BERGER'S DUAL-CITIZENSHIP APPROACH TO RELIGION

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ABSTRACT

Peter Berger's commitment to religious values is remarkable if you consider that he is also committed to the "impossible struggle" for "valuefree research concerning mankind's ultimate values." Against "heartless observers" or technocrats, Berger argues (using sociology of knowledge,) that it is impossible to divorce oneself from the *Lebenswelt*, the world of values. Against ideologues, on the other hand, he contends that one's engagement to personal values need not prevent one from attempting to understand the world objectively. Against technocrats and ideologues Berger holds out an approach to religion which calls for the practice of "dual-citizenship." This approach enables one to be academically credible *and* responsive to the political, religious and scientific concerns of our epoch.

My thesis centers on Berger's dual-citizenship approach to religion. Guided by the task of determining whether Berger's dual-citizenship constitutes an "impossible struggle" or a workable model for the study of religion, the first part is devoted to explaining what dual-citizenship entails. The second part tests the coherence of Berger's approach. Rather than proposing a new method for the study of religion, my thesis has the more modest aim of unpacking and testing an already established approach in the field, namely that of Peter Berger.

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INTRODUCTION

"To be a sociologist need not mean that one become either a heartless observer or a propagandist. Rather it should mean that each act of understanding stands in an existential tension with one's values, even those, indeed especially those, that one holds most passionately. For me, these have mainly been political and religious values."[1]

Peter Berger's commitment to religious values is remarkable if you consider that he is also committed to the "impossible struggle" for "valuefree research concerning mankind's ultimate values."[2] Against "heartless observers" or technocrats, Berger argues (using sociology of knowledge,) that it is impossible to divorce oneself from

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[1]Peter Berger, *Facing up to Modernity: Excursions in Society, Politics, and Religion* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), p. vii.

[2]Gordon Clanton, "Peter L. Berger und die Rekonstruktion der Religionssoziologie," übertragen von Wolfram Fischer. *Wissenschaft und Praxis in Kirche und Gesellschaft*, 62 (1973): 95. Clanton states: "Berger is . . . a paradigmatic figure. He reflects the ambivalence which many of us feel who stand between the social sciences and religion, and struggle for the impossible: valuefree research concerning mankind's ultimate values." (my translation)

the *Lebenswelt*, the world of values. Against ideologues, on the other hand, he contends that one's engagement to personal values need not prevent one from attempting to understand the world objectively. Against technocrats and ideologues Berger holds out an approach to religion which calls for the practice of "dual-citizenship." This approach enables one to be academically credible *and* responsive to the political, religious and scientific concerns of our epoch.

My thesis centers on Berger's dual-citizenship approach to religion. Guided by the task of determining whether his dual-citizenship constitutes an "impossible struggle" or a workable model for the study of religion, the first part is devoted to explaining what dual-citizenship entails. The second part tests the coherence and "workability" of Berger's approach. Rather than proposing a new method for the study of religion, my thesis has the more modest aim of unpacking and testing an already established approach in the field, namely that of Peter Berger.

My first introduction to Peter Berger's work was about four years ago in a graduate seminar on socio-critical approaches to religion. At that time I read *The Sacred Canopy* and *A Rumor of Angels*, written within the space of two years, 1967 and 1969 respectively. What struck me about these works, was Berger's approach to the subject of contemporary Western religious phenomena from standpoints traditionally antagonistic to one another--the sociological *and* theological. In *The Sacred Canopy*, his purpose was to theorize about the origin and place of religion in society from a sociological standpoint, specifically using sociology of knowledge. Uncomfortable with what may have been construed as support for a "methodological atheism" in the study of religion, he followed through two years later with *A Rumor of Angels*, written from the standpoint of a "lay theologian."

Naturally, this apparent methodological flip flop suggested to some readers that Berger was trying to have his cake and eat it too. That is, he was attempting to wear the two distinctly different hats of sociologist and lay theologian at the same time. Of course, this judgment is rooted in the idea that the "relevance structures" of sociology and theology have nothing to do with one another, that "consciousness is all of one piece." From the standpoint of mainstream sociology or theology, therefore, the spectacle of Berger changing from sociological to theological frames of reference with the ease of a chameleon, was simply unacceptable.

