.

[28] *Ibid.*, p.110.

[29] *Ibid.*, p.111, *emphasis original.*

[30] *Ibid.*.

[31] *Ibid.*, p.112.

[32] *Ibid.*, p.115.

[33] *Ibid.*. One may note in passing that Turner here does not draw a theory of tragedy from Weber's analysis of value-spheres in the *Zwischenbetrachtung* but from his lecture *Science as a Vocation.*

[34] See Charles Turner, *Modernity and Politics in the Work of Max Weber*, pp.60-85. Weber, in his essays on *Roscher and Knies*, is particularly critical of the idea of the 'epoch' and of the idea of Hegelian synthesis. For a comprehensive account of the opposition between neo-Kantianism and Hegelianism, see Gillian Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, chapter 1.

[35] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained to Children*, p.35.

[36] The translator of *Just Gaming* (Wlad Godzich), anticipating precisely this misunderstanding, states: 'Postmodern is not to be taken in a periodizing sense', *Just Gaming*, p.16.

[37] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p.79.

[38] *Ibid.*, p.82.

[39] Lyotard, *Peregrinations*, p.7.

[40] *Ibid.*, p.22.

[41] Lyotard, *Just Gaming*, p.17 and p.59

[42] Turner, 'Lyotard and Weber', p.112.

[43] Lyotard, *Driftworks*, p.10.

[44] Lyotard, *The Differend*, p.xi. I am here unable to discuss Lyotard's idea of the *differend* at any length. For an overview of the complex argument of *The Differend*, see Geoffrey Bennington, *Lyotard: Writing the Event*, pp.106-75, David Carroll, *Paraesthetics*, pp.158-184, Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory*, pp.167-171, and Bill Readings, *Introducing Lyotard*, pp.105-27.

[45] Turner, 'Lyotard and Weber', p.115.

[46] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p.10.

[47] Lyotard, 'Presentations', *Philosophy in France Today*, p.121.

[48] For Lyotard, tragedy is connected to time. He states, for example: 'The decay of epic or the decline of tragedy...implies the end of periodic rhythm as such', *Peregrinations*, p.2.

[49] Geoffrey Bennington, *Lyotard: Writing the Event*, p.113. Charles Turner is one such intellectual, for in spite of his critique of the 'need for a feeling of totality', he nevertheless supports what he sees as Weber's search for 'foundations for the unity of culture'. See, for example, Turner, 'Lyotard and Weber', p.110

[50] See Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained to Children*, p.40.

[51] On this concept of terror, see Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p.46.

[52] Lyotard argues that 'in the diverse invitations to suspend artistic experimentation, there is an identical call for order, a desire for unity, for identity, for security, or popularity', *Postmodern Condition*, p.73. Bauman's analysis of the violence of the modern quest for order is a direct development of Lyotard's position here. See *Postmodernity and Its Discontents*, chapters 1 and 2.

[53] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, pp.81-2.

[54] Lyotard here argues that the social bond is implied in the concept of the self: 'A *self* does not amount to much, but no self is an island; each exists in a fabric of relations that is now more complex and mobile than ever before', p.15.

[55] *Ibid.*, p.17.

[56] *Ibid.*.

[57] Weber, 'Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions', p.341.

[58] *Ibid.*, p.342.

[59] Lyotard, *Driftworks*, p.27. He adds to this: ' In a society reputed to be archaic, there is a certain function of art that is, in fact, a religious function in the strict sense of the term: art, in this case, belongs to the society's system of self-integration: it is an integral part of the system. One could say, moreover, that the culture of this society is also simply an art. It functions as a religion, as something that joins people by putting them to communicate...This type of art has become impossible', *Ibid.*, pp.71-2.

[60] Lyotard argues, for example: 'Aesthetics is the mode taken by a civilization that has been deserted by its ideals. It cultivates the pleasure of representing. And so calls itself culture', *Postmodern Fables*, p.235. Weber is similarly sceptical of the disenchanted nature of modern culture. See, for example, 'Religious Rejections of the World', pp.356-7.

[61] Lyotard, *Driftworks*, pp.71-2.

[62] Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', p.137.

[63] Weber, 'Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions', p.342.

[64] David Carroll rightly notes that Lyotard's work attacks the discourse of aesthetics. In view of this Carroll employs the term *paraesthetics* which, he argues, 'indicates something like an aesthetics turned against itself or pushed beyond or beside itself, a faulty, improper aesthetics - one not content to remain within the area defined by the aesthetic. Paraesthetics describes a critical approach to aesthetics for which art is a question not a given, an aesthetics in which art does not have a determined place of a fixed definition', *Paraesthetics*, p.xiv.

[65] This work is not available in English translation in its entirety. The following sections, however, have been translated: 'The Dream-Work Does Not Think', *Lyotard Reader*, pp.19-55, (*Discours, Figure* pp.239-270); 'The Connivances of Desire with the Figural', *Driftworks*, pp.57-68 (*Discours, Figure* pp.271-9), and 'Fiscourse, Digure', *Theatre Journal*, October 1983, (*Discours, Figure* pp.333-57). I here, for reasons of space, only give the barest outline this complex work. For a detailed overview of the argument of *Discours, Figure* see David Carroll, *Paraesthetics* pp.30-43; Geoffrey Bennington, *Writing the Event*; Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory*, pp.148-152, and Peter Dews, *Logics of Disintegration*, pp.112-128

[66] Bill Readings, *Introducing Lyotard*, p.4.

[67] Lyotard, *Driftworks*, p.65.

[68] Lyotard argues: 'Where do you criticise from? Don't you see that criticizing is still knowing, knowing better? That the critical relation still falls within the sphere of knowledge, of "realization" and thus of the assumption of power? Critique must be drifted out of', *Ibid.*, p.13. On the tendency of critique to remain caught within the position of its object, see chapter 8.

[69] See here, for example, Lyotard's analysis of music. He argues that the rules of classical composition impose a number of 'grids which filters the flows of energy, in this case sound'. 'These grids', he continues, 'are not things (there are no things): they are libidinal investments that block the entrance and exit of certain sound-noises, and that maintain and transmit themselves', *Ibid.*, pp.94-5. Lyotard here argues for 'deafness to the rules of composition', and for the potential of silence and unresolved dissonance to disrupt the rational basis which underlies and orders the form of Western music.

[70] I here do not have the space to analyse this complex work in any detail. For a detailed discussion of *Libidinal Economy*, see Peter Dews, *Logics of Disintegration*, pp.128-143; Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory*, pp.152-160; David Carroll, *Paraesthetics*, pp.43-52.

[71] See 'The Tensor', *Lyotard Reader*, p.7.

[72] Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, p.262.

[73] Lyotard, *Driftworks*, p.74.

[74] *Ibid.*, pp.82-3.

[75] Roger McKeon, 'Opening', *Driftworks*, p.1.

[76] Lyotard is here clearly alluding to a form of political situationism. This commitment to situationism is noted by I.H. Grant, *Libidinal Economy*, p.xvii, and by David Macey, who refers to 'Lyotard's secret kinship with the Situationists', 'Obituary of Jean-François Lyotard', p.53.

[77] On the March 22 Movement, see Lyotard's essay March 23, *Political Writings*, pp.60-7.

[78] Lyotard, *Driftworks*, p.30.

[79] Lyotard, *Peregrinations*, p.13.

[80] This is not to suggest, however, that Lyotard simply abandons the work of Nietzsche for that of Kant, for in a number of respects he drifts between the two. He argues in *The Postmodern Condition*, for example, that 'I see a much earlier modulation of Nietzschean perspectivism in the Kantian theme of the sublime', p.77. One may also note that Lyotard retains his interest in Freud. He argues, for example, that Kant's distinction between the beautiful and the sublime is in many respects analogous to Freud's theory of the conscious and unconscious. Lyotard states: 'secondary repression is to primary repression as the beautiful is to the sublime - and this with respect to the matter or quality of what for Kant is the given, for Freud the notion of excitation, with respect to the capacity to synthesize in Kant and to associate in Freud, with respect to the spatiotemporal form in the former or to the formation unconscious-preconscious in the latter and, finally, with respect to the way in which neither the Kantian sublime nor the Freudian *Nachträglichkeit* lets itself be inscribed in "memory", even as an unconscious one', *Heidegger and the Jews*, p.5.

[81] See Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, pp.8-227.

[82] I here do not have the space to address, for example, Lyotard's argument for the heteronomy of the faculties, and, following this, his argument that Kant failed to restore unity to philosophy through the third *Critique*. For a brief overview of these important points, see Stuart Sim, *Jean-François Lyotard*, pp.99-103.

[83] Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, p.72.

[84] Lyotard, *Peregrinations*, p.40.

[85] Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, p.110. This question of the 'here and now' is important, as the sublime, Lyotard argues, is intimately connected to time. On this complex point see his essay on Barnett Newman and the 'here and now', *The Inhuman*, pp.89-107.

[86] Lyotard states: 'The sublime sentiment...carries with it both pleasure and pain. Better still, in it pleasure derives from pain', *Postmodern Condition*, p.77. Sim is thus clearly mistaken in presenting the sublime as a case 'where pain is the experience rather than pleasure', *Jean-François Lyotard*, p.99.

[87] Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, p.233.

[88] Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*, p.78.

[89] *Ibid.*, p.81.

[90] Best and Kellner, *Postmodern Theory*, p.170.

[91] Lyotard, *Heidegger and the Jews*, pp.40-1.

[92] Weber, *Science as a Vocation*, p.143.

[93] See, for example, Weber's *The Rational and Social Foundations of Music*.

Chapter VII

Max Weber and Michel Foucault: The Political Sphere Revisited

'[T]he historian must...venture forth by lending his or her ear to what is not presentable under the rule of knowledge' (Lyotard).[1]

'[K]nowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting' (Foucault).[2]

There are a number of strong similarities between the work of Max Weber and Michel Foucault. These similarities arise primarily from a shared concern for the impact of cultural rationalisation upon the leading of life (*Lebensführung*), or, more precisely, the bearing of instrumental rationality (for Foucault power/knowledge) on individual freedom. This shared concern, as Colin Gordon notes, is apparent in their respective studies of 'forms of domination and techniques of discipline, their concern with what Weber called "the power of rationality over men", their writings on methodology and intellectual ethics, their interest in Nietzsche - and the effect of that interest on the critical reception of their thought'.[3] This chapter, however, will move away from an analysis of these shared interests, which have now been well documented, and instead will focus on the responses of Weber and Foucault to the instrumental rationalism of modern culture. This analysis will proceed as follows. First, it will outline the genealogical practice which forms the basis of Foucault's challenge to the modern order, and will illustrate his use of this historical method through a brief

study of his genealogies of discipline and sexuality. Following this, a comparison will be made between Weber's cultural science and Foucault's genealogical history, and of the distinct political practices to which each gives rise. Finally, a comparison will be made between the different political ethics advanced by Weber and Foucault, and here the question of the authority of their respective works will be raised.

7.1 Foucault's Genealogical Practice

The work of Foucault, like that of Weber, contains an account and critique of the instrumental rationalism of modern Western culture. This is evident, for example, in *The Order of Things*, which charts the development of intellectual culture from the sixteenth century onwards, and connects profound changes in the historical foundations of knowledge (the *episteme*) to the emergence of new forms of thought and cultural classification. This account focuses on the shifts in the structure of knowledge that enabled the transition from Renaissance and Classical thought to Modern culture, which, through disciplines such as political science and philology, first created 'Man' as both a subject and object of knowledge. This narrative of the historical rationalisation of culture, is, in the words of Scott Lash, 'a periodisation of *instrumental* rationality'[4], for Foucault defines the modern, in contradistinction to Classical and Renaissance culture, as an order in which scientific knowledge gives rise to new, more complete forms of political domination. This periodisation of instrumental rationality frames many of Foucault's historical writings: *Madness and Civilisation* depicts the movement from the *Stultifera Navis* to the modern asylum; *Discipline and Punish* the transition from physical torture to modern discipline and correction; and *The History of Sexuality* the descent from the classical age of sovereign power to the modern order of bio-power (see below). The collective message of these historical accounts is similar to that expressed by Weber in *Science as a Vocation*: cultural rationalisation, whilst promising individual autonomy and human 'progress', in fact leads to new technologies of domination, for it provides the means for increased knowledge of, and power over, 'Man'.

Foucault's resistance to this process of cultural rationalisation, unlike that advanced in the work of Weber (see below, section 3), proceeds through two forms of historical practice. First, an archaeology of truth which exhumes and 'defines the conditions under which a true knowledge is possible'[5] in order to expose the 'history of that which renders necessary a certain form of thought'.[6] Second, a genealogical counter-history of the present which maps discursive production in a present-relevant field of power and knowledge in order to expose and transform the limits that define 'the contemporary field of possible experience'.[7] This latter practice is informed by, but also extends the scope of the former, as it moves beyond an analytic of discursive production to a critical analysis of the interpenetration of history, truth, power, and the present. It is this exercise in critique, in particular the challenge of Foucault's genealogy to the instrumental rationalism of modern institutions and to the progressive 'sameness' of modern culture, which is of specific interest in this chapter.

Foucault outlines the methodology of this genealogical practice in his 1971 paper 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', in which he explores the philosophical basis of a form of history which challenges the idea of human 'progress' through exposition and transfiguration of the historical limits of power, truth, and identity. He presents genealogical history as an untimely meditation which disturbs the singularity of human memory through dispersion of the historical origin and exposition of the alterity concealed within history. The aim of this severe style of history is to rid the present of its internalised enslavement to the past through dissipation of the historical identity of modern 'Man'.[8] Foucault argues that genealogy disturbs the security of this anthropological subject through the restoration of political philosophy to a critical philosophy of the limit.[9] It removes 'Man' from the centre of political practice, instead pointing to historical difference in order to demarcate and decentre the limits of identity. Foucault here argues:

> The purpose of history, guided by genealogy, is not to discover the roots of our identity but to commit itself to its dissipation. It does not seek to define our unique threshold of emergence, the homeland to which metaphysicians promise a return; it seeks to make visible all of those discontinuities that cross us.[10]

This historical practice shatters the appearance of historical unilinearity through exposition of the unstable multiplicity of historical descent. This practice operates at a

micro-level, seeking, like the work of Lyotard, to eschew grand narratives in favour of local events[11], and to address 'a layer of material which had hitherto had no pertinence for history and which had not been recognised as having any moral, aesthetic, political or historical value'.[12] Genealogy recalls, reassembles, and magnifies these forgotten or obscured fragments or accidents of history, mapping them within historical relations of power and knowledge, not to resurrect the past in terms of the present, but in an active bid to write 'the history of the present'.[13]

Foucault, as noted by Mitchell Dean, pursues this historical practice on the basis of Nietzsche's essay 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life'[14], in which genealogy is employed to oppose three Platonic modalities of history: the *monumental* veneration of historical events; the *antiquarian* continuity of identity through the preservation and reverence of the past; and the *critical* judgement of the past on the basis of present truths.[15] In opposition to this historical tradition, Nietzsche proposes three new means for the use of history. It is worth quoting Foucault's depiction of these at length, for they encapsulate the aims of his historical practice, and form the basis of what he terms a 'history of the present'[16] :

> The first is parodic, directed against reality, and opposes the theme of history as reminiscence or recognition; the second is dissociative, directed against identity, and opposes history given as continuity or representative of a tradition; the third is sacrificial, directed against truth, and opposes history as knowledge. They imply a use of history that severs its connection to memory, its metaphysical and anthropological model, and constructs a counter-memory - a transformation of history into a totally different form of time.[17]

Foucault claims that this form of transfigurative history may be used to form the basis of an experimental mode of political resistance and transgression, arguing that it may be employed to expose the conditions under which political knowledge is formed and functions, and to exploit the instability of history wherever discourses are in competition or in the process of transformation. Foucault's use of genealogy hence centres on the historical fragility of discursive redistribution, on the conflict, for example, between the spectacle of the scaffold and 'carceral' society, and between the discourse of the *ars erotica* and *scientia sexualis* (see below, section 6.2). Foucault employs genealogy to rework these points of discursive conflict to reveal and transform the limits of what we are and what we may possibly become. This practice,

like archaeology, is a form of counter-history, 'nothing more than a rewriting: that is, in the preserved form of exteriority, a regulated transformation of what has already been written'.[18] It is a form of critical description that works against the grain of 'official' knowledge to level the hierarchical ranking of ideas, and to reveal the discursive and institutional modalities of subjection and normalisation which produce 'true', functional forms of knowledge. This practice pits discourse against discourse through a retrieval of marginal or subjugated knowledges which have been disqualified or obscured by 'official' histories.[19] This resuscitation of subjugated knowledge - that of the madman, the patient, the delinquent - destabilises the present through the dissemination of our historical descent and emergence, reminding us of the proximity and potentiality of historical difference, and thereby opening new possibilities of political transfiguration. It recalls the historical closure of difference in an ontological critique of the limits of the powers that define the possibility of becoming otherwise. This ontology constitutes a form of political practice which dissipates the singularity of memory by revealing the historical limit as a site of practical and theoretical transgression.[20] Foucault argues, for example:

> The critical ontology of ourselves has to be considered not, certainly, as a theory, a doctrine, nor even as a permanent body of knowledge that is accumulating; it has to be conceived as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them.[21]