Van Harvey is one such critic of Berger. He charges Berger with obscuring the critical differences between theological and sociological perspectives by aiming for a reconciliation between "his belief in the god of the biblical tradition with a sociological theory in which all beliefs . . . . are regarded as human products relative to social structures. . . "[3] Van Harvey suggests that Berger is not consistent with his approach, that he speaks out of both sides of his mouth, as it were:

> Because the relativism of the sociology of knowledge is obviously so crucial for Berger's religious and political polemics, one might have fairly expected him to have addressed himself in a thorough fashion to the basic philosophical and theological issues it raises. How is it, to take an obvious question, that he can so blithely "relativize the relativizers" while claiming that his own work is strictly empirical and value-free, just the sort of claim the sociology of knowledge has taught many of us to be suspicious of?[4]

The charge that Berger is not consistent with his approach to religion sets the agenda for what is to follow.

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[3]Van A. Harvey, "Religious Faith and the Sociology of Knowledge: The Unburdening of Peter Berger". *Religious Studies Review* Vol. 5, No. 1 (January, 1979): 1.

[4]*Ibid.*, p. 8.

Our approach to investigating the charge diverges from that taken by Van Harvey. Whereas Van Harvey solemnly concludes that "it must be counted as the major failure of his work that he has never seriously dealt with these issues despite the fact that he everywhere presupposes an answer to them,"[5] I respectfully suggest that Van Harvey did not do his homework. The central task of this dissertation, therefore, is to establish, analyze *and then* evaluate the frame of reference with which Berger studies religious phenomena.

My receptivity to and interest in Berger's work four years ago was rooted in the fact that he had apparently resolved the classic confrontation between science and faith in the two aforementioned books. But I was not sure how he had done it. I just knew that he had articulated his position *qua* Sociologist and *qua* Theologian very elegantly. My question was, is it convincing? Does it work? Rather than leaving the impression of someone at odds with himself, Berger came across as a well versed theoretician about religious phenomena. Even Van Harvey admitted: "Berger is obviously one of those versatile and prolific minds that Protestantism casts up from time to time: equally at home in highly theoretical matters as well as in matters of public policy and popular culture."[6]

I will argue that rather than undermining the strength of sociology and theology, Berger's analysis of religion is a strong argument for the contribution which each makes to our understanding of this pivotal dimension of our existence. Anton Zijderveld says it well:

> Berger's work in the area of religion is an integral part of Berger's whole *oeuvre*. It should not be seen as an alien part in it, or as amateurish exercises in the margins. . . . Much like Schleiermacher, Berger seems to address the

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[5] *Ibid.*

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

> 'cultured despisers of religion,' but he does so without any missionary zeal. In fact his motive to transcend the level of scientific (that is, empirical, objective, rational) argument and to engage in religious and theological considerations about the supernatural is a very simple and very rational one. If debunking of our world-taken-for-granted is the task *par excellence* of the sociology of knowledge, one ought to debunk also this sociological debunking!. . . . As no one else in contemporary sociology, Berger had the nerve to formulate his ideas about all this explicitly, without obfuscating the logical and methodological boundaries between sociology and theology; between value-free analysis and normative commitment.[7]

Whom then does this thesis address? It addresses those students in the field of religion who are interested in a credible approach and are unafraid to grapple with the concerns represented by sociologists and theologians without claiming to be themselves professionals in sociology or theology; it addresses those students who work in the interdisciplinary field of religious studies. For those who believe that understanding modernity depends on coming to terms with the scientific *and* religious dimension of our lives, Peter Berger cannot be ignored. Again, Zijderveld's comments are illuminating:

> Berger's sociology is not only characterized by its debunking, rational analysis of the prereflexive, world-taken-for-granted. It also possesses an intrinsic relationship with humor and laughter. . . . In a sense, Berger's sociology has always been a *fröhliche Wissenschaft*, a gay science in which there is a titillating mountain air. But unlike Nietzsche's philosophy, Berger's sociology is not, in the end, run down by the forces of tragedy. Maybe in his sociology comedy

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[7]Anton C. Zijderveld, "The Challenges of Modernity" in James Hunter and Stephen Ainlay, editors, *Making Sense of Modern Times: Peter L. Berger and the Vision of Interpretive Sociology*, (London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), p. 73.

wins over tragedy, because it is ultimately based on Christian faith and hope.[8]

How Berger's colleagues in Sociology judge his work is not our concern here, although his name in the field is well known. Since one of Berger's "trademarks" is his "aloofness from the gamesmanship of professional sociology,"[9] it is not surprising that a "mutual suspicion . . . has characterized his relationship with mainstream American Sociology." This in spite of, or perhaps because of, the fact that Berger's twenty books and one hundred articles (coauthored, authored and edited) have sold in excess of one and a half million copies, and his work has