The possibility of transgressing these limits of subjectivity, which may be both restricting and empowering, lies, for Foucault, in the recollection of the cultural alterity concealed within the history of the present. Foucault's genealogical counter-histories, unlike the work of Baudrillard (see chapter 8), do not, however, recall the past in order to recommend a nostalgic return to a form of pre-modern history, rather they use this history to reinstate the transfigurative possibility of historical otherness. The *Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self*, for example, do not explore the different sexual ethics of ancient Greece and Rome simply to reminisce or to prescribe a particular way of life, but to disturb the limits of the present through the historical exposition of cultural difference.[22] In view of this, Jürgen Habermas is, I believe, mistaken in understanding Foucault's genealogical practice as a conservative form of anti-

modernism that removes 'into the sphere of the far away and the archaic the spontaneous powers of imagination, of self-experience and of emotionality'.[23] Foucault's genealogical history is rather a radical form of political provocation which seeks to invigorate the present by using the past to reveal and contest the limits of existence today. This practice attempts to destabilise the power-knowledge relations which define the historical order of identity and memory, thereby opening, as John Rajchman rightly notes, the possibility of a heterotopian future, which, at least in theory, we are left to pursue.[24] Foucault here claims to employ genealogy to recall historical difference, not to prescribe a particular route to a particular future, but to open the very limits of political possibility to demarcation and transgression.[25]

7.2 Foucault's Use of Genealogy

Foucault first applies this historical practice in *Discipline and Punish*, which he terms 'a genealogy of the present scientifico-legal complex from which the power to punish derives its bases, justifications and rules, from which it extends its effects and by which it masks its exorbitant singularity'.[26] This genealogy erects an historical counter-memory against the Enlightenment narrative of 'progress' through a dissemination of the powers underlying the transition of punishment from physical torture to the present culture of correction and discipline. Foucault here locates the historical specificity of law within a political landscape of power and knowledge, reworking this shift from feudal to modern punishment in order to reveal changes in the underlying fabric of societal power relations.[27]

This work opens with an horrific account of the public torture and execution of a regicide in Paris, 1757, an event Foucault explains in terms of its ritual reaffirmation of sovereign power. He states:

> The public execution...belongs to a whole series of great rituals in which power is eclipsed and restored (coronation, entry of the king into a conquered city, the submission of rebellious subjects); over and above the crime that has placed the sovereign in contempt, it deploys before all eyes an invincible force. Its aim is not so much to re-establish a balance as to bring into play, as its extreme point, the dissymmetry between the subject who has dared to violate the law and the all-powerful sovereign who displays his strength.[28]

Foucault argues that by the end of the eighteenth century this volatile regime of princely centred power had been replaced by a new contractual order, and punishment as a spectacle largely disappeared. The sovereign power to punish, Foucault argues, here gave way to that of the reforming jurists, who sought to requalify individuals as juridical subjects, and punished by sign and analogy rather than by physical force. This semiotic modality of punishment, however, was short-lived, for it was soon displaced by a 'scientific' knowledge of 'man' and an economy of power centred on the production of docile individuals, reflected in the birth of corrective institutions and the technology of panoptic surveillance.[29]

Foucault argues, however, that this historical separation of pain and punishment is not indicative of human progress, for it freed the criminal from the horrors of the scaffold only through the investment of life itself within a network of normalising power. This process, which may be read as a manifestation of the rise of instrumental rationalism in the West, and which is marked by the birth of the prison and the discourse of criminal science, shifted the site of punishment from the body to the soul, and connected punishment to the production and transformation of individuals. In view of this, Foucault treats 'punishment as a political tactic'[30], observing that '[h]umanity does not gradually progress from combat to combat until it arrives at universal reciprocity, where the rule of law finally replaces warfare; humanity installs each of its violences in a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination to domination'.[31] His genealogy traces and magnifies the devices that have enabled this continuity of domination, exposing, for example, the prison time-table as a means for cataloguing and routinising life, and the examination as a means for measuring, classifying and standardising individual performance. Foucault here attempts to disturb the chimera of modern progress, arguing that liberation from torture only subjugated life to a new technology of domination, one in which power itself is at once both beneath and beyond the law. He states:

> although the universal juridicism of modern society seems to fix limits on the exercise of power, its universally widespread panopticism enables it to operate, on the underside of the law, a machinery that is both immense and minute, which supports, reinforces, multiplies the asymmetry of power and undermines the limits that are traced around the law'.[32]

Foucault further develops this exposition of formative micro-powers in the first volume of the *History of Sexuality*. Here, extending the thesis of *Discipline and Punish*, he argues that power no longer exists as the sovereign right of life or death, but as a normalising strategy which invests itself within the individual, permeating life to its core.[33] He terms this *bio-power*; a technology of normalisation that disciplines humanity at the level of life through material subjugation of the body. One crucial manifestation of this *bio-power* is sexuality, which, for Foucault, captures and penetrates life irrespective of subjective consciousness or representation, producing and incarcerating both body and life through power and discourse. Foucault pursues a *dissociative* history of this process, and inverts the seemingly 'repressive' identity of Victorian sexuality to reveal a hidden regime of life production, one that invests and reinvests normalising *bio-power* within the individual through the *scientia sexualis*: a vast array of technical discourse which includes medicine, psychiatry and pedagogy. On the basis of this, he draws the following observation:

> Sex was a means of access both to the life of the body and the life of the species. It was employed as a standard for the disciplines and as a basis for regulations. This is why in the nineteenth century sexuality was sought out in the smallest details of individual existences; it was tracked down in behaviour, pursued in dreams; it was suspected of underlying the least follies, it was traced back to the earliest years of childhood; it became the stamp of individuality - at the same time what enabled one to analyse the latter and what made it possible to master it.[34]

Foucault here employs genealogy to reveal the mechanisms through which *bio-power* permeates the individual, propagates the discourse of sexuality, and is exercised through this knowledge. On the basis of this, he argues that the constitution and normalisation of subjectivity is inextricably bound to relations of power and knowledge. This argument for the normalisation of society through the exercise of these relations is a development of Weber's rationalisation thesis, for it suggests that the accumulation of 'rational' knowledge gives rise to new forms of domination and discipline which routinise modern life. Indeed, one may argue that Foucault here extends Weber's work on the question of rationalisation through historical analysis of the rule of instrumental rationalism within institutions (the prison) and ideas (the discourse of sexuality), and over life itself (*bio-power*).

7.3 Cultural Science and Genealogical History

In this respect, Foucault's genealogical histories complement Weber's analysis and critique of the rationalisation and disenchantment of the world. Foucault's work, like that of Weber, offers an account of the rise and operation of instrumental rationalism both at the level of ideas (culture) and at the level of the institution (the prison, the clinic, the asylum), and, further to this, addresses the impact of this rationalism upon the leading of life in the modern world. These similarities between the work of Weber and Foucault, and in particular the similarities between their respective accounts of the rise of bureaucratic or disciplinary societies, have been noted by theorists such as Colin Gordon, Scott Lash, and John O'Neill.[35] In spite of these similarities, however, one may note that the work of Weber and Foucault, although equally critical of instrumental rationalism, clearly differs both in form and intent, for whilst Foucault employs genealogy to open the possibility of transgressing the limits of the modern order (see above, section 1), Weber's work is neither genealogical in nature nor affirms this anarchic spirit of transgression, for it seeks rather to work concurrently within and against the limits of modernity (see chapters 3 and 4). The forms of resistance to instrumental rationalism advanced in the work of Weber and Foucault are here very different, as are the political and ethical positions which are forwarded in their respective writings.

The question of the political nature of Weber and Foucault's work has been raised, albeit implicitly rather than explicitly, by David Owen in his work *Maturity and Modernity*.[36] It is here worth examining briefly a number of the key arguments regarding the work of Weber and Foucault which are forwarded in the volume. Owen argues, first, that Weber's work in fact shares a similar evaluative interest to that of Nietzsche and Foucault, namely whether the 'autonomous individual' can become 'the dominant human type in modern culture'[37], and, further to this, that his cultural science, in pursuing this interest, constructs a 'history of the present' which, like the work of Foucault, is genealogical in nature. This argument is important for it challenges the conventional view that Weber's methodology rests upon an application

of the principles of Baden neo-Kantianism. Owen here claims that Weber's cultural science is in fact an extension of Nietzsche's genealogical perspectivism, arguing that Weber sides with Nietzsche and against Rickert in rejecting the possibility of an objective value of truth, that Weber's doctrine of value-freedom embodies Nietzsche's commitment to reflexivity and probity, and that his ideal-type methodology embraces Nietzsche's value perspectivism. Further to this, Owen argues that the actual purpose of Weber's work is the same as Nietzsche's: 'to provide a "context of meaning" within which the development of *Menschentum* may be understood and evaluated in terms of the fate of man in modernity'.[38] And on this basis, Owen reads Weber's work, in particular his sociology of religion, as a genealogy of modernity, one which is broadly similar in form to those forwarded by Nietzsche and Foucault insofar as it is concerned 'with how we have become what we are, that is to say, with articulating a history of the present'.[39]

There are, however, a number of important difficulties in this reading of Weber which are worthy of reflection. First, Owen's presentation of Weber's work is in many respects one-sided, for it accentuates the 'Nietzschean commitments' of Weber's methodology whilst playing down its debt to neo-Kantian philosophy, and the points at which it departs from Nietzsche's work. Owen makes no reference, for example, to Weber's neo-Kantian theory of concept formation and reality, and accentuates Nietzschean themes that are found in Weber's early (1895) 'Inaugural Freiburg Lecture', in particular those regarding the 'greatness and nobility of our human nature', whilst overlooking the critique of historical progress and evolution which may be found in neo-Kantian value-philosophy. Habermas rightly reminds us of this latter point, arguing that '[n]eo-Kantianism gained special significance for the critique of evolutionist approaches in the social sciences because of its theory of value...This is the background to Weber's position in the controversy over value judgements in social science'.[40]

Second, as noted in the introduction to this thesis, it is clearly difficult to identify a single evaluative interest which runs through the entirety of Weber's work, for whilst, as Owen argues, Weber is interested in the development of *Menschentum* and in the 'fate of man in modernity', these questions, as Wilhelm Hennis and

Lawrence Scaff have argued, do not represent Weber's sole evaluative interests (see chapter 1). This leads to a third difficulty in Owen's argument: that because Weber is interested in the development of *Menschentum* and in the fate of man, his work constitutes a 'history of the present' and is thus genealogical. Owen is here right to note that a number of Weber's studies - particularly those which address the rise of capitalism and the fate of the Western order, for example *The Protestant Ethic*, *Science as a Vocation* and *Politics as a Vocation* - do facilitate an understanding of the present. This said, however, the present-relevance of Weber's historical sociology is not always clear, indeed, often it has to be reconstructed according to a particular evaluative interest, for works such as *The Religion of India* or *The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilisations* contain very few references to the present, and are, moreover, interesting not simply as documents which lend weight to Weber's thesis regarding the rise of capitalism in the West, but as historical documents in their own right. The main difficulty here is that most historical studies, if one reads them actively, can be read in terms of their relevance to the present, and on this basis, if one follows Owen, can be seen to be genealogical. In view of this, the distinction between historical writing and genealogical practice must be pursued in greater detail.

There are, I believe, a number of important distinctions between Weber's historical sociology and the genealogical practice of Nietzsche and Foucault which are overlooked by Owen. First, Weber's historical account of the rise of capitalism, or, more broadly, modernity, is comparative but also *developmental* in nature. This account, against the arguments of Lyotard and Foucault (see chapter 6 and above), traces the origins of Western culture and establishes a meta-narrative of the stages and direction of its subsequent development (see chapter 2). Second, genealogy, as Foucault, following Nietzsche, argues, is not simply history which is relevant to the present but is a critical *and* transgressive practice. Whilst Owen rightly notes that Weber's work is critical in nature (a position which is forwarded in the first half of this thesis), there is little evidence to suggest that it seeks either to be transgressive or to open the possibility of transgression (see chapter 9). The key point here is that Weber's sociology of religion and Foucault's genealogies of discipline and sexuality are different in style and intention. On one hand, Weber's historical analyses seek clarity

and objectivity in order to enable an understanding of facts or actions at the levels of causality and meaning, and do not seek to motivate the overcoming of the modern order. Weber, whilst recognising the indispensibility of an initial evaluative interest (as stated in his theory of value-relevance (*Wertbeziehung*)), here attempts to avoid entering into the realm of practical or subjective evaluations, and, as a result, relatively few of his works even contain critical judgements on the nature of Western culture.[41] On the other hand, the work of Foucault is not just openly critical of the instrumental nature of Western culture, it itself is a transgressive practice which seeks to open the possibility of becoming other, and which, following Nietzsche calls for a 'revaluation' of the values of modernity. Foucault here does not employ genealogy to establish clear, objective facts, indeed he notes that it would not matter if his histories were fictions, but to overturn modern values, and, as argued above, to affirm forms of otherness which lie both within and outside of the hegemonic sameness of our age.

The historical practices of Weber and Foucault here differ from each other both in terms of form and intent, and are intimately connected to two opposing forms of political practice. Weber's work, on the one hand, whilst refusing to arbitrate within value-disputes and retaining an heuristic quality, seeks to transcend opinion (*doxa*) in a bid to establish, clarify, and understand the nature of social action. In view of this, Zygmunt Bauman characterises Weber as a modern legislator, for not only does he attempt to bring some degree of order to the chaos of modern values, but, in doing so, 'argues the case for the truth of the sociologist through denigrating the cognitive value of lay knowledge'.[42] Weber, whilst committed to a neo-Kantian ethic of value-freedom (*Wertfreiheit*) in academic work, here makes a case for the *value* of specialised vocational activity which goes beyond the work of the mere dilettante. Indeed, for Weber, it is precisely this vocational activity which, through the responsible work of the scientist (chapter 3) and political leader (chapter 4), opens the possibility of resistance to the rationalisation to the world. And in this sense, Weber questions but also conveys the authority of the specialist to engage in legislative activity.

In spite of this, one may note that both Weber and Foucault are critical of intellectual work which attempts to confer the legitimacy of an 'ought', and which thereby prescribes a direction for political practice. Foucault, in similar fashion to

Weber, argues: 'I hold that the role of the intellectual today is not that of establishing laws or proposing solutions or prophesying, since by doing that one can only contribute to the functioning of a determinate situation of power that to my mind must be criticised'.[43] Foucault, however, unlike Weber, extends this critique of authority to all acts of legislation, from the practice of establishing objective historical facts through to political activity itself. He here argues that the purpose of intellectual work is neither to educate nor legislate but to open history to the free play of lay interpretation. He agues that this practice, which centres on the local rather than the 'world-historical', and which proclaims the 'death of the author' rather than the authority of a universal subject, calls for a new type of 'specific' intellectual, and not for a universal 'master of truth and justice'. Foucault here argues:

> A new mode of the "connection between theory and practice" has been established. Intellectuals have got used to working, not in the "universal", the "exemplary", the "just-and-true-for-all", but within specific sectors, at the precise points where their own conditions of life or work situate them...This is what I would call the "specific" intellectual as opposed to the "universal" intellectual.[44]

This specific intellectual, for Foucault, escapes from the dogma of political leadership through the non-evaluative exposition of the historical limits of power and knowledge. This experimental strategy seeks to leave the ends of intellectual and political work (between which, for Foucault, there is no clear separation) undefined, and, at least in theory, transfers the responsibility for the nature and direction of political practice from the author (the legislator) to the reader (the lay interpreter).

7.4 The Political Ethics of Legislative and Interpretive Practice

Weber's modern commitment to what Bauman terms legislative activity and Foucault's postmodern practice of interpretation are based upon opposing political ethics. On one hand, Weber's work is grounded upon a practical ethic of conduct, an ethic which claims, for example, that it is the duty of the vocational politician to pursue and protect ultimate values whilst at the same time bearing responsibility for the consequences of their actions. This type of political activity, he argues, is to proceed through the rational evaluation of the purpose, means and ends of actions, and rests

upon a sense of responsibility in intellectual and political work (see chapters 3 and 4). On the other hand, Foucault's genealogical practice rests upon a postmodern ethics of difference, an anti-humanist ethics committed to the exposition of otherness within history rather than to the affirmation of legislative responsibility. The legislative definition of individual duty is, for Foucault, simply another form of dogmatism, another exercise of authority or power which constrains transgressive activity. In view of this, the question for Foucault is not of an 'ought', an imperative prescribing the value of responsible individual commitment, but of work which does not seek to represent others and which leaves the future open to possibility.[45]

The marked difference between these two political ethics, these two forms of resistance to the drive of modern rationalism, becomes clear if one contrasts their respective positions before what Weber terms the 'ethical irrationality' of the world.[46] One may here note that Foucault and Weber both emphasise the historical relation of politics and violence. Weber, for example, defines the state as 'the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory'[47], arguing that '[t]he decisive means for politics is violence'[48], whilst Foucault inverts Clausewitz's assertion that war is politics continued by other means to suggest instead that 'power is war, a war continued by other means'.[49] For Weber, this connection of politics and violence effectively defines the role of the vocational politician: he/she is to take a definite stand whilst at the same time weighing up the relation of political means and ends, and bearing personal responsibility for the consequences. For Foucault, however, the intimate relation of politics and violence, whilst a point of concern, does not shape the content of his writings, for he formally declares no control over, and interest in, the destination of his work, and thus the political effects produced by his genealogical histories.[50] Indeed, Foucault claims to employ genealogy not to prescribe a specific end but to *reconstitute* subjugated knowledge, knowledge which, under the force of its own intrinsic dynamism, may expose the limits of cultural identity and thus open possibilities of transgression. This disengaged practice, which refrains both from commentary and analysis, effectively leaves subjugated knowledge, that of the parricide Pierre Rivière or the regicide Damiens, to its own devices. This is a practice that Jacques Derrida notes with respect to *Madness and Civilisation*:

> In writing a history of madness, Foucault has attempted...to write a history of madness *itself*. *Itself*. Of madness itself. That is, by letting madness speak for itself. Foucault wanted madness to be the *subject* of his book in every sense of the word: its theme and its first person narrator, its author, madness speaking about itself.[51]

This separation of the author from the authority of the work he/she produces disjoins political authorship from any specific intentions and refuses political responsibility in favour of the contingency of discursive play.[52] This practice, which attempts to free knowledge from dogma by releasing subjugated knowledge and to thereby open history to difference, unmasks the historical conditions and authority of knowledge regardless of the consequences which may follow. In view of this, genealogy may be seen to be a radical but dangerous practice, for it leaves open the possibility of political transfiguration by eschewing political rationality and responsibility in favour of the free play of discursive forces.

Weber's practical ethics and Foucault's ethics of difference here reside in stark contrast. For Weber, it is the duty both of the political leader and of the intellectual to take account of the bearing of his/her work on the future. This idea is prominent in the 1895 Inaugural Lecture, in which Weber argues:

> It is certain that there can be no work in political economy on any other than an altruistic basis. The overwhelming majority of the fruits of the economic, social, and political endeavours of the present are garnered not by the generation now alive but by the generations of the future. If our work is to retain any meaning it can only be informed by this: concern for the *future*, for *those who will come after us*.[53]

Weber is here acutely aware of the relation of politics and violence, and, in view of this, argues that the intellectual must take responsibility for the future, even if, or perhaps precisely because, the consequences of our actions are not always as intended. This same concern is voiced over twenty years later in 'Politics as a Vocation', in which Weber stresses the need for the political leader to weigh up the relations between the means and ends, intentions and possible consequences, of action (see chapter 4). The important point here is that Weber, unlike Foucault, refuses to leave political ends open to interpretation, rather, following Fichte, he 'takes account of precisely the average deficiencies of people' and refuses to 'presuppose their goodness and perfection'.[54] Weber places no faith in the eudemonistic outcome of political practice, and indeed argues that, given the ethical irrationality of the world, the

political leader must take personal responsibility for political consequences rather than leaving 'the results with the Lord'.[55] Foucault, by contrast, whilst not an advocate of an ethic of ultimate ends, places his faith in the potentiality of interpretation and the possibility of self-transfiguration, and on this basis disengages himself from the consequences of political practice. In this respect, Foucault shares a similar position to that of Weber's 'mystic', for he claims to 'resist no evil' and 'withdraws from the pragma of violence which no political action can escape'.[56]

In spite of these differences, however, one may note that Weber and Foucault both advance an ethical claim for value-freedom in intellectual work. Weber, employing a neo-Kantian distinction between facts and values, argues that subjective value-judgements have no place within the lecture room or academic text, for personal bias should not preclude the scientific ascertainment of objective historical facts. He states, for example, that 'I am ready to prove from the works of our historians that whenever the man of science introduces his personal value judgement, a full understanding of the fact ceases'.[57] Foucault, by contrast, employs value-freedom as a political strategy. He claims that his genealogical history is neither normative nor prescriptive but instead attempts 'to produce some effects of truth which might be used for a possible battle, to be waged by those who wished to wage it, in forms yet to be found and in organisations yet to be defined'.[58] Foucault here dismisses the dogmatism of modern political theory, arguing that his 'open' genealogical histories do not prescribe a theory of contemporary life, but provoke us to question the historical identity of our present.[59] This, he argues, is an aspect of his work which has been widely misunderstood. He states of *Discipline and Punish*, for example, that '[t]he inquiry is limited to an investigation covering the period up to about 1830. But even in this case readers, whether critics or not took it as a description of modern society. You won't find an analysis of the present in the book...'.[60]

Weber and Foucault, however, to some extent both violate their respective claims to value-freedom. Weber, for example, values an ethic of political and intellectual responsibility in its own right (see chapters 3 and 4), and this value is itself embodied in his doctrine of ethical neutrality or value-freedom (*Wertfreiheit*). This doctrine proclaims that questions of 'ought' are to be kept separate from questions of

what actually 'is', for it is the task of social science to convey the validity of objective facts and not subjective ideals. Weber argues that this process can only proceed through the suspension of questions of ought from scientific investigation: 'it can never be the task of an empirical science to provide binding norms and ideals from which directives for immediate practical activity can be derived'.[61] This statement, however, itself posits a practical ideal, an ideal which, for example, affirms the commitment of the scientist to the clear distinction of facts and values, thus indicating that Weber's empirical science operates on the basis of a 'normative' statement, a judgement of what should be.[62] This judgement, however, whilst raising doubt as to the presuppositions of 'value-free' methodology, defines rather than compromises Weber's commitment to value-freedom, for this judgement places the value of responsibility at the heart of intellectual and political activity. And this commitment to value-freedom defines the very nature of Weber's historical work, which seeks to establish objective facts rather than to motivate political forms of transgression (see above, section 3).

The charge against Foucault is perhaps more serious. Foucault's genealogical practice, whilst claiming not to prescribe an 'is' or an 'ought', is tendentious, for it not only presupposes its own value but conceals the position and purpose of its historical attack. Foucault claims, for example, not to offer a theory of contemporary life, but a close reading of his genealogical history, which mysteriously manages to remain outside of the modern powers of normalisation, reveals that this is not strictly the case, for his historical analysis of 'carceral' society is accompanied by a largely ahistorical description of the present:

> *Our* society is not one of spectacle, but of surveillance: under the surface of images, one invests bodies in depth; behind the great abstraction of exchange, there continues the meticulous, concrete training of useful forces; the circuits of communication are the supports of an accumulation and a centralisation of knowledge; the play of signs defines the anchorages of power; it is not that the beautiful totality of the individual is amputated, repressed, altered by our social order, it is rather that the individual is carefully fabricated within it, according to a whole technique of forces and bodies.[63]

Likewise, in *The History of Sexuality* Foucault tells us that '*[w]e*...are in a society of "sex", or rather a society "with a sexuality": the mechanisms of power are addressed to the body, to life, to what causes it to proliferate, to what reinforces the species, its

stamina, its ability to dominate, or its capacity for being used'.[64] Foucault here clearly violates his claim to a *sacrificial* history which neither asserts a dogmatic description of the present nor judges the past on the basis of present truths, for his genealogical histories read both back from, and forward to, an assertion of the disciplinary power of the present.[65] In view of this, Jürgen Habermas rightly accuses Foucault of presentism, arguing that

> the attempt...to explain discourse and power formations only on their own terms, turns into its opposite. The unmasking of objectivist illusions of *any* will to knowledge leads to an agreement with a historiography that is narcissistically oriented toward the standpoint of the historian and instrumentalises the contemplation of the past for the needs of the present.[66]

The key problem here is that Foucault's work effectively replaces an *antiquarian* continuity of historical identity with a new meta-narrative of Western development, one which give an account of the rise and periodisation of instrumental rationalism. This, despite Foucault's ridicule of the 'fear which makes you seek, beyond all boundaries, ruptures, shifts, and divisions, the great historico-transcendental destiny of the Occident'.[67] Foucault clearly attempts to avoid this problem by focusing on local knowledges which expose, and thus potentially destabilise, the instrumental means by which historical difference is repressed and effaced by the Western order. This practice, however, still rests upon, and contributes to, a meta-narrative of Western development, for Foucault, in similar fashion to Lyotard - whose account of the collapse of the meta-narrative is itself meta-narratival in form (see chapter 6) - here seeks to reactivate local narratives precisely because of the broader historical and political contexts in which they are imbedded, in the process lending weight to, rather than destroying, an overarching meta-narrative of the instrumental nature of the modern world.

In view of this, Foucault's genealogical practice is not as disinterested as it claims, for it is proceeds through the selection, evaluation, and prioritisation of historical evidence with the aim of destabilising the 'carceral' domination which it portrays as intrinsic to modernity.[68] Foucault's claim simply to offer '"propositions", "game openings" where those who may be interested are invited to join in' rather than 'dogmatic assertions that have to be taken or left en bloc' must thus be treated with a degree of scepticism.[69] Foucault's genealogical counter-histories, whilst claiming to be

free from prescriptives, are in fact not free from directives and are, to use Habermas's term, 'cryptonormative', for they are not only critical of the nature of the modern order but are based upon a call for transgressive activity.[70] These histories not only contain statements regarding the nature of contemporary society, but are tendential insofar as they seek to energise an undefined movement against the order they depict. In view of this, Foucault's work is not as free from its own values or *authority* as it may appear.

7.5 Conclusion

In sum, the work of Foucault is at once close to, and far removed from that of Weber. Foucault, like Weber, shares a concern for the progressive rationalisation of Western culture, and his work, despite its declared intention, offers an account of the rise and trajectory of the modern order. This said, Foucault engages in historical work with different intentions to Weber, and aspires to a different political ethics, and in these respects Weber's modern and Foucault's postmodern strategies of resistance to instrumental rationalism lie worlds apart. In practice, however, the distinction between these two worlds is not easy to sustain, for the postmodern remains susceptible to the modern, in particular to the authority of authorship and to the construction of presentist meta-narratives. And in precisely these respects, Foucault's postmodern opposition to Western rationalism is corrupted by the very order which it seeks to transcend.

Notes

[1] Lyotard, *The Differend*, p.57

[2] Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, p.154.

[3] Colin Gordon, 'The Soul of the Citizen', p.293. There are also a number of striking similarities between the 'life-works' of Weber and Foucault, see Arpád Szakolczai, *Max Weber and Michel Foucault: Parallel Life-Works.*

[4] Scott Lash, 'Modernity or Modernism?', p.360, *emphasis original.*

[5] Foucault, 'Kant on Enlightenment and Revolution', p.15.

[6] Foucault, 'Monstrosities in Criticism', p.60.

[7] Foucault, 'Kant on Enlightenment and Revolution', p.15.

[8] Foucault's genealogical project may here be read as a response to the second essay of Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morality*, in which the birth of guilt and conscience is traced to life within contract, a history which is sustained and ingrained by memory. Foucault asserts his interest in pursuing of a 'genealogy of morals' in a least two interviews, see *Power/Knowledge*, p.53, and *the Foucault Effect*, p.74.

[9] This critique of humanism stems from Foucault's reading of Kant, who, he argues, closed the possibility of limit-philosophy when he 'relegated all critical investigations to an anthropological question', *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, p.38. For a detailed discussion of the important relation of Foucault's limit-philosophy to Kant's *Anthropology From A Pragmatic Point of View*, which Foucault himself translated into French, see James Miller's *The Passion of Michel Foucault*, pp. 137-151.

[10] Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, p.162.

[11] Foucault states, for example, that 'the problems that I pose are always concerned with local and particular issues', *Remarks on Marx*, p.150

[12] Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, p.50-1

[13] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p.31

[14] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, pp.57-123.

[15] Mitchell Dean provides an excellent outline of *monumental*, *antiquarian*, and *critical* history in *Critical and Effective Histories*, pp.18-19. I disagree with Dean's claim, however, that 'while Foucault is certainly attracted to Nietzsche's genealogy as a source of inspiration and of "historical sense", it is a mistake to read this as a methodological statement', p.19. I suggest that Foucault (following Bataille and Blanchot) uses Nietzsche's critique of method to radicalise method itself, adopting, in particular, 'the task of "tearing" the subject from itself in such a way that it is no longer the subject as such, or that it is completely "other" than itself so that it may arrive at its annihilation, its dissociation', *Remarks on Marx*, p.31.

[16] The correspondence of Foucauldian and Nietzschean genealogy is not explored in this chapter. For a comprehensive account of this complex relation see Michael Mahon's *Foucault's Nietzschean Genealogy* and Keith Ansell-Pearson's *Nietzsche Contra Rousseau*, pp.119-34. One may note in passing, however, that Foucault openly acknowledges his distortion of Nietzschean genealogy. He states: 'The only valid tribute to thought such as Nietzsche's is precisely to use it, to deform it, to make it groan and protest. And if commentators then say I am being faithful or unfaithful to Nietzsche, that is of absolutely no interest', *Power/Knowledge*, pp.53-4.

[17] Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, p.160.

[18] Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p.140.

[19] Foucault defines 'subjugated knowledge' as follows: 'on the one hand, I am referring to the historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal

systematisation...On the other hand, I believe that by subjugated knowledges one should understand something else, something which in a sense is altogether different, namely, a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity...it is through the reappearance of this knowledge, of these local popular knowledges, that criticism performs its work', *Power/Knowledge*, p.81-2.

[20] This distinction between practical and theoretical transgression, which cannot be explored here, is addressed in detail by Jon Simons in *Foucault and the Political*, pp. 81-104. For an overview of this work see my review, *Sociology*, 30, 2, May 1996, pp.406-7.

[21] Foucault, 'What is Enlightenment', *The Foucault Reader*, p.50.

[22] In view of this I would argue that there is a high degree of continuity between the three volumes of *The History of Sexuality*. Foucault states that the aim of *The Use of Pleasure* is, for example, to 'examine both the difference that keeps us at a remove from a way of thinking in which we recognise the origin of our own, and the proximity that remains in spite of that distance which we never cease to explore', p .7.

[23] Habermas, 'Modernity versus Postmodernity', p.13.

[24] See Rajchman, *Michel Foucault: The Freedom of Philosophy*, p.49.

[25] Edward Said is one of the few commentators to have understood this aspect of Foucault's work, arguing that it is part of an 'everlasting effort to formulate otherness and heterodoxy without domesticating them or turning them into doctrine', 'Michel Foucault, 1926-1984', p.6.

[26] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p.23.

[27] Foucault's genealogy of punishment is thus deeply political in nature. Foucault argues, for example: 'What's effectively needed is a ramified, penetrative perception of the present, one that makes it possible to locate lines of weakness, strong points, positions where the instances of power have secured and implanted themselves by a system of organisation dating back over 150 years', *Power/Knowledge*, p.62.

[28] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, pp.48-9.

[29] Foucault does, however, note the overlap of these regimes. He states: 'The reduction in the use of torture was a tendency that was rooted in the great transformation of the years 1760-1840, but it did not end there; it can be said that the practice of the public execution haunted our penal system for a long time and still haunts it today', *Ibid.*, p.15. For a detailed discussion of the periodisation of *Discipline and Punish* see Stephen Watson, 'Applying Foucault', pp.132-51.

[30] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p.23.

[31] Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, p.151.

[32] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p.223.

[33] One may here note a convergence between Foucault's critique of cultural normalisation and Weber's critique of the presuppositions of scientific rationalisation. Weber argues, for example, that

'[b]y his means the medical man preserves the life of the mortally ill man, even if the patient implores us to relieve him of life, even if his relatives, to whom his life is worthless and to whom the costs of maintaining his worthless life grow unbearable, grant his redemption from suffering...Whether life is worth living and when - this question is not asked by medicine', 'Science as a Vocation', *From Max Weber*, p.144. This statement is consistent with Foucault's analysis of the 'Right of Death and Power over Life', *The History of Sexuality Volume One*, pp.135-159.

[34] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume One*, p.146.

[35] See Colin Gordon, 'The Soul of the Citizen' and Scott Lash, 'Modernity or Modernism?'. See also John O'Neill *The Poverty of Postmodernism*. O'Neill argues, for example, that 'certain developments in Foucault's studies of the disciplinary society may complement Weber's formal analysis of the modern bureaucratic state and economy', p.43.

[36] For an overview of the wider arguments of this work, see my review, *Acta Sociologica*, 41, 4, 1998, pp.389-91. This review is reproduced in the appendix to this thesis.

[37] David Owen, *Maturity and Modernity*, p.123.

[38] *Ibid.*, p.101.

[39] *Ibid.*.

[40] Jürgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action Volume One*, p.154.

[41] An example of this reluctance to enter into the realm of value-judgements is to be found at the conclusion to the *Protestant Ethic*, where Weber refuses to speculate on what lies ahead in the course of Western development, for 'this brings us to the world of judgements of value and faith, with which this purely historical discussion need not be burdened', *The Protestant Ethic*, p.182.

[42] Zygmunt Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity*, p.123.

[43] Foucault, *Remarks on Marx*, p.157.

[44] Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, p.126.

[45] Indeed, Foucault states: 'What I write does not prescribe anything, neither to myself nor to others', *Remarks on Marx*, p.29.

[46] See chapter 4. To recapitulate, the ethical irrationality of world lies, for Weber, in three main facts. First, that '[t]he decisive means for politics is violence', 'Politics as a Vocation', p.121. Second, that political purposes and actual ends often do not correspond: 'The final result of political action often, no regularly, stands in completely inadequate and often even paradoxical relation to its original meaning', ibid., p.116, and third, that good does not always come from good and evil from evil.