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[8]*Ibid.*, pp. 57-58. Zijderveld will argue, however, that Berger's answer to the "tragic" element in ideologies of demodernization and counter-modernization, based on an "inductive type of religion and theology", is "far from convincing." (58) Berger's answer to Zijderveld in the "Epilogue" to Hunter and Ainlay's diverse collection of essays, is of interest. He writes: "Anton Zijderveld's essay spans my early work on religion and the concern with modernization that has preoccupied me since the early 1970s. I suppose that my entire published opus revolves monomaniacally around two questions: What is modernity? And, how can one come to terms with it personally and politically? I agree with Zijderveld that the collapse, or at least the weakening, of the canopy of meaning is at the core of these questions. I also agree that, *au fond*, this has been the central problem of sociology as a discipline from its beginnings, although many sociologists in recent decades have found less interesting questions to preoccupy them.. . . . I accept Zijderveld's charge (if it can be called that) to the effect that, in the final analysis, my greater optimism is grounded in Christian faith: under the aspect of this faith, modernity, like any other era of human history, is simultaneously relativized and transcended. To say this in no way detracts from my admiration for the sort of stoicism with which Zijderveld identifies." (225)

[9]Hunter and Ainlay, editors, *Making Sense of Modern Times*, p. 3.

averaged three hundred listings a year in the *Social Science Citation Index* since 1980.[10]

Locating Berger in the discipline of sociology is relatively easy despite his own aversion for the task:

> He has shown little interest in personal intellectual debate in public settings and only marginal interest (in his writing) in the often ritualistic act of self-consciously defining his territory through elaborate bibliographic comparisons, contrasts, cross-referencings, and the like. He would likely consider both exercises tedious and pedantic. He merely pursues his intellectual agenda whether people like it or not.[11]

Rather than introducing a new theory or model for the sociological enterprise, Berger stresses that sociology must begin with endeavoring to understand social reality, a task firmly rooted in the classical tradition of sociology. If Berger has not been self-conscious about "defining his territory," he has been self-conscious about calling for the task of recovering "the vision of interpretive sociology, a vision established by the classical figures of the discipline."[12] His recovery of the classical sources in the tradition puts his work outside the American mainstream. I have already mentioned this point but it is worth repeating. Anton Zijderveld sums up the problem:

> Berger's corpus has often perplexed those schooled in America's mainstream, functionalist, and positivist sociology -- a style of sociological reasoning that has often displayed a chilling disregard for the classical European tradition of the discipline. For such people, his work is very often judged as superficial. Yet to conclude this

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[10] *Ibid.*, *p. 2.*

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 7. By classical figures of the discipline, Hunter and Ainlay mean Weber, Durkheim, Marx, Pareto and so on.

> is to fail to appreciate the profundity of Berger's cognitive and stylistic virtuosity.[13]

A word about my own travelling papers is in order. My specialization in religious studies has been that of Western religious thought, an area which traditionally highlights what philosophers and theologians have said about religion in the West. While theological and philosophical approaches to the study of Western religious thought have dominated that particular corner of the field, they by no means exhaust ways in which people have thought about religion. Berger's sociological perspective constitutes another way to approach the study of religion and, needless to say, I am convinced that theologians and philosophers have much to learn from sociologists and vice versa. My "citizenry," therefore, is that of Western religious thought, which, prior to studying Peter Berger's work, was dominated by theology and philosophy. In the end, I can only say that Berger has broadened my own frame of reference.

Let us return to the central problem of this thesis. In my opening remarks I alluded to two other possible routes to the study of religion, namely ideological and technocratic. Essentially, the ideologue is hermeneutically committed to a specific theory or world view, religious, political or otherwise. The assumption within this approach is that not only is it impossible to separate one's value commitments from one's academic life, but further, that one must endeavour to implement these values (via programs, "consciousness-raising," etc.) in the academic world and outside. The dogmatic edge to this mode of approaching reality is revealed in the classroom delivery which resembles more that of a preacher or politician than that of a teacher. In this regard, Berger shares Weber's

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[13]Zijderveld, "Challenges of Modernity", in Hunter and Ainlay, editors, *Making Sense of Modern Times*, p. 57.

view: *" . . . der Prophet und der Demagoge [gehören] nicht auf den Katheder eines Hörsaals."*[14]

The antithesis to the ideological model, the technocratic, is one which stipulates that personal values be divorced from academe. Berger describes this type as

> the self-appointed superior man, standing off from the warm vitality of common existence, finding his satisfactions not in living but in coolly appraising the lives of others, filing them away in little categories, and thus presumably missing the real significance of what he is observing.[15]

Undergirding this model is the assumption that personal values can be discarded or "put on" as easily as one dresses or undresses. Presumably, one could be a racist, misogynist, socialist, buddhist, (the list can go on indefinitely,) without such values influencing one's work.