[47] Weber, 'Politics as a Vocation', p.78, *emphasis original.*

[48] *Ibid.*, p.121. Weber gives a concrete example of this point in his 1906 essay 'Pseudo-Constitutionalism', in which he reflects on the use of force following the failed 1905 Russian Revolution. He states: 'In general, the application of force by the police, wherever it occurs, offends the peasant's sense of justice, although, and partly because, he is accustomed to yield to it outwardly, in probably a greater measure than in other countries; for he sees in it nothing whatsoever "moral",

nothing but the purely "random" and senseless brutality of power, which is in the hands of people who are his sworn enemies', *The Russian Revolutions*, pp.190-1.

[49] Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, p.90.

[50] One may note in passing that this position is similar to that forwarded by Lyotard, who argues: 'I don't think it is true that one writes for someone...I believe that it is important that there is no addressee. When you cast bottles to the waves, you don't know to whom they are going and that is all to the good', *Just Gaming*, pp.8-9.

[51] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, pp.33-4.

[52] One may here note in passing that both Foucault and Lyotard toyed with the idea of publishing anonymous, 'unsigned' works. See Arpád Szakolczai, *Max Weber and Michel Foucault*, p.259, and David Macey, 'Obituary: Jean-François Lyotard', p.53.

[53] Weber, 'The National State and Economic Policy', *Reading Weber*, p.197.

[54] Weber, 'Politics as a Vocation', p.121, *emphasis original.*

[55] *Ibid.*, p.120.

[56] Weber, 'Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions', *From Max Weber*, p.336.

[57] Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', *From Max Weber*, p.146.

[58] Foucault, *Foucault Live*, p.191.

[59] Foucault proclaims: 'A topological and geological survey of the battlefield - that is the intellectual's role. But as for saying, "Here is what you must do!", certainly not', *Power/Knowledge*, p.62. He states of *I, Pierre Rivière*, for example, that 'the reason we decided to publish these documents was to draw a map, so to speak, of those combats, to reconstruct these confrontations and battles, to rediscover the interaction of those discourses as weapons of attack and defence in the relations of power and knowledge', p.xi. This idea of political cartography has been developed by Gilles Deleuze, see *Foucault*, pp.23-46.

[60] Michel Foucault, 'How an "Experience-Book" is Born', *Remarks on Marx*, p.37.

[61] Weber, '"Objectivity" in Social Science', *Methodology of the Social Sciences*, p.52.

[62] For Weber's distinction between 'normative knowledge' ('ought') and existential knowledge ('is') see '"Objectivity" in Social Science', *Methodology of the Social Sciences*, p.51.

[63] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p.217, *emphasis mine.*

[64] Foucault, *History of Sexuality Volume One*, p.147, *emphasis mine.*

[65] One may note, for example, that Foucault characterises his genealogical method as 'instrumental and visionary or dream-like', 'How an "Experience-Book" is Born', *Remarks on Marx*, p.29. This statement suggests that a purpose and thus a particular value is concealed with Foucault's genealogy.

[66] Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p.278.

[67] Foucault, *Archaeology Of Knowledge*, p.210.

[68] As J.G.Merquior notes: 'Historian or not, he constantly worked on the assumption that he was being faithful to each age's outlook on each relevant subject...and that his documents...could prove him right', *Foucault*, p.144.

[69] Foucault, *The Foucault Effect*, p.74.

[70] Habermas here quotes the work of Nancy Fraser: '"Why is struggle preferable to submission? Why ought domination be resisted? Only with the introduction of normative notions of some kind could Foucault answer this question. Only with the introduction of normative notions could he begin to tell us what is wrong with the modern power/knowledge regime and why we ought to resist it"', Fraser quoted in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p.284.

Chapter VIII

Weber and Baudrillard: The Erotic Sphere, Symbolic Exchange, and the Question of Re-enchantment

'In seduction...it is the manifest discourse... that turns back on the deeper order...in order to invalidate it, substituting the charm and illusion of appearances' (Baudrillard).[1]

'Achieving depth through erotic adventures is something quite problematical' (Weber).[2]

The previous two chapters have addressed the possibility of resistance to the rationalisation of the world first, through analysis of Lyotard's theory of postmodern science and aesthetics (chapter 6), and second, through an examination of Foucault's project of genealogical transfiguration (chapter 7). The present chapter addresses a further strategy through which such resistance may be possible, namely that of re-enchantment. It is argued that such a strategy is pursued by Jean Baudrillard, whose work emphasises the threat which symbolic forms continue to pose to the order of Western rationalism. This chapter focuses on Baudrillard's account of the subversive nature of what he terms the 'symbolic order', and examines the possibility of developing a strategy of re-enchantment from the play of symbolic forms, in particular from the symbolic form of seduction. This analysis proceeds as follows. First, Baudrillard's theory of the radical opposition between the 'symbolic order' and the modern 'order of value' is expounded, and, following this, it is argued that Baudrillard's analysis of the changing hegemony of these two orders parallels Weber's theory of rationalisation. In the light of this position, the possible challenge of the symbolic order (myth) to modern culture (science) is then considered through a

comparative analysis of Weber's writing on the erotic sphere and Baudrillard's theory of seduction. Finally, on the basis of the above, the possibility of escape from the rationalisation and disenchantment of the world, from what Baudrillard terms the 'hell of the same', is examined through consideration of the possibility of returning to an order governed by the principle of symbolic exchange.

8.1 Symbolic Exchange and the Law of Value

Baudrillard's analysis of modernity is founded upon a radical critique of capitalist production and economic exchange. This critique, which will be discussed in detail for it grounds the entirety of Baudrillard's work, proceeds initially through an extension of Marx's critique of economic exchange-value to a critique of use-value. Baudrillard here argues that whilst Marx's critique of political economy attacks the principle of capitalist exchange, it reproduces the ideological basis of this principle through the retention of a concept of 'pure' use-value: value tied to the fulfilment of scarcity and need, utility and function, but free from the accumulation of surplus value.[3] In view of this, he argues that Marx's critique of economic exchange mirrors the ideological form of capitalist production itself, as use-value is an effect of a system of needs itself created by an economy based upon the production and accumulation of value.[4] Baudrillard states:

> needs...can no longer be defined adequately in terms of the naturalist-idealist thesis - as innate, instinctive power, spontaneous craving, anthropological potentiality. Rather they are better defined as a *function* induced (in the individual) by the internal logic of the system: more precisely, *not as a consummative force liberated* by the affluent society, but *as a productive force* required by the functioning of the system itself, by its process of reproduction and survival. In other words, there are only needs because the system needs them.[5]

Baudrillard argues that Marx, in accepting this system of needs and thus the necessity of production (and labour), fails to break free of the logic of capitalist production.[6] For rather than attack the principle of production itself (the order of value), Marx's critique of political economy legitimates use-value through the concept of need, thereby reproducing the functional ideology of capitalist exchange. This move, Baudrillard argues, effectively leaves production itself unquestioned. He states: 'A spectre haunts

the revolutionary imagination: the phantom of production. Everywhere it sustains an unbridled romanticism of productivity. The critical theory of the *mode* of production does not touch the *principle* of production'.[7]

Baudrillard extends this critique of production through an analysis of the political economy of the sign. He argues that the sign is a reified object that is tied, like the commodity, to the order of production and circulation of economic value. The sign and commodity share the same basic logic and structure. First, the logic of the commodity is to be found within the structure of the sign:

> It is because *the logic of the commodity and of political economy is at the very heart of the sign*, in the abstract equation of signifier and signified, in the differential combinatory of signs, that signs can function as exchange value (the discourse of communication) and as use value (rational decoding and distinctive social use).[8]

Second, the structure of the sign is homologous to the structure of the commodity:

> It is because *the structure of the sign is at the very heart of the commodity form* that the commodity can take on, immediately the effect of signification...because its very form establishes it as a total *medium*, as a *system of communication* administering all social exchange. Like the sign form, the commodity is a code managing the exchange of values.[9]

Baudrillard develops this homology of the sign and the commodity on the basis of Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of linguistic value, which claims that the structure of language, itself a system of values, is comparable to the structure of economic value in that it is composed

> (1) of a *dissimilar* thing that can be *exchanged* for which the value is to be determined; and
>
> (2) of *similar* things that can be *compared* with the thing of which the value is to be determined.[10]

Baudrillard, following Saussure, breaks the sign and the commodity into their constituent parts to show the connection of these dissimilar (economic exchange-value, the signifier) and similar (use-value, the signified) elements. He formulates this connection of use-value and the signified, economic exchange-value and the signifier as follows:

$$\text{(Commodity)}\ \frac{\text{EcEV (Economic Exchange Value)}}{\text{UV (Use Value)}} = \frac{\text{Sr (Signifier)}}{\text{Sd (Signified)}}\ \text{(Sign)}$$

In view of this, the radical other to exchange-value is, for Baudrillard, neither use-value, which is an abstraction of a system of needs that is itself defined by economic exchange, nor sign value, which is homologous to economic value. He argues that the radical other to economic exchange is rather *symbolic exchange*, which exists outside of and contrary to the order of value (production) itself. This form of exchange, which Baudrillard develops from Marcel Mauss's analysis of gift exchange (potlatch) and Georges Bataille's theory of general economy, is based upon the cyclical reciprocity of the ritual rather than the linear production and accumulation of value.[11] Baudrillard states:

> In symbolic exchange, of which the gift is our most proximate illustration, the object is not an object: it is inseparable from the concrete relation in which it is exchanged, the transferential pact that it seals between two persons: it is thus not independent as such. It has, properly speaking, neither use value nor (economic) exchange value. The object given has symbolic exchange value.[12]

This form of symbolic exchange value exists in fundamental opposition to the production of economic value and the circulation of the sign, and rests upon an order of social wealth which is radically different to the ideologies of scarcity, need, abundance, and function which legitimate capitalist exchange. Baudrillard argues that these Western ideologies exist only as effects of a productivist economy, and have no place within the reciprocal relations of symbolic exchange, which are defined by sacrifice, return and annulment, and not by linear accumulation. He argues, similarly, that in the symbolic order objects are not defined and consumed according to their function, for within this order objects do not exist outside of the narrative of the gift exchange. Objects thus possess no autonomy within the symbolic order, and consequently are not reified as signs. In view of this, Baudrillard stresses the radical opposition of symbolic exchange to the homologous order of the commodity and the sign. This opposition may be represented as follows:[13]

$$\frac{\text{EcEV (Economic Exchange Value)}}{\text{UV (Use Value)}} = \frac{\text{Sr (Signifier)}}{\text{Sd (Signified)}} \quad \textbf{(General Political Economy)}$$

$$\textbf{SbE (Symbolic Exchange)}$$

This formulation conveys the fundamental opposition of political economy (of the commodity and the sign) to the symbolic order, an opposition, or, more precisely, a struggle for primacy, which, for Baudrillard, defines the basis of societal order and social change. The historical processes of modernisation and rationalisation may be read as manifestations of this struggle insofar as they refer, to use Baudrillard's terms, to a transition from a social order dominated by the principle of symbolic exchange to an order in which symbolic exchange is blocked and destroyed by the law of value. This inversion of the hegemony of the symbolic order and the order of value occurs, Baudrillard argues, the moment that the return of gift exchange is broken by the production of value outside of the narrative of the ritual. From this point onwards, annulment through the return of symbolic exchange is blocked by the birth of autonomous objects (signs) and the linear accumulation of value. Baudrillard states:

> It is from the (theoretically isolatable) moment when the exchange is no longer purely transitive, when the object (the material of the exchange) is immediately presented as such, that it is reified into a sign. Instead of abolishing itself in the relation that it establishes and thus assuming symbolic value (as in the example of the gift), the object becomes autonomous, intransitive, opaque, and so begins to signify the abolition of the relationship. Having become a sign object, it is no longer the mobile signifier of a lack between two beings, it is "of" and "from" the reified relation (as is the commodity at another level, in relation to reified labour power). Whereas the symbol refers to lack (to absence) as a virtual relation of desire, the sign object only refers to the absence of relation itself, and to isolated individual subjects.[14]

8.2 Baudrillard's Genealogy of Value: The Transition to Modernity

In *Symbolic Exchange and Death* Baudrillard grounds this transition from the rule of the symbolic order to the rule of the order of value through reference to three orders of simulacra. These orders of appearance, which are accompanied by mutations of the law of value, together form an historical series. This series, which is comparable to Weber's rationalisation thesis insofar as it traces the modern attack on symbolic forms, is as follows:

1). *First-Order Simulacra: The Counterfeit or Natural Stage (Use-value)*

This stage, Baudrillard argues, has its origins in the Renaissance, and marks the transition from feudal or archaic society, in which signs are limited in number and restricted in circulation, to democratic society, in which there is open production of and competition between signs. This transition from society based on rank and the reign of the *obligatory* sign to that based on the participation of all classes and the reign of the *emancipated* sign is marked by the birth of the counterfeit. Baudrillard states:

> Competitive democracy succeeds the endogamy of signs proper to status-based orders. With the transit of values or signs of prestige from one class to another, we simultaneously and necessarily enter into the age of the *counterfeit*. For from a limited order of signs, the "free" production of which is prevented by a prohibition, we pass into a proliferation of signs according to demand.[15]

The counterfeit works through the invention and imitation of 'nature'. It constructs an *analagon* of man through the production of signs that give a theatrical representation of Renaissance (bourgeois) life. This process of imitation operates through the construction of a natural referent, and proceeds through the transubstantion of nature into a single substance. This substance, Baudrillard argues, is stucco, which is used to embrace all forms and imitate all materials, and which thereby becomes an equivalent for all other substances. Baudrillard argues, however, that the distinction which is here erected between the referent (the real) and the sign is nothing more than the projection of the sign itself. He terms this the 'mirage of the referent', and argues: 'The referent in question here is no more external to the sign than is the Sd: indeed, it is governed by the sign. It is carved out and projected as its function: its reality is of that which is *ornamentally inscribed on the sign itself*'.[16]

2). *Second-order Simulacra: The Production or Commodity Stage (Exchange-value)*

This stage, which arises with the Industrial Revolution, marks both the destruction of reproduction by analogy and effect and the rise of technical production and reproduction. Baudrillard illustrates this transition by contrasting the automaton (first-order), which operates through analogy and maintains a difference between appearance and reality, and the robot (second-order), which operates through mass equivalence

and liquidates the distinction between the simulacrum (appearance) and the original (the real). Baudrillard states: 'The automaton is the *analogon* of man and remains responsive to him...The machine is the *equivalent* of man, appropriating him to itself as an equal in the unity of a functional process. This is the difference between first- and second-order simulacra'.[17] In this latter order of technical reproduction the counterfeit, which refers to an original, is superseded by the mass production of signs and objects and is replaced by the series, in which an infinite number of identical objects are produced without reference to an original. At this point there is no longer a division between the order of the sign and its projection of external reality. Baudrillard argues that the signifier here subsumes the referent and circulates in its own self-referential orbit. This negation of the real, and thus any reference to an original or natural object is, for Baudrillard, the defining characteristic of this order. He states: 'The extinction of the original reference alone facilitates the general law of equivalences, that is to say, *the very possibility of production*'.[18] This order of simulacra, once established, subjects everything to the rule of mechanical efficiency and mass equivalence, and operates according to the market law of value. Baudrillard states: 'No more semblance or dissemblance, no more God or Man, only an immanent logic of the principle of operativity'.[19]

3). *Third-Order Simulacra: Simulation or Structural Stage (Sign-value)*

The second-order simulacrum of serial reproduction is short-lived, for as the machine establishes its hegemony over reproduction production itself gives way to operational simulation. Baudrillard states:

> As soon as dead labour gains the upper hand over living labour (that is to say, since the end of primitive accumulation), serial production gives way to generation through models. In this case it is a matter of a reversal of origin and end, since all forms change from the moment that they are no longer mechanically reproduced, but *conceived according to their very reproducibility*, their diffraction from a generative core called a "model". We are dealing with third-order simulacra here. There is no more counterfeiting of an original, as there was in the first order, and no more pure series as there were in the second; there are models from which all forms proceed according to modulated differences.[20]

This order of modulation is dominated by the indeterminacy of the code. Here, simulacra proceed through exercises of simulation that are designed to test and

control. This, Baudrillard argues, is the age of digitality in which cybernetic models replace living labour through manipulation of the genetic code, and simulacra operate through reduction of reproduction to a test modelled on the binary form of DNA (question - answer, 0 -1).

Baudrillard, in *The Transparency of Evil*, extends this three stage classification of simulacra through the addition of a fourth order: *the fractal*. This is an order of universal vitiation, an order in which all individual categories and distinct fields become corrupted and confused. Baudrillard argues:

> At the fourth, the fractal (or viral, or radiant) stage of value, there is no point of reference at all, and value radiates in all directions, occupying all interstices, without any reference to anything whatsoever, by virtue of pure contiguity. At the fractal stage there is no longer any equivalence, whether natural or general. Properly speaking there is now no law of value, merely a sort of *epidemic of value*, a sort of general metastasis of value, a haphazard proliferation and dispersal of value. Indeed, we should really no longer speak of "value" at all, for this kind of propagation or chain reaction makes all valuation impossible.[21]

The fractal disperses all limits and decentres all systems, giving rise to a culture in which categories proliferate beyond traditional boundaries and circulate in a network devoid of referential value. Here, indeterminacy rules, for all types and terms are commutable and substitution is possible between all spheres, including Weber's value-spheres. This, for Baudrillard, is demonstrated by the birth of the transpolitical, the transaesthetic, the transsexual, and the transeconomic: spheres which are no longer restricted to politics, aesthetics, sex, and economics for they expand and infect all other spheres, forming a vast undifferentiated field.[22] This expunction of difference paradoxically leads to the concurrent success and disappearance of all spheres:

> Each category is generalised to the greatest possible extent, so that it eventually loses all specificity and is reabsorbed by all the other categories. When everything is political, nothing is political any more, the word itself is meaningless. When everything is sexual, nothing is sexual any more, and sex loses its determinants. When everything is aesthetic, nothing is beautiful or ugly any more, and art itself disappears.[23]

This effacement of all forms of differentiation constitutes a violent assault on the symbolic order, for here all differences and forms of otherness are attacked by the 'transversalism' of Western culture. In this sense, the fractal is the most 'advanced' state of the Western order for it works to destroy all forms of reciprocity which enable

symbolic exchange, and thus all forms of otherness which pose a threat to itself. The result of this process, Baudrillard argues, is that Western culture systematically removes everything other to itself, and thereby consigns us to what he terms the 'hell of the same'.

Baudrillard argues, however, that this classification of the four orders of simulacra is not to be read strictly as an account of the linear destruction of symbolic exchange but as a genealogy of the law of value, and as an account of the fundamental opposition of this law to the symbolic order. For despite the descent of signification to fourth-order simulacra within the order of value itself, history, for Baudrillard, is never closed, as the symbolic exists indefinitely as the radical other of the commodity and the sign, and the different orders of simulacra may themselves co-exist in contemporary cultural forms. In view of this history is not, for Baudrillard, strictly a unilinear process of regression from the symbolic order through the four orders of the law of value but a process whereby the order of the former, although reduced to a subordinate position within the social order, continues to haunt the latter orders in the form of their other. This fact is crucial as it effectively allows Baudrillard to reactivate elements of the symbolic order in a bid to destabilise the rule of the law of value. Baudrillard here argues that the strength of the symbolic order lies in its essential weakness, for it lies outside of, and operates on a different principle to, the order of power and value. He even claims, for example, that '[t]he excluded form [the symbolic] prevails, secretly, over the dominant form [the order of value]'.[24]

The symbolic order and the order of value reside then in an uneasy co-existence, and whilst the nature of this co-existence has changed over time, as the latter order has progressively attacked and blocked the basis of symbolic exchange, Western rationalism remains vulnerable to its 'primitive' other. This account of the repression of symbolic exchange by the order of value, and of the potential threat of the former order to the latter, bears interesting comparison to Weber's rationalisation thesis. One may note, for example, that Baudrillard's analysis accentuates the different principles which govern the modern and pre-modern world - the production of value and the annulment of gift-exchange respectively - and broadens the scope of Weber's thesis, in similar fashion to Lyotard's work, through reference to contemporary science (computer simulation, fractal mathematics, cybernetics etc.), economic exchange value,

and semiotics. Baudrillard, here, departs from Weber's rationalisation thesis in a number of important respects, most notably in emphasising the radical basis of the pre-modern order and in arguing that the boundaries between value-spheres are levelled in contemporary culture. In spite of this, however, the key historical problem for both thinkers is essentially the same: the progressive disenchantment of magical religiosity (myth) by 'rational' science.[25] One may also note that the radical opposition between what Baudrillard terms the symbolic order and the order of value is also present in Weber's work, if only in nascent form. The clearest example of this is to be found in the *Zwischenbetrachtung*, in which Weber contrasts the cyclical fate of pre-modern life to the linear fate which characterises modern existence. He states, for example:

> The peasant, like Abraham, could die "satiated with life". The feudal landlord and the warrior hero could do likewise. For both fulfilled a cycle of their existence beyond which they did not reach. Each in his way could attain an inner-worldly perfection as a result of the naive unambiguity of the substance of his life. But the "cultivated man" who strives for self-perfection, in the sense of acquiring or creating "cultural values", cannot do this. He can become "weary of life" but he cannot become "satiated with life" in the sense of completing a cycle. For the perfectability of the man of culture in principle progresses indefinitely, as do the cultural values.[26]

This passage offers an illustration of the different trajectories of the symbolic order and the law of value. The fate of the pre-modern individual is contained within the bounds of a symbolic narrative, beyond which there is no knowledge, no desire to know, and thus no known external reality or referent. This 'naive' cycle of life offers the possibility of individual satiation, for mastery of the world here proceeds not through the production and accumulation of knowledge but through magical or mythical means. The life of the modern individual, by contrast, is distinguished by the endless pursuit of knowledge (see chapter 3), a life which can never be complete because of the inevitability of death. Weber states:

> the individual life of civilised man placed into an "infinite progress", according to its own imminent meaning should never come to an end; for there is always a further step ahead of one who stands in the march of progress. And no man who comes to die stands upon the peak which lies in infinity.[27]

Here, the cyclical fate of the symbolic order is broken by the linearity of progress, by the infinite perfectability of knowledge. The modern individual thus can never live a definitive life for this life is itself defined by a will to know which can never be fulfilled.

Weber and Baudrillard here both agree that science ultimately is unable to eradicate the presence of the 'arationalism' or irrationalism of the symbolic order. For Weber, science is necessarily an incomplete enterprise which breaks the organic cycle of life but is unable to engage in the irrational world of values, thereby leaving the modern order open to the claims of mythical doctrines which attribute meanings to the world. In addition modern forms of rational order repress but also remain susceptible to more 'primitive' forms of charismatic authority. For Baudrillard, as argued above, the order of value is unable to eradicate the symbolic order because this order has a fate which is radically other to, and independent of, that of the former. In view of this, the rational 'progress' of the West, for both theorists, remains vulnerable to the symbolic order, to forms of symbolic 'arationalism' which exist outside of, and in opposition to, scientific rationality. The radical otherness of this 'arationalism', which has been considered in different terms in chapter 6 through analysis of the aesthetic sphere, would thus appear to present a profound challenge to Western rationalism, and, by extension, to the process of rationalisation. The nature and bearing of this challenge is here to be further examined through analysis of Weber's writing on the erotic sphere, and of Baudrillard's writing on the principle of seduction.

8.3 The Erotic Sphere and Seduction

The erotic sphere, like the aesthetic sphere, is, for Weber, fundamentally 'arational' or irrational in nature. Weber's analysis of this sphere opens with an account of the historical rationalisation of what he terms 'the greatest irrational force of life': sexual love.[28] This account centres initially on the relation of sexual love and religion, Weber here observing that originally the relation of sex and religion was particularly intimate for sexual activity was often part of 'magic orgiasticism' or the unintended result of 'orgiastic excitement'. Weber argues, however, that over time a fundamental tension has developed within this relation due to 'evolutionary factors', factors which mark the rationalisation both of religion and sex. On the side of religion,

for example, he argues that this tension arose with the cultic chastity of priests, which itself was determined by the view that sexuality was 'dominated by demons'. This identification of sex as an evil 'residue of the Fall' was accompanied on the side of sexuality by the sublimation of sex into eroticism. Here, Weber argues, the 'naive naturalism' of sex was transcended as sex itself was raised to a sphere of conscious activity. This process, he argues, is a part of the general rationalisation and intellectualisation of culture, a process which identified the irrational nature of eroticism. Weber states:

> The total being of man has now been alienated from the organic cycle of peasant life; life has been increasingly enriched in cultural content, whether this content is evaluated as intellectually or otherwise supra-individual. All this has worked, through the estrangement of life-value from that which is merely naturally given, toward a further enhancement of the special position of eroticism. Eroticism was raised into the sphere of conscious enjoyment (in the most sublime sense of the term). Nevertheless, indeed because of this elevation, eroticism appeared to be like a gate into the most irrational and thereby real kernel of life, as compared with the mechanisms of rationalisation.[29]

The intellectualisation of culture enhances the tension between religion and sex, a tension which is manifested, in particular, in the conflict between eroticism and a religious ethic of brotherliness. On one side of this relation, inner-worldly and rational asceticism stand firmly against the erotic relation as a brutal form of passion, rejecting 'every sophistication of the sexual into eroticism as idolatry of the worst kind'.[30] On the other, passion itself is seen to constitute beauty, the rejection of which is seen to amount to blasphemy. But, as Weber indicates above, there is a more important conflict here at play: that between the rationalism of the everyday world and the irrational or arational freedom of the erotic experience. In view of this conflict, Weber argues that the erotic sphere appears to offer a means of escape both from the asceticism of a religious ethic of brotherliness and from the modern order of instrumental rationalism. Weber's passionate reflection on this point in the *Zwischenbetrachtung* affirms this latter possibility:

> The lover realises himself to be rooted in the kernel of the truly living, which is eternally inaccessible to any rational endeavour. He knows himself to be freed from the cold skeleton hands of rational orders, just as completely as from the banality of everyday routine. This consciousness of the lover rests upon the ineffaceability and inexhaustibleness of his own experience. The experience is by no means communicable and in this respect it is equivalent

> to the "having" of the mystic. This is not only due to the intensity of the lover's experience, but to the immediacy of the possessed reality.[31]

The erotic sphere, for Weber, is thus a sphere which returns us from the rationalism of the modern world to the 'immediacy' of experience. This sphere offers the possibility of an undefined freedom which escapes the grasp of instrumental rationality through the resurrection of a reciprocal relation based upon immediate sensation rather than rational judgement. This freedom lies outside of the morality of ascetic brotherliness and the rationality of the intellectual sphere. It lies rather, to use Baudrillard terms, in the order of symbolic exchange, in an order of fate defined by the reciprocity of a symbolic relation. The direction of this fate, however, remains unknown, for it lies outside of the order of rationality, in the aleatoric realm of immediacy rather than in the security of reasoned reflection. It is here, for Weber, that the attraction of the erotic relation lies. He states: 'No consummated erotic communion will know itself to be founded in any way other than through a mysterious *destination* for one another: *fate*, in this highest sense of this word'.[32]

Baudrillard's theory of seduction is in many respects a radical extension of Weber's analysis of the erotic sphere. For Baudrillard, seduction is an agonistic relation between two parties (the seduced, the seducer) which proceeds, like Weber's erotic relation, through the mastery of immediate appearances rather than through considered rational judgement. It is a form of symbolic exchange which manipulates objects and signs, subordinating them within a reciprocal relation between individual subjects, a relation which, for Baudrillard, is itself cyclical and reversible. On this basis, seduction too eludes and threatens the Western order of value. Baudrillard states:

> Seduction...never belongs to the order of nature, but that of artifice - never to the order of energy, but that of signs and rituals. This is why all the great systems of production and interpretation have not ceased to exclude seduction - to its good fortune - from their conceptual field. For seduction continues to haunt them from without, and from deep within its forsaken state, threatening them with collapse.[33]

Seduction is here not to be confused with sex, which, for Baudrillard, is merely the disenchanted other of seduction, and which is defined by function and nature rather than by the mythical play of appearances. Seduction, in contrast to sex, is not centred on reproduction or the accumulation of pleasure, rather it is a surface relation which effaces anatomy, a relation which is driven to an unknown fate by the cyclical

provocation of its own reciprocity. Baudrillard states: 'The law of seduction takes the form of an uninterrupted ritual exchange where seducer and seduced constantly raise the stakes in a game that never ends...Sex, on the other hand, has a quick, banal end: the orgasm, the immediate form of desire's realisation'.[34] Similarly, seduction is not to be confused with desire. Baudrillard argues that desire, like sex, is chained both to a functional definition of 'nature' and to a linear economy of bodily pleasure. It is precisely this definition of nature and this form of economy, centring on the production and accumulation of (libidinal) value, which the symbolic relation of seduction opposes. Baudrillard states:

> In order to understand the intensity of ritual forms, one must rid oneself of the idea that all happiness derives from nature, and all pleasure from the satisfaction of a desire. On the contrary, games, the sphere of play, reveal a passion for rules, a giddiness born of rules, and a force that comes from ceremony, and not desire.[35]

Seduction, in short, is not a relation born not from 'natural' attraction but from ritual and artifice. In this sense, seduction is comparable to Weber's depiction of eroticism, which involves the 'boundless giving of oneself' and radical 'opposition to all functionality, rationality, and generality'.[36] Baudrillard argues that seduction is a relation which, again like Weber's erotic relation, operates at the level of pure appearances, absorbing autonomous objects and signs within the reciprocal relation in which they are exchanged, and at the same time annulling their meaning. It too thus presents a means of escape from the depth model of reason and rationality, offering the possibility of a return to an order of fate within which objects and signs are abolished through symbolic exchange.[37] It is on this basis that the principle of seduction presents itself as a principle of possibility, a principle which haunts the modern order and which threatens to reverse and efface the effects of Western rationalism. Hence, Baudrillard states: 'Seduction continues to appear to all orthodoxies as maliface and artifice, a black magic for the deviation of all truths, an exaltation of the malicious use of signs. Every discourse is threatened with this sudden reversibility, absorbed into its own signs without a trace of meaning'.[38]

The possibility of symbolic exchange, at least in the form of seduction, is thus, for Baudrillard, always present, even within cultures characterised by the presence of third- and fourth-order simulacra. This possibility lies in the celebration of appearance

rather than the pursuit of meaning, in the preservation rather than disenchantment of what remains secret. The strength of seduction thus lies not in a bid to unmask truth of the world, an exercise which seeks to distinguish appearance from reality, but in its return to a world of pure appearance. It is through this strategy of comparative 'weakness' that seduction remains outside of the forces of rationalisation. Baudrillard states:

> Any movement that believes it can subvert a system by its infra-structure is naive. Seduction is more intelligent, and seemingly spontaneously so. Immediately obvious seduction need not be demonstrated, nor justified - it is there all at once, in an alleged reversal of all the alleged depth of the real, of all psychology, anatomy, truth, of power. It knows (this is its secret) that *there is no anatomy*, nor psychology, that all signs are reversible. Nothing belongs to it, except appearances - all powers elude it, but it "reversibilises" all their signs...The only thing truly at stake is the mastery of the strategy of appearances, against the force of being and reality. There is no need to play being against being, or truth against truth; why become stuck undermining foundations, when a *light* manipulation of appearances will do.[39]

8.4 The Possibility of Re-enchantment

Baudrillard develops this principle of seduction into a radical theoretical strategy. The purpose of theory, he argues, is not to disenchant myth in order to uncover the meaning of the world but precisely the opposite: to annul the production of meaning itself and to thereby resurrect the enchantment of appearances. This form of theory thus celebrates ambiguity rather than clarity, and rests upon a sacrificial form of writing which resists and dispels the accumulation of knowledge. Baudrillard states, for example: 'The real joy of writing lies in the opportunity of being able to sacrifice a whole chapter for a single sentence, a complete sentence for a single word, to sacrifice everything for an artificial effect or an acceleration into the void'.[40] Baudrillard's anagrammatic and aphoristic style is an exercise in this form of sacrificial writing, a poetic form which seeks to reverse and disperse rather than elucidate meaning, and which aims not to interpret but to mystify and enchant. This strategic application of the principle of seduction stands in radical opposition to the modern culture of conceptual production and interpretation. Baudrillard argues:

> To produce is to materialise by force what belongs to another order, that of the secret and of seduction. Seduction is, at all times and in all places, opposed to production. Seduction removes something from the order of the visible, while production constructs everything in full view, be it an object, a number or concept.[41]

This strategy thus also stands in radical opposition to Weber's interpretative sociology, to any approach that seeks to unveil the meanings which lie beneath immediate appearances. Baudrillard here argues that interpretation itself contributes directly to disenchantment, for its very aim is to strip the world of its hidden meanings, thereby destroying the enchantment of all that is secret. In this sense, interpretation, for Baudrillard, is nothing more than a form of theoretical pornography, a practice which denudes all appearances through the projection of an underlying reality.[42] He states: '*All meaningful discourse seeks to end appearances*: this is its attraction and its imposture'.[43] In view of this, Baudrillard works against the practice of interpretation in a bid to re-enchant the world. He stipulates the following principles upon which this re-enchantment is to proceed:

> Cipher, do not decipher. Work over the illusion. Create illusion to create an event. Make enigmatic what is clear, render unintelligible what is only too intelligible, make the event itself totally unreadable. Accentuate the false transparency of the world to spread a terroristic confusion about it, or the germs or viruses of a radical illusion - in other words a radical disillusioning of the real. Viral, pernicious thought, corrosive of meaning, generative of an erotic perception of reality's turmoil.[44]

This strategy of re-enchantment seeks to restore the possibility of symbolic exchange through the theoretical re-mystification of the world. It, like seduction, embraces immediate appearances rather than reason with the aim of returning the world to the rule of myth rather than the intellect. This radical strategy thus runs against all forms of Enlightenment thought, for it seeks to re-enchant the secret of the symbolic form through the annulment rather than production of knowledge. This practice brings the reversible fate of the symbolic order to bear on the linearity of modern culture, and proceeds through a theoretical application of the principle of gift-exchange.[45] Baudrillard states: 'The absolute rule is to give back more than you were given. Never less, always more. The absolute rule of thought is to give back the world as it was given to us - unintelligible. And, if possible, to render it a little more unintelligible'.[46]

Weber, in contrast to Baudrillard, is fundamentally opposed to this form of resistance to the rationalisation of the world. His commitment, for example, to clarity and precision in intellectual work and to the interpretation of social action clearly stands in marked opposition to any strategy of mystification. This said, however, the erotic sphere does exist, for Weber, as a sphere of possibility. He argues, to recapitulate, that the erotic and intellectual life-orders reside in fundamental opposition to one another, and further to this that the erotic relation offers a means of escape from the rationalism of everyday affairs. He states:

> The last accentuation of the erotical sphere occurred in terms of intellectualist cultures. It occurred where this sphere collided with the unavoidably ascetic trait of the vocational specialist type of man. Under this tension between the erotic sphere and rational everyday life, *specifically extramarital sexual life*, which had been removed from everyday affairs, could appear as the only tie which still linked man with the natural fountain of life.[47]

One may note that Weber (the vocational specialist) here appears to reflect on and affirm the possibility of escape from rationalism that he himself found through engagement in the erotic sphere, or to be more precise through his extramarital relations with Mina Tobler and Else Jaffé.[48] The exact details of these relations are not known, as the personal correspondence from Max to his wife Marianne, Tobler and Jaffé has been withheld from print. The resulting lack of insight into Weber's private life has led scholars to err on the side of caution on this matter. Dirk Käsler, for example, refuses to speculate on the nature of these relationships and their bearing on Weber's work without the evidence of personal correspondence. He states: 'The intention to publish Weber's eighty or so letters to Marianne, his hundred and twenty or so to Else Jaffé and his one hundred and twenty or so to Mina Tobler will no doubt throw light on the problems of this area on Weber's development'.[49] Lawrence Scaff also takes this position, arguing that we 'must await publication of Weber's correspondence in the *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe* for fuller discussion'.[50] The recent decision, however, not publish Weber's correspondence to Mina Tobler and Else Jaffé in the *Gesamtausgabe* leaves the autobiographical nature of the *Zwischenbetrachtung* open to interpretation[51], and clouds the exact nature of Weber's own attempt to escape modern rationalism through erotic activity.