Peter Berger recognizes the inherent strengths and weaknesses of both models. With Hansfried Kellner, he proposes for those students of religion who are committed to religious values, that they regard themselves as *"dual-citizens,"*[16] citizens belonging to the academic world (the

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[14]Max Weber, *Wissenschaft als Beruf* (München: Duncker & Humblot, 1919), p. 25. "The prophet and the demagogue do not belong in the classroom lectern".

[15]Berger, *Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1963), p. 15.

[16]Berger and Kellner introduce the notion of "dual-citizenship" in response to the question: "Can one still ask about religious truth once one has recognized that religious systems too are social constructions?" *Sociology Reinterpreted: An Essay on Method and Vocation* (New York: Anchor Books, 1981), p. 84. Taking as an example a Muslim believer/sociologist, they illustrate the point that one can both participate in and professionally sociologize about a religious community: "I will then have a particular sort of 'dual citizenship': on the one hand I am a citizen of the 'republic of scholars'. . . on the other hand, however, I continue to be a citizen of the *'umma,'* the community of Islam." (p. 86) In conversation with Peter Berger I

(continued...)

"republic of scholars") and the everyday world ruled by practical concerns (*der Lebenswelt*.) The two worlds are neither divorced from nor wed to one another[17] but are, rather, "two solitudes"[18] intimately connected within the person who travels back and forth between the two "republics." In this way, commitment to one's values and striving for objectivity, strengths of the ideologue and technocrat respectively, are upheld. Similarly, fanaticism and heartlessness, weaknesses inherent to both approaches respectively, are banished.

Berger and Kellner formulate their position in the following passage:

> The general problem both in the technocratic and ideological uses of sociology is the relation between theory and praxis. In our view, there certainly can be a relation, but it is not a direct, 'one-to-one' relation. Rather, it is a 'broken'

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[16](...continued)
learned that this notion of "dual-citizenship" was suggested by Hansfried Kellner and further, that a "triple-citizenship" more accurately describes Berger's citizenry. That is, he is a citizen of three countries;--sociology, religion and ethics/politics.

[17]In the traditional sense, where "two become one."

[18]A "union of two solitudes" represents an option to the traditional model just mentioned. R.M. Rilke eloquently describes such a marriage in his "Letter to a Young Poet" where he states: "All companionship can consist only in the strengthening of two neighboring solitudes, whereas everything that one is wont to call giving oneself is by nature harmful to companionship: for when a person abandons himself, he is no longer anything, and when two people both give themselves up in order to come close to each other, there is no longer any ground beneath them and their being together is a continual falling." He concludes: A "wonderful living side by side can grow up" if the partners "succeed in loving the distance between them which makes it possible for each to see the other whole and against a wide sky!" R.M. Rilke in J.L. Mood, translator, *Rilke on Love and other Difficulties. Translations and Considerations of Rainer Maria Rilke* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1975), p. 28.

> relation. The sociologist who is committed to any pragmatic project, be it technical or political, must remain aware of this 'brokenness' if he is not to be pulled into a pragmatic mentality that in the end threatens the survival of the scientific attitude. Again, he must remain conscious of his 'dual citizenship.'[19]

From the foregoing, we note that Berger and Kellner diagnose the problem with ideological and technocratic approaches to phenomena in terms of how "theory and praxis" relate to one another. In place of a "one-to-one" relation between "theory and praxis," Berger and Kellner prescribe a relationship between "theory and praxis" which is "broken."

To visualize a relationship which is "broken," the authors utilize the metaphor of "dual-citizenship." As previously noted, dual-citizenship does not involve an assimilation of the academic into the everyday world or the converse. Neither does it involve a confrontation between the two worlds. Rather, a dual-citizenship approach implies that both worlds, the everyday and the academic, are valuable in themselves and must be respected as such. Rules which govern the passage of a citizen who belongs to the United States and Canada, for instance, are equally important for the citizen of the "republic of scholars" and *der Lebenswelt*. His or her passports for the respective countries must be in order; passports must not be confused as border crossings are made; and finally, his or her travel must be legal. Illegal passage between countries, no matter how cordial the relations between them, is never a wise procedure.

Since "praxis" is subject to a variety of interpretations, it is crucial to indicate what Berger means by the term. For Berger, praxis means the commitment to a

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[19]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 139.

"pragmatic project," technical or political.[20] When research is dominated by a pragmatic motif, the potential strength of the theoretical or "scientific attitude" is stymied. Berger's quarrel with technocrats and ideologues is that they have forfeited academic freedom by committing themselves to a political cause or a technical project.