On this point, however, one may turn to Weber's work rather than to his personal life for answers. Here, one may note that Weber, unlike Baudrillard, makes no attempt to extend the principle of eroticism or seduction into an attack on Western rationalism. Rather, he turns away from this possibility and instead commits himself to an ascetic vocation which seeks to demystify rather than mystify the world (as argued in chapters 3 and 4). There are a number of important reasons for this which together lend themselves to a critique of Baudrillard's position. First, one may recall that Weber argues that even the arational or irrational spheres tend towards rationalisation (this argument is elucidated in chapter 6 in regards to the aesthetic sphere). Weber states:

> the spheres of the irrational, the only spheres that intellectualism has not yet touched, are.. raised into consciousness and put under its lens. For in practice this is where the modern intellectualist form of romantic irrationalism leads. This method of emancipation from intellectualism may well bring about the very opposite of what those who take to it conceive as its goal.[52]

In view of this, Weber would appear to reject erotic activity as anything more than a *temporary* means of escape from modern rationalism, arguing that conscious engagement in irrational or arational activity is likely in the long run to lead not to the re-enchantment of the world but to its opposite: rationalisation.

Second, Weber argues that there is no possibility of returning to the naive state of the pre-modern world, for the intellect once realised is irrevocable. This argument, which parallels Kleist's argument for the impossibility of redemption from self-consciousness in 'On the Marionette Theatre', suggests that there can be no genuine attempt to unlearn modern rationalism. It also suggests that there can be no invention of genuinely arational or irrational forms by rational activity. Weber illustrates this point through reference to art and religious prophecy. He states:

> If we attempt to force and "invent" a monumental style in art, such miserable monstrosities are produced as the many monuments of the last twenty years. If one tries intellectually to construe new religions without a new and genuine prophecy, then, in an inner sense, something similar will result, but with still worse effects.[53]

There can, by extension, be no rational reinvention of mythical or symbolic forms and no return to the naiveté or immediacy of pre-modern culture. Jean-François Lyotard makes precisely this point, arguing that any such attempt at reinvention is necessarily futile, for '[p]rimitive culture cannot be invented: it is *given* by definition'.[54]

Third, whereas Baudrillard's work is highly nostalgic, resting upon what Lyotard terms the 'paradisaic representation of a lost "organic" society'[55], Weber's work by contrast is pragmatic and forward-looking. Weber, at the conclusion of 'Science as a Vocation', for example, refuses to yearn and tarry for new prophets who will disrupt the order of modernity but instead pledges to act differently by attempting to meet the 'demands of the day'. Weber here places little faith either in pre-modern symbolic forms, such as seduction, or modern arational or irrational forms, such as eroticism or mysticism, instead arguing that we must face disenchantment through rational work both in and against this world. This vocational work involves, for example, questioning the meaning and value of rationalisation, placing limits on the rule of science (chapter 3), and reconciling responsible action with the preservation of ultimate values (chapter 4). It is thus diametrically opposed to Baudrillard's call to cipher rather to decipher the world.

8.5 Conclusion

On the above three grounds, Weber would appear to reject first, the possibility of resisting the rationalisation of the world through either seduction or erotic activity, and second, the more general possibility of re-enchantment. The notion of redemption from rationalism through either arational or irrational forms is, for Weber, ultimately nothing more than a form of idealism or *Weltflucht* based upon a nostalgic lust for a lost pre-modern totality. This criticism applies to Baudrillard's vision of a return to the rule of the symbolic order, an order which, one may note, he cites without detailed historical or anthropological evidence[56], and to his idea of the subversive nature of the principle of seduction. Baudrillard here forwards an idealised notion of symbolic exchange and an outline for redemption from the intellect, which together, in the light of Weber's work, would appear to over-estimate the power of pre-modern forms to disrupt the intellectualisation of the world, and under-estimate the strength of the rational world to resist re-enchantment. Weber, whilst sharing Baudrillard's interest in the fate of the symbolic order and in the potentiality of the erotic sphere, is by contrast less of an idealist. He remains deeply pessimistic as to both the outcome of rationalisation and the possibility of re-enchantment, and, as argued in chapters 3 and

4, emphasises that resistance to rationalisation can only proceed from within the rationalised world through measured vocational work. And it is here that Baudrillard and Weber ultimately depart, for whereas the former commits himself to a seductive, arational, and even other-worldly practice, the latter rejects this position and places his faith in ascetic, rational, this-worldly work.

Notes

[1] Baudrillard, *Seduction*, p.53.

[2] Max Weber quoted in Marianne Weber, *Max Weber: A Biography*, p.381.

[3] Marx states, for example, that a 'thing can be a use-value without being a value. This is the case whenever its utility to man is not mediated through labour', *Capital Volume One*, p.131.

[4] See, for example, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, 'The Ideological Genesis of Needs', pp.63-87. Baudrillard also cites Marx's concept of free labour as an example of his inability to break from the ideology of political economy. Baudrillard states: 'In a work, man is not only quantitatively exploited as a productive force by the *system* of capitalist political economy, but is also metaphysically overdetermined as a producer by the *code* of political economy. In the last instance, the system rationalises its power here. *And in this Marxism assists the cunning of capital. It convinces men that they are alienated by the sale of their labour power, thus censoring the much more radical hypothesis that they might by alienated as labour power, as the "inalienable" power of creating value by their labour*', *The Mirror of Production*, p.31, *emphasis original.*

[5] *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, p.82. *emphasis original.* Marx generally portrays 'needs' as facts of human nature. He states, for example: 'Let us suppose that we had produced as human beings...In your use or enjoyment of my product I would have the *immediate* satisfaction and knowledge that in my labour I had gratified a *human* need, i.e. that I had objectified *human nature* and hence had procured an object corresponding to the needs of another *human being*', 'Excerpts from James Mill's *Elements of Political Economy*', p.277.

[6] This argument is similar in nature to Lyotard's attack on Marx's theory of alienation for positing the possibility of 'a *true* universality', *Driftworks*, p.20, and to Foucault's critique of ideology for presupposing a 'true' form of representation, see *The Order of Things*, p.240. The key point here for Lyotard, Foucault, and Baudrillard is that the critic (in this case Marx) remains, because of the nature of critique itself, 'in the sphere of the criticised', Lyotard, *Driftworks*, p.13. This is point developed, for example, by Foucault in his analysis of Maoist forms of popular justice, see *Power/Knowledge*, chapter 1, and by Lyotard in his attack on the politics of 'ultra-leftist organizations', see *Driftworks*, p.29.

[7] Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production*, p.17.

[8] *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, p.146, *emphasis original.*

[9] *Ibid., emphasis original.*

[10] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, p.115.

[11] For a concise statement of Mauss's theory of gift exchange see *The Gift*, pp.6-16. For Bataille's theory of general economy see the first volume of *The Accursed Share*, pp.19-77. A detailed account of the complex relation of Baudrillard to Mauss and Bataille is provided by Julian Pefanis in his work *Heterology and the Postmodern.*

[12] Baudrillard, *Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, p.64.

[13] I have modified this formulation slightly by replacing a slanted bar (/) between the orders of value and symbolic exchange with a horizontal bar (—) in order to accentuate this line as one of radical exclusion, for it is this bar which is of crucial importance. Baudrillard states: '[t]he fundamental reduction no longer takes place between UV and EV, or between signifier and signified. It takes place between the system as a whole and symbolic exchange', *Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, p.128. It is here worth noting that the bar between use- and exchange-value and the signifier and signified is different to that dividing the value-system from symbolic exchange. The former is a bar of logical implication that establishes a structural relation between two terms within the framework of political economy, the latter a bar that marks the fundamental opposition of two radically different orders: the symbolic order and the order of value (political economy). For a detailed analysis of Baudrillard's 'bar games' see Gary Genosko, *Baudrillard and Signs*, especially pp.1-27. J-C. Giradin, in one of the few commentaries on *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, argues that this formulation may be completed through the addition of the following equations:

$$\frac{\text{Wage}}{\text{Labour}} = \frac{\text{Sd}}{\text{Sr}} \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{\text{Exchange-Value}}{\text{Use-Value}} = \frac{\text{Sd}}{\text{Sr}}$$

$$\overline{\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad}$$

Symbolic Exchange

These formulae, however, contradict the basic structure of Baudrillard's critique, for they invert the order of primacy within the structure of the sign (Baudrillard, following Saussure and Lacan, argues that the signifier dominates the repressed signified, and in third- and fourth order simulacra destroys both the referent and signified), and thereby break the link made by Saussure between value and the sign. Here, the homology of the sign and value is destroyed as there is no correlation between either economic exchange-value and the signified or between use-value and the signifier. See J-C. Giradin, 'Toward a Politics of the Sign', pp.127-37.

[14] *Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, p.65. This transition to the 'functional' order of the sign is also addressed by Baudrillard in his first book, *The System of Objects.* He here argues: 'The materiality of objects no longer directly confronts the materiality of needs, these two inconsistent primary and antagonistic systems have been suppressed by the insertion between them of the new, abstract system of manipulable signs - by the insertion, in a word, of *functionality*', p.64.

[15] Baudrillard, *ibid.*, p.51.

[16] *Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, p.151.

[17] *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, p.53.

[18] *Ibid.*, p.55, *emphasis original.*

[19] *Ibid.*, p.54.

[20] *Ibid.*, p.56, *emphasis original.*

[21] Jean Baudrillard, *The Transparency of Evil*, p.5.

[22] For a detailed account of the transpolitical see Baudrillard's *Fatal Strategies*, pp.25-70.

[23] Baudrillard, *The Transparency of Evil*, p.9.

[24] Baudrillard, *Seduction*, p.17.

[25] It could here be argued that both Weber and Baudrillard neglect the scientific basis of pre-modern culture. For a critique of this tendency see Lévi-Strauss, 'The Science of the Concrete', *The Savage Mind.*

[26] Weber, 'Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions', p.356. Weber also contrasts the different fates of the peasant and modern or 'civilised man' in a similar passage of 'Science as a Vocation', p.140.

[27] Weber, *Science as a Vocation*, p.139-40.

[28] Weber, 'Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions', p.343. See also Weber, *Economy and Society Volume One*, pp.602-4.

[29] *Ibid.*, p.344-5.

[30] *Ibid.*, p.349.

[31] Weber, 'Religious Rejections of the World and Their Direction', p.347.

[32] *Ibid.*, p.348, *emphasis original.*

[33] *Seduction.*, p.2.

[34] *Ibid*, p.22. Baudrillard adds: 'in our culture the sexual has triumphed over seduction, and annexed it as a subaltern form. Our instrumental vision has inverted everything. For in the symbolic order seduction is primary, and sex only appears as an addendum', *Ibid.*, p.41.

[35] *Ibid.*, p.132.

[36] Weber, 'Religious Rejections of the World and Their Direction', p.347.

[37] Baudrillard states, for example, that seduction is 'what remains of a magical, fateful world, a risky, vertiginous and predestined world; it is quietly effective in a visibly efficient and stolid world', *Ibid.*, p.180.

[38] *Ibid.*, p.2.

[39] Baudrillard, *Seduction*, p.10.

[40] Baudrillard, *Cool Memories*, p.29

[41] Baudrillard, *Seduction*, p.34.

[42] Baudrillard argues, for example, that '[w]hat is obscene about this world is that nothing is left to appearances, or to chance', *Ibid.*, p.34.

[43] *Ibid.*, p.54.

[44] *The Perfect Crime*, p.104.

[45] This combined resurrection and application of symbolic exchange defines, for Baudrillard, the very basis of radical thought. He states: 'it is necessary to restore the possibility of returning, that is, to change the form of social relations. If no counter-gift or reciprocal exchange is possible, we remain imprisoned in the structure of power and abstraction', *Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, p.211.

[46] *The Perfect Crime*, p.105.

[47] *Ibid.*, p.346, *emphasis mine.*

[48] Mina Tobler was a concert pianist who was introduced to Weber's Heidelberg circle through Emil Lask and to whom Weber dedicated the second volume of his *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*. Wolfgang Mommsen, one of the few Weber scholars to have read Weber's personal correspondence refers to Mina Tobler as 'a Swiss pianist with whom Max Weber carried out a very personal, if platonic relationship during the war years', *Max Weber and German Politics 1890-1920*, p.431. Else Jaffé was a former student of Weber's and the wife of Edgar Jaffé, co-editor with Weber of the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, and to whom Weber dedicated the third volume of his *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*.

[49] Dirk Käsler, *Max Weber*, p.218, footnote 12.

[50] Lawrence Scaff, *Fleeing the Iron Cage*, p.109, footnote 83.

[51] A number of theorists have attempted to overcome this problem by reading the changes made by Weber to the text of the *Zwischenbetrachtung* between 1911 and 1920 as reflecting the sexual consummation of his affair with Else Jaffé. This line of interpretation, which was originally suggested by Eduard Baumgarten, is forwarded by Martin Green, who argues that Weber's relationship with Jaffé 'is echoed in the amplifications of one chapter of the *Religionssoziologie* (Sociology of Religion)...Weber wrote chapter 2 in 1911, rewrote it in 1916, giving it the title "Zwischenbetrachtung", and rewrote it again in 1920. Each time the sexual and aesthetic spheres of experience received more extensive and sympathetic treatment', Martin Green, *The Von Richthofen Sisters*, p.171. The differences between the initial text published in November 1915 in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* and the 1920 revision (which is reproduced by Gerth and Mills in *From Max Weber*) have been expounded and analysed by Sam Whimster. Whimster notes that there are twelve additions to the text Weber revised from 1919 onwards, of which nine concern the erotic. These nine additions address the questions of love as destiny, sexual consummation of love and the 'fusion of souls'. On the basis of this, Whimster draws the speculative conclusion that 'in 1916 Weber developed the theme of eroticism up to the point of its sexual consummation, whereas by 1920 there is no doubt that full sexual consummation is included in his analysis', Sam Whimster, 'Max Weber and

the Erotic', p.458. See also Whimster's 'Max Weber, Rationality and Irrationality' for a further elucidation of this point. This line of interpretation may also be supported by a consideration of the influence of Otto Gross on Weber's Heidelberg circle, and of Weber's visits to Ascona in 1913 and 1914. In 1907 Weber refused to publish an article by Gross, a pupil of Freud, in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*. Despite this, however, one may note the clear similarities between Weber's writing on the erotic sphere in the *Zwischenbetrachtung* and Gross's doctrine of 'sexual communism', which is described by Marianne Weber as follows: 'The life-enhancing value of eroticism is so great that it must remain free from extraneous considerations and laws, and, above all, from any integration into everyday life. If, for the time being, marriage continues to exist as a provision for women and children, love ought to celebrate its ecstasies outside its realm', *Max Weber: A Biography*, p.374. On the experience of Weber in Ascona, and the influence of Gross see Sam Whimster (ed.) *Max Weber and The Culture of Anarchy*, Martin Green, *Mountain of Truth*, and Wolfgang Schwentker 'Passion as a Mode of Life'.

[52] 'Science as a Vocation', p.143.

[53] *Ibid.*, p.155.

[54] Lyotard, *Driftworks*, p.72.

[55] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p.15.

[56] Jean-François Lyotard is one of the few commentators to have attacked Baudrillard's theory of pre-modern 'savage' society and symbolic exchange, although again not on an historical or anthropological basis. Lyotard argues, for example, that '[w]hen Baudrillard says: '*There is neither a mode of production nor production* in primitive societies. *There is no dialectic and no unconscious* in primitive societies, we say: there are no primitive societies', *Libidinal Economy*, p.106, and continues: 'undoubtedly, it must be clearly said: *there are no* primitive societies or savage *at all*, we are all savages, all savages are capitalised-capitalists', p.127.

Chapter IX

Conclusion

> 'Were I to wish for anything I could not wish for wealth and power, but for the passion of the possible, that eye which everywhere, ever young, ever burning, sees possibility' (Kierkegaard).[1]

There are a number of conclusions to be drawn from the preceding work. First, one may note that the work of Weber, Lyotard, Foucault, and Baudrillard contains a comparable account and critique of the rise, nature, and trajectory of modern culture. Weber, to recapitulate, explains the transition to modernity in terms of an ongoing process of rationalisation. This process, he argues, involves the progressive disenchantment of religious legitimation by the claims of 'rational' (scientific) knowledge, and gives rise to new forms of domination which are bureaucratic rather than charismatic or traditional in nature, and which are tied to the needs of market capitalism rather than to ethical or spiritual beliefs. Weber here argues that the transition to modernity promises but in fact restricts individual freedom, for whilst the rationalisation of the world differentiates culture into a number of competing value-spheres which are no longer held together by a religious metanarrative, these spheres tend towards rationalisation insofar as they become increasing rational from the standpoint of instrumental rationality. In this respect, rationalisation may be seen to be a meta-process which, whilst inaugurating a new struggle between values, neither fragments nor dissolves modern culture, but pervades all spheres of life and ties each life-order to the development of instrumental rationalism (see chapter 2).

The work of the three postmodern theorists discussed in this thesis develops and accentuates different aspects of this rationalisation thesis. The work of Lyotard, for example, emphasises the differences between mythical and scientific knowledge, and identifies the instrumental rationalism of modern culture, noting, in particular, the reciprocal relation which exists between the pursuit of scientific knowledge or 'truth' and the accumulation of wealth, and, further to this, the connection between technological development and state or military power (see chapter 6). Lyotard here analyses and attacks the metanarratives which are used to legitimate this instrumental pursuit of knowledge, and which, he claims, inaugurate a movement towards cultural sameness through the levelling of differences under the rule of a single authority.

The work of Foucault, like that of Lyotard, also addresses the rise of instrumental rationalism which accompanies the transition to modernity. This work analyses first, the rationalisation of culture, in particular the emergence and development of new forms of knowledge which give increased power of and over 'Man', and second, the institutional technologies which develop through application of this (instrumental) rationalism. Foucault here outlines a movement towards sameness in the modern age both at the level of culture, which works towards 'the ever-to-be-accomplished unveiling of the Same'[2], and at the level of life itself, as institutional practices of normalisation develop which standardise, catalogue, and routinise individual behaviour (see chapter 7). In this respect, Foucault's analysis of the rise and nature of the modern world develops and extends Weber's rationalisation thesis, for it not only offers a comparable account of the development of instrumental rationalism in modernity, but examines the forms and practices of 'legitimate' domination to which this rationalism gives rise.

The work of Baudrillard also offers an account of the transition to modernity which complements Weber's rationalisation thesis. This work emphasises the fundamental differences which exist between the pre-modern world (the symbolic order) and the modern world (the equivalent orders of the sign and economic value). Baudrillard forwards the claim that modern rationalism is driven by a desire to efface all symbolic or mythical forms which are other to itself, a process which leads to what he terms the 'Hell of the Same'. He here follows Weber in arguing that Western rationalism progressively disenchants the mythical basis of the pre-modern world, but also extends Weber's work, first, through accentuation of the radical nature of myth

or the symbolic form, and second, through reference to contemporary science (computer simulation, fractal mathematics, cybernetics etc.), and through analysis of the 'rational' orders of economic exchange value and semiotics (see chapter 8).

In view of the above, it is possible to argue that despite differences in style and tenor between the work of Weber, Lyotard, Foucault, and Baudrillard, the work of each theorist, first, offers an account of the transition to, and trajectory of, modernity, and second, an argument to suggest that this transition is not a mark of historical or human progress for it is accompanied by the rationalisation of life, and a movement towards cultural sameness. These four thinkers here exhibit a common disenchantment with modernity, but importantly none of them withdraw from the problems which underlie this order. Indeed, each of these thinkers' work offers a response to the instrumental rationalism of modern culture. Weber's response, to recapitulate, rests on the belief that there can be no redemption from modern rationalism, for the intellect, once realised, is irrevocable. In view of this, he argues that there can be no other-worldly or mystical route of escape from the rationalisation of the world, and instead calls for the use of reason in order to meet the demands of the day. Weber here refuses to tarry for prophets who will disrupt the modern order but instead calls for an active mediation of fate through the pursuit of this-worldly vocational work. The value of this work, he argues, lies not in its capacity to free us from the constraints of the modern order but in its ability to clarify the nature of this order, and to delineate the grounds of value-choices and possible action. Weber seeks to establish not only the uses but also the *limits* of modern rationalism, a project which does not call for the transcendence of the modern order, but which does constitute a form of resistance to the rationalisation of the world insofar as it seeks to protect the realm of ultimate values from the further encroachment of instrumental rationalism (see chapters 3 and 4).

In contrast, the work of the postmodern theorists examined in this thesis not only contains an analysis and critique of the modern order, but also a call for the transgression of the limits of this order, and an outline of how this transgression may proceed. In each case this transgressive practice rests on a philosophical challenge to the limits of modern rationalism. Lyotard, for example, seeks to undo the cultural sameness which is characteristic of the modern order, first, by embracing the irreconcilable difference (the *différend*) which exists between narratives or values;

second, by recalling the experimental or aporetic moment which is concealed within, but effaced by, modern culture (the future anterior), and third, by searching for new forms of presentation which transcend the rules of the existing order (paralogy). Foucault, by contrast, attempts to disturb the sameness of modern culture through the genealogical exposition of forms of historical otherness which are repressed by, and present a challenge to, the order of modern rationalism. These forms, he claims, may be used to reveal *and* transform the limits of what we are and of what we may possibly become, and in this respect genealogy proceeds as both a critical *and* transgressive practice. Finally, Baudrillard seeks to disturb the drive of modern rationalism through the resurrection of a-rational or irrational symbolic forms, forms which remain other to the modern order and which, he claims, threaten this order with the possibility of reversal and collapse.

Weber's response to the rationalisation and disenchantment of the world is clearly very different to that of Lyotard, Foucault, and Baudrillard. Weber's work is distinctly modern in orientation, seeking not only to establish objective historical facts which may be used to inform responsible value-judgements, but to place limits on the development and uses and of instrumental rationalism. The work of Weber is here modern insofar as it is critical of the nature and trajectory of the modern order but seeks to work within and against, rather than to overcome, the limits of this order. This position stands in marked contrast to that found in the work of the three postmodern theorists analysed in this thesis. The postmodern response to the rationalisation and disenchantment of the world seeks not to work within the limits of modern rationalism but to transgress precisely these limits through exposition of forms of difference or otherness (for example, Lyotard's *différend*, Foucault's subjugated knowledge, Baudrillard's symbolic order) which are repressed by the modern order. This response rests on the belief that these forms, which tend to be a- or irrational in nature, are concealed within Western history but remain other to the instrumental rationalism of the modern order, and thus may be employed to expose, destabilise, and overcome the limits of this order. And on this basis, Lyotard, Foucault, and Baudrillard, contrary to Weber, affirm the possibility of transcending the confines of modern culture, and of undoing or even escaping the rationalisation process.[3]

The differences here between Weber, on one hand, and Lyotard, Foucault, and

Baudrillard, on the other, are interesting in a number of respects. Weber's work may be used, for example, to assess critically the postmodern attack on the modern order, and in particular the postmodern appeal to a-rational or irrational forms. The second half of this thesis, in part, engaged in such an assessment. Chapter 6, for example, drew on Weber's work to suggest that Lyotard, in affirming both the potentiality of cultural differentiation and the possibility of escaping modern rationalism through radical aesthetic practice, not only disregards the bearing of instrumental rationalism on individual autonomy, but also overlooks the susceptibility of *paraesthetic* practice to the play of rational thought. Chapter 7, in similar fashion, employed the work of Weber to question the ethics of Foucault's genealogical practice, and, in particular, to expose the values which are implicit in this work. Finally, Chapter 8 drew on Weber's work to suggest that Baudrillard's appeal to the symbolic order is not only nostalgic in nature but misjudges the capacity of the intellect to sacrifice itself, and that in view of this his theory of seduction (the erotic sphere) offers no solution to the rational constraints of the everyday world.

On the basis of these three chapters, it is possible to forward a Weberian critique of postmodern theory, one which reads the work of Lyotard, Foucault, and Baudrillard as Utopian or *other-worldly* in its commitment to the potentiality of a-rational or irrational forms, and in its desire to return to the infancy of thought. This said, however, equally it is possible to reflect critically on Weber's work through the use of postmodern theory. The main point in question here is Weber's rationalist response to the rationalisation and disenchantment of the world, which, whilst admirable insofar as it seeks to engage in the problems of this world, is not without difficulty, for it risks contributing to, rather than resisting, precisely the processes it seeks to oppose. This problem, one may note, is not restricted to Weber's work but haunts sociology more generally, for sociology by its very nature is a rational discipline, or, in the words of Helmuth Plessner, 'an instrument of self-knowledge and disenchantment'[4], which is tied to the order of modern rationalism, even if it is critical of this order. This problem, which is raised by Baudrillard (see chapter 8), is particularly pressing in Weber's work, for this work, as an exercise in interpretive sociology, seeks to clarify and explain the causes and meanings of social action, and in doing so lends itself to the disenchantment of the world through exposition of the meaning or reality which lies behind the realm of immediate or mythical

appearances.[5] This practice, which effectively denudes the world of its mysteries, leaves Weber's work in an uncomfortable position, for whilst this work is critical of the rationalisation and disenchantment of the world, its commitment to understanding social action and to rational (vocational) work is itself subject to this critique.

The work of Weber may, in view of the above, be used to problematise postmodern theory and vice versa. This exercise offers an indication of the weaknesses but also of the *strengths* of the work of Weber, Lyotard, Foucault, and Baudrillard. The strengths of Weber's sociology, for example, may be seen to lie, in contrast to postmodern theory, in its commitment to *this-worldly* work, to work which is both realistic and responsible in nature. The strengths of postmodern theory, by contrast, lie in its exposition of the limits of rational critique, and subsequently in its experimental search for forms which challenge the order of modern rationalism. The question which remains, however, and which is beyond the scope of this thesis, is whether these strengths may be developed together to form an integrated approach, one which is both this-worldly *and* experimental, realistic and responsible yet also sensitive to the further rationalisation and disenchantment of the world. The possibility of such an approach, which would cross the distinction between the modern and the postmodern, here lies in a reconciliation of two seemingly irreconcilable positions. One may recall, however, that the work of Weber teaches us not to be disenchanted by such a prospect, indeed it reminds us that the pursuit of the impossible itself opens a new realm of possibility.[6]

Notes

[1] Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, p.56.

[2] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p.340.

[3] On this basis, I would argue that it is wrong to characterise postmodern theory as pessimistic in nature. Baudrillard in particular has been read as a pessimistic thinker, see, for example, Pauline Marie Rosenau's, *Postmodernism and the Social Sciences: Insights, Inroads, and Intrusions*. This reading, however, overlooks Baudrillard's argument for the symbolic order as a sphere of radical possibility, an argument which is profoundly optimistic in regards to the transgression of the modern order. Baudrillard states, for example, that '[s]ymbolic rituals can absorb anything, including the organless body of capitalism', *The Transparency of Evil*, p.144.

[4] Helmuth Plessner, *Max Weber zum Gedächtnis*, p.49, quoted in Wolf Lepenies, *Between Literature*

and Science, p.247. One may note that Weber touches upon but withdraws from this problem in his lecture *Science as a Vocation* (see chapter 3), in which he, first, questions the presuppositions of disciplines such as medicine, aesthetics, and historical and cultural science, but then passes over the presuppositions of sociology, and second, claims to follow Nietzsche's critique of the 'last men' of the Enlightenment, but fails to relates this critique to his own affirmation of the value of science.

[5] This apparent contradiction between Weber's critique of the processes of rationalisation and disenchantment and his commitment to an interpretive sociology is here not analysed at length due to limited space, and indicates a possible area for future research.

[6] See, for example, Weber, 'The Meaning of "Ethical Neutrality"', *Methodology of the Social Sciences*, pp.23-4, and chapter 4 of this thesis.

Appendix: Reviews of Recent Weber Literature

1). Wolfgang Schluchter's *Paradoxes of Modernity: Culture and Conduct in the Theory of Max Weber*.[1]

Wolfgang Schluchter is one of the world's leading Max Weber scholars. His books *Max Weber's Vision of History* (with Guenther Roth) [1979] and *The Rise of Western Rationalism* [1981] set the tone of Weber scholarship throughout the 1980s, and remain the most original and penetrating analyses of Weber's historical sociology to date. In the late 1980s, Schluchter extended these analyses through a series of essays on Weber's sociology of religion, culminating in his impressive study *Rationalism, Religion, and Domination* [1989]. His latest work, *Paradoxes of Modernity*, is in many respects a continuation of the project contained within these three books, as it addresses the comparative and developmental nature of Weber's historical sociology through analysis of his studies of the world religions, focusing specifically on the questions of ethics and culture.

The first half of the book analyses what Schluchter terms Weber's 'political-philosophical profile', and addresses the inter-relation of truth, power, and ethics in his work. This analysis centres initially on Weber's speeches 'Politics as a Vocation' and 'Science as a Vocation', which, Schluchter argues, are philosophical texts, for they encourage self-reflection, and move beyond a consideration of the state of the nation to a broader examination of the state of modern culture. He states: 'Both speeches were addressed to the German academic *and* democratic youth; they were and are speeches about political *and* human self-determination under the conditions of modern Western culture'.[2] Schluchter locates these speeches, first, within the context of Weber's return to university teaching, and, second, within the context of his relationship to the youth and student movements of the time (in particular the Free Student movement). He then moves to an analysis of the content of these speeches,

focusing on Weber's belief in vocation as a form of self-limitation, a belief which, he argues, demands the affirmation of ascetic action (activity) through commitment to specialised work (renunciation). Schluchter connects this theory of vocational duty and self-limitation to Weber's concept of personality. This connection, he argues, is as follows:

> Ascetic, humanistic individualism represents the closest approximation to the concept of personality: ascetic, because continuous *action* in the service of a cause is demanded; humanistic, because this cause presupposes the constant commitment to ultimate *values*; and individualistic because this constant commitment has to be *chosen* through a series of ultimate decisions. Where these conditions are satisfied, a person has become a personality without necessarily intending to.[3]

Schluchter claims that a preliminary formulation of this definition of personality is to be found within the later works of Goethe, which develop the idea of an ascetic form of conduct not founded on Christian religion. Following a rather brief discussion of this point, Schluchter finally turns to the reaction aroused by Weber's 'Science as a Vocation', analysing, in particular, the responses of Ernst Robert Curtius, Erich von Kahler, Arthur Salz, Ernst Troeltsch, and Max Scheler to this speech.

The second chapter of the book analyses the ethical nature of Weber's work, focusing, in particular, on the concepts of conviction and responsibility. This analysis proceeds through a consideration of the key themes of what Schluchter sees as the three phases of Weber's work. The first of these phases centres around Weber's inaugural lecture at Freiburg in 1895. Schluchter notes that Weber did not employ a distinction between an ethic of conviction and an ethic of responsibility in this phase, for he was concerned with the evaluative standard of national economic policy, and engaged, more generally, in a critique of eudaemonism. This rejection of eudaemonism, Schluchter claims, finds clear expression in the second phase of Weber's work, which confronts the Bourgeois Revolution in Russia and the Sexual Revolution in Germany. Weber here contrasts 'panmoralism', which negates nonethical values or devaluates them vis-à-vis ethical values, to success-oriented ethics. Schluchter argues that this is an important phase of the development of Weber's ethical position: 'Step by step, he defined more precisely the idea of the internal and external limits of ethics'.[4] This development is subsequently realised in the third phase of Weber's work, in which, in his essay 'Intermediate Reflections' and his speech 'Politics as a Vocation', he finally

distinguishes between an ethics of conviction and an ethics of responsibility. Schluchter argues, however, that these two ethics are in fact part of a wider typology of ethics which also underlies Weber's sociology of religion. He demonstrates this, first, by distinguishing ethics, which formulate normative rules and rest on ideal interests, from 'mere doctrines of prudence', and, second, by analysing Weber's formal ethics of conviction and responsibility as ethics of 'reflexive principle'. Schluchter here reveals the full complexity of Weber position, and moves, finally, from a two-part to a four-part typology of ethics that distinguishes between technical and normative rules, conventional / legal and moral rules, substantive and formal moral rules, and constitutive and regulative formal moral rules.