The "pragmatic" praxis of the technocrat and the ideologue is substantially different from what we can call "academic" praxis. Academic praxis involves the lived activity of investigating phenomena with "scientific integrity." In the pages to follow I will treat this type of praxis with more detail.

To summarize our working definition of praxis, it is important to highlight two points. First, Berger employs the term explicitly to connote a pragmatic commitment to political or technical projects. In that connection, he criticizes the pragmatic praxis of technocrats and ideologues. Second, although he does not describe his approach to phenomena as a praxis, an academic praxis pervades Berger's work. His dual-citizenship approach is nothing short of a vocation, the vocation of "thinking through and living through the tensions between 'is' and 'ought,' between understanding and hope, between scientific analysis and action."[21]

Two crucial assumptions feed into the "dual-citizenship" approach. The first is that consciousness itself does *not* require an "either/or," is not "all of one piece."[22] Arguing from the standpoint of everyday

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[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid., p. 13.

[22]Berger and Kellner state unequivocally: "To deny the specificity of the scientific relevance structure implies the denial of any possible passage between relevance

(continued...)

experience, Berger maintains that we move effortlessly between "relevance structures"[23] of consciousness in different situations. These relevance structures can be as diverse as theology and sociology without one dominating the other. In this way, a kind of pluralism exists in our consciousness, as real in the external world as in the interior. In the sociological realm, one employs the relevance structure of science. Conversely, in the theological realm, one's operations are carried out *qua* those of a religiously engaged individual. One does *not* do "theological" sociology or "sociological" theology. The two "relevance structures" are discrete and separate, connected only by the individual from whose perspective they are utilized.

The second assumption is that individuals within the academic community are not somehow immune to beliefs and opinions about reality by virtue of their professional status. Regardless of the level of refinement, hermeneutical approaches to reality are the product of choices one has already made (consciously or not) about the gamut of existence. In order to preserve, therefore, the traditional model of the university as the place where truth is freely explored, it is necessary that individuals within that community live as citizens of "two worlds."

Our understanding of Berger must begin with his "sociological perspective." From early in his career to the present he has consistently called the hermeneutical point

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[22](...continued)
structures, and implies conversely the assertion that consciousness is always 'all of one piece'--that is, that *all* relevances and interests are, at all times and in all places, co-present in the mind. Both the denial and the assertion are flagrantly at odds with the empirical evidence." *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 62.

[23]"Relevance structure" is a Schützian designation for the way our focus is directed to that which directly concerns us, is relevant to us in any given situation and time.

of departure for his work, his "sociological perspective." The terms "sociological" and "perspective" give us a picture of Berger's approach to reality. In contrast to the sterile connotations of "theory" or "method," Berger opts for the language of sight, a language which liberates rather than confines. Similarly, he moves away from the traditional focus on "ideas" characteristic of both theology and philosophy, directing his attention instead to the knowledge of everydayness. Berger will initially focus on the *Lebenswelt* since "knowledge," ideas and theory emerge therefrom. His investigation begins, therefore, with the "social," what people think and do in their everyday life. Thus, his perspective is *sociological*.

One of the "unintended consequences" of my research into Berger's approach to religion has been the discovery that a significant portion of the secondary literature fails to interpret him correctly. The central flaw of that literature is to evaluate Berger as a "sociologist of knowledge" as if that label would exhaust his intellectual framework.[24] Berger's more or less exclusive use of sociology of knowledge is relegated to the mid-sixties, making it fair to refer to him as a "sociologist of knowledge" during that time period. His perspective, however, is the product of two theoretical components, namely, Weber's sociology and sociology of knowledge. Since

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[24]Rather than listing every article or book in which Berger is referred to as a "sociologist of knowledge" without the context of its role in his "sociological perspective," I have selected two names, one of which I have already referred, namely Van A. Harvey, "Religious Faith and the Sociology of Knowledge: The Unburdening of Peter Berger", *Religious Studies Review* Vol V (Jan., 1979): 1-10; The other name is that of Armin Kreiner, *Religionssoziologie zwischen Theorie, Apologie und Kritik der Religion: Peter L. Bergers Theorieansatz in theologischer Perspektive* (Frankfurt a.M.: Verlag Peter Lang), 1986.

he is clear about his Weberian/Schützian foundation,[25] it is crucial that our study proceed from that ground.

Our examination of Berger's sociological perspective will proceed in four steps. In the first chapter, we will attend to the terms he uses to describe his "*modus operandi*," namely, "sociological" and "perspective." Here, we will look at a) why Berger adopts a perspective