The second half of the book turns to Weber's 'historical-sociological profile', addressing the spheres of religion, economy, and politics. Chapter 3 analyses Weber's fragmented work on Islam, which, for Schluchter, indicates a number of the 'hindrances to modernity' which prevented the universal development of rational capitalism. Schluchter reads these writings on Islam as forming a comparative perspective which extends and enriches Weber's developmental history of Western culture. He states:

> if one seeks to define and explain the distinctive character of the *whole* of Western culture in terms of its rational-methodical conduct, its rational capitalist enterprise, its *Anstaltsstaat*, its formally rational law, its rational science, and its music of harmonic chords, it is necessary to compare this civilization with others and to show why these phenonomena did not occur there.[5]

Schluchter proceeds to compare Islam, which he characterises as a religious ethic of world mastery which stands between world conquest and world adjustment, to the religious ethics of Calvinism. He concludes that Islam resisted capitalism in two main ways: first, the traditional character of Islamic economic ethics did not lend itself to an economically rational mode of conduct, and, second, 'the institutional conditions that prevailed in the Islamic states were favourable for commercial capitalism but not for industrial capitalism as an economic system'.[6] Schluchter is keen, however, to distance Weber from what he terms 'normative Eurocentrism', and in the final section of this chapter offers a critique of the readings of Weber on Islam forwarded by Bryan Turner and Maxime Rodinson.

The final chapter of the book turns from the comparative perspective of Weber's historical sociology to its developmental perspective. Schluchter here argues that Weber's planned work on Western Christianity holds the key to his account of the emergence of modernity. He states:

> The more intensively he dealt with the economic ethics of non-Christian religions in order to divest the studies on Protestantism of their isolated character, the more urgent it became to place the latter studies in the more general framework of a study of Western Christianity. Only in this way could they be placed "in the context of overall cultural development", and that was the stated purpose, as can be gathered from the revised version of these studies.[7]

The problem for Schluchter is that, like the projected study of Islam, Weber never completed this study of Western Christianity before his death. Schluchter attempts to overcome this problem by reconstructing this work from Weber's preliminary studies for this project, drawing also on the letters he wrote to his publisher, Siebeck. On the basis of this evidence, Schluchter reconstructs Weber's vision of the trajectory of Western culture in terms of three 'great transformations'. The first of these refers to the intertwining of the 'Papal Revolution', the 'Feudal Revolution', and the 'Urban Revolution' in the Middle Ages, which in their own ways enabled the rise of the capitalist organisation of free labour, the modern market economy, and the bourgeois mode of conduct. The second rests upon what Schluchter terms 'the religious foundation of bourgeois conduct', which is based on the rise of ascetic Protestantism and the 'spirit' of modern capitalism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The third and final transformation is to 'the new house of bondage', to the 'iron age of capitalism', an age in which social relationships no longer require a bourgeois mode of conduct, for '[c]apitalism now actually produces those human beings it needs to function'.[8]

Paradoxes of Modernity is, on the whole, thoroughly researched and clearly written. Schluchter's analysis of *Science as a Vocation* is particularly welcome as it offers a detailed account both of the historical context of the speech and the controversy it subsequently caused, as is his analysis of the typology of ethics contained in *Politics as a Vocation* and in Weber's sociology of religion, which is far superior to the analyses found elsewhere in the secondary literature. The second half of the book, in which Schluchter reconstructs Weber's position on Islam and Western

Christianity is also a success, for it enhances Weber's comparative and developmental account of the trajectory of the West, and rightly defends this account against the charge of Eurocentrism. My only criticism of this work is that Schluchter fails to bring the two halves of the book together, and, as a consequence, Weber's 'political-philosophical' and 'historical-sociological' profiles are left in isolation from one another. The main problem here is that the book lacks a final chapter to relate these two profiles to the central themes of conduct and culture. There is, admittedly, an epilogue to the book, but this is only very short and focuses on the related questions of action, order, and culture. As a consequence, the book has a rather fragmented feel, and leaves one with a degree of uncertainty as to the purpose of Schluchter's project.

2). David Owen's *Maturity and Modernity: Nietzsche, Weber, Foucault and the Ambivalence of Reason.*[9]

This book is an attempt to challenge Jürgen Habermas's claim that Hegel is the 'foundational legislator' of the philosophical discourse of modernity. Owen's rejection of this claim centres on the nature of post-Kantian critique, which, he argues, is not determined solely by Hegel but also by Nietzsche. He argues that the Nietzschean tradition, which runs through Weber to Foucault, emerged through reflection on the problems of Kantian thought, and offers a clear alternative to Hegel's critique of Kant. Owen justifies this argument, first, by grounding 'the claim that Nietzsche, Weber and Foucault may be read as a distinct trajectory within modern thought with respect to the question of critique by placing this tradition in its Kantian context of emergence', and second, by tracing 'the development of *genealogy* as a specific form of critique'.[10]

This project opens with a clear statement of Kant's enlightenment ideal. This ideal, Owen argues, identifies maturity with the ability to direct one's own will, and employs a distinction between the public use of reason, which addresses individuals as ends, and the private use of reason, which addresses individuals as things. Owen outlines two well known difficulties of this vision of maturity: first, that Kant's theory of moral action rests on a transcendental postulate (God), and second, that this vision requires but rules out the idea of a history of reason. Owen argues, however, that in

spite of, or even because of these difficulties, Kant's philosophy remains important, for it raises two key philosophical questions: 'firstly, the question of the relationship between thought and time, between the philosophy and history, *qua* the thinking of autonomy as maturity and, secondly, the question of the relationship between critical and instrumental forms of reason *qua* the achievement of maturity'.[11] These questions are central to post-Kantian thought, Owen argues, for they force thought itself to confront its own historical specificity. This point is illustrated through a detailed exegesis of Nietzsche's critique of Kant, a critique centring on the transformation of epistemology to the realm of genealogy, the rejection of a transcendental ego in favour of a philosophy of historical consciousness, and the displacement of reason from the realm of metaphysics to the realm of history. Owen argues that through this critique of Kant, Nietzsche moves from a project of legislation to a project of evaluation, which, unlike Kant's critical philosophy, opens the questions of value and critique. The key point here, for Owen, is that Nietzsche advances from Kant's vision of autonomy as a transcendental ideal grounded in a universalisable moral law to a new vision of autonomy as an historically specific ideal. Nietzsche traces this historical ideal through genealogy, an exercise which, Owen argues, employs the will to power as its principle of evaluation.

This dense reflection on Nietzsche's critique of Kant is followed by a more accessible analysis of Nietzsche's genealogical evaluation of modernity. Here, Owen expounds Nietzsche's account of the transition from the prehistory of 'man' to historical consciousness, before analysing the emergence of *ressentiment* and bad conscience and the eventual triumph of 'slave morality' in Jewish and Greek culture. Owen relates this history to the devaluation of values in modern culture (nihilism), and analyses the connection of the 'scientific conscience' or 'morality of truthfulness' of Protestant asceticism to the modern 'death' of God.[12] This analysis leads, in turn, to the question of how the nihilism of modern culture is to be overcome. Owen here argues that, for Nietzsche, modern *ressentiment* may be overcome through the construction of a new ground of value. This construction, it is argued, may proceed through Nietzsche's doctrine of *eternal recurrence*, which 'enables the formation of autonomous agents in so far as it constructs a reflexive relationship between the pathos of (artistic) distance and the self-determination of values', and transforms our

experience of time.[13] Owen then turns to the politics of this doctrine, drawing the conclusion that Nietzsche's *eternal recurrence* provides 'a vision which reconciles individual and collective autonomy through the articulation of agonistic politics'.[14]

Whilst Owen's reading of Nietzsche is thoughtful and scholarly, his reading of Weber is more problematic. This reading opens with the claim that Weber's cultural science is an extension of Nietzsche's genealogical perspectivism rather than an exercise in Baden neo-Kantianism. Owen here argues that Weber sides with Nietzsche and against Rickert in rejecting the possibility of an objective value of truth, that Weber's doctrine of value-freedom embodies Nietzsche's commitment to reflexivity and probity, and that Weber's ideal-type methodology embraces Nietzsche's value perspectivism. This line of argument, which to some extent follows the lead of Wilhelm Hennis, challenges the conventional view of Weber's neo-Kantian roots, but in a number of respects remains unsubstantiated. Owen avoids, for example, Weber's theory of concept formation and theory of reality, and whilst he is critical of Rickert, overlooks the influence of other neo-Kantian philosophers on Weber, for example, Lotze, Windelband, and Lask. He also fails to engage with the secondary literature on Weber and neo-Kantianism, ignoring, in particular, the work of Thomas Burger and Guy Oakes, who both offer evidence of Rickert's influence on Weber, and Habermas's argument that Weber's critique of historical progress and evolution stems from his commitment to a neo-Kantian theory of value. In this respect, Owen's presentation of Weber's work is clearly one-sided, for it accentuates the 'Nietzschean commitments' of Weber's methodology, overlooking not only its debt to neo-Kantian philosophy but also the numerous points at which it departs from Nietzsche's work.

Owen extends this Nietzschean reading of Weber through an analysis of his sociology of religion. This sociology, he argues, may be read as a genealogy of modernity, as it is 'concerned with how we have become what we are, that is to say, with articulating a history of the present'.[15] This reading, however, is again problematic. Owen, despite his stated intention, reads Weber's essays on ancient Judaism and the Protestant ethic not as genealogical histories but as developmental histories that offer an account of the dual emergence of rationalism and nihilism in the West. This reading, against the basic tenets of both Nietzschean and Foucauldian counter-historical practice, seeks the origin of Western culture and establishes a linear

narrative of its subsequent development. The problem here, I believe, is not Owen's understanding of Weber's analysis of modernity, but his definition of genealogy, which is so broad that it allows practically all historical work to be read as genealogical practice. In addition, Owen fails to address the relation between genealogy and critique in sufficient detail. He argues that Weber's work has an evaluative interest, centred on the question of nihilism and the emergence of 'autonomous individuals', but gives little indication of the way in which this value-free sociology is critical in nature. He thus gives little evidence of the degree to which Weber actually follows Nietzsche in pursuing a (genealogical) philosophy of evaluation.

The final chapters of the book offer a more conventional reading of the work of Michel Foucault. This analysis focuses initially on Foucault's reading of Kantian enlightenment as a philosophical ethos, before moving to an elaboration of Foucault's anti-humanist methodology, paying particular attention to his practices of 'archaeological detachment' and 'genealogical engagement'. Owen's argument is that these practices exemplify the philosophical ethos of enlightenment, for they elaborate a project of critical reason that seeks 'the creation of ourselves in our autonomy'. The key point here, for Owen, is that Foucault's work centres on the pursuit of autonomy, as it attempts to show how we have become what we are in order to free the possibility of otherness. In view of this, Owen argues: 'Foucault's project of genealogy operates as a Nietzschean mode of critique in which the concern for autonomy, no less than in Hegelian forms of critique, animates his mode of analysis'.[16] He supports this claim through a detailed exegesis of Foucault's genealogy of modernity, analysing his work on discipline (punitive reason), sexuality (sexual reason), and governmentality and biopolitics (political reason). This genealogy, Owen argues, specifies the form of the will to truth in contemporary culture by tracing the emergence of this (humanist) will as the central problem of modernity. Owen notes, however, that Foucault's genealogy is critical not only because it deconstructs this will to truth, but also because it engages in a form of practical critique based on the perpetual problematisation of the present. On this basis, Owen draws the conclusion that

> genealogy is always already an engagement in those struggles which it seeks to facilitate both at the level of its formal architectonic interest in human autonomy...and at the level of the substantive "filling in" of this architectonic interest through its specific genealogical accounts

as embodying interests in particular social practice/discourses which constrain certain groups and individuals.[17]

Maturity and Modernity is, on the whole, an interesting and provocative account of the Nietzschean tradition of post-Kantian critique. The book does have its limitations, there is, for example, no mention of the connection between Nietzsche's work and postmodernism or post-structuralism, and its presentation of Weber is clearly tendentious, but Owen's detailed and scholarly readings of Nietzsche and Foucault compensate to some extent for these drawbacks. Indeed, these readings present a strong case for the Nietzschean tradition, and together mount a stern challenge to Habermas's presentation of the discourse of modernity.

3). Arpád Szakolczai's *Max Weber and Michel Foucault: Parallel Life-Works.*

There are a number of affinities between the work of Max Weber and Michel Foucault. These affinities, as theorists such as Colin Gordon, John O'Neill, and David Owen have shown, include a shared interest in forms of modern domination and discipline, a common concern for the impact of instrumental rationality on the leading of life, and an interest in the work of Nietzsche. Arpád Szakolczai, in *Max Weber and Michel Foucault*, argues, however, that there is a further, and as yet unexplored, connection between Weber and Foucault: their 'life-works'. In view of this, Szakolczai attempts to establish the parallel points of contact which exist between the respective lives and works of the two theorists, an approach which he terms a 'bio-logo-graphy'.[18]

The first part of the book comprises of a methodological reflection on the practice of 'reflexive historical sociology', in which the author states that it is not his intention to explain the content of ideas 'but the conditions of possibility of a project'.[19] Following this, Szakolczai proceeds to analyse the 'keys' to the work of Weber and Foucault, and the central problems these thinkers address. In regards to the former of these points, Szakolczai argues that the key to Weber's work is his 1920 'Author's Introduction' to the 'Collected Essays on the Sociology of Religions', whilst the key to Foucault's work is his 'Introduction' to the *History of Sexuality*. In regards

to the latter of these points, he argues, against Friedrich Tenbruck and Wilhelm Hennis, and in rather vague fashion, that Weber's central problem, whilst stemming from the connection between his life and work, remains largely undefined, and that Foucault's central problem is, in short, that of the 'effects of...discourse about the self on the self itself'.[20]

The second part of the book comprises of a lengthy analysis of Weber's life and work. This analysis is detailed and imaginative but is clearly limited in a number of respects. Szakolczai fails to consider, for example, the impact of Weber's trips to Ascona in 1913 and 1914 on his work, and overlooks the connections made by Eduard Baumgarten, Martin Green, and Sam Whimster between the revisions Weber made to the 'Zwischenbetrachtung' ('Intermediate Reflection') between 1915 and 1920 and important developments in his personal life. There is, moreover, little evidence to support a number of the conclusions Szakolczai draws from his analysis of Weber's 'life-work', particularly the following: that Weber's relation to his wife, Marianne, was 'severely handicapped' intellectually, for she 'would never be his Nietzschean companion'[21]; that Weber's 'secrets' were: 'the "beautiful" women in his life', his 'reading experiences' of Marx, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche, and his 'effective self-reflexions'[22]; that in the autumn of 1916 Weber 'suddenly found his status and his role model in the Ancient Hebrew prophet, Jeremiah'[23], and that Weber, like Foucault, was an 'antiprophetic prophet', or 'parrhesiast'.[24]

Szakolczai's analysis of Foucault's 'life-work' is also problematic. He stresses the importance of Foucault's 'reading experiences' (of Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Nietzsche), and makes detailed references to a number of his lesser-known documents and lectures, but offers little discussion of Foucault's political activity. Szakolczai here does not analyse the radical nature of Foucault's 'life-work' but makes a number of anodyne remarks about his personal qualities. He notes, for example, that Foucault was a 'nice person'[25], and, following Pierre Nora, that he 'had a tremendous need to be loved'.[26] In addition, Szakolczai also makes a number of claims which, without serious analysis of the content of Foucault's work, are difficult to substantiate, one being, for example, that 'Heidegger remained for Foucault *the* philosopher'.[27]

This book is, I believe, unlikely to appeal either to students or to experienced Weber or Foucault scholars, for on one hand, it is rather long-winded and disjointed,

and on the other, lacks biographical detail and rarely moves beyond a superficial consideration of the actual work of the two thinkers. As a result, Szakolczai's claims regarding the connections between the respective lives and works of Weber and Foucault often appear forced or simply ungrounded. In view of this, I would argue that this is not a particularly successful exercise in 'reflexive-historical sociology'.

Notes

[1] This review has been published in *Acta Sociologica*, 41, 3, 1998, pp.285-7.

[2] Wolfgang Schluchter, *Paradoxes of Modernity*, p.9.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp.37-8.

[4] *Ibid.*, p.59.

[5] *Ibid.*, p.110.

[6] *Ibid.*, p.175.

[7] *Ibid.*, p.181.

[8] *Ibid.*, p.240.

[9] This review has been published in *Acta Sociologica*, 41, 4, 1998, pp.389-91.

[10] David Owen, *Maturity and Modernity*, p.3.

[11] *Ibid.*, p.16.

[12] *Ibid.*, p.57.

[13] *Ibid.*, p.70.

[14] *Ibid.*, p.78.

[15] *Ibid.*, p.101.

[16] *Ibid.*, p.162.

[17] *Ibid.*, pp.211-2.

[18] Arpád Szakolczai, *Max Weber and Michel Foucault*, p.33.

[19] *Ibid.*, p.27.

[20] *Ibid.*, p.81.

[21] *Ibid.*, p.126.

[22] *Ibid.*, p.172.

[23] *Ibid.*, p.177.

[24] *Ibid.*, p.181.

[25] *Ibid.*, p.195.

[26] *Ibid.*, p.196.

[27] *Ibid.*, p.202.

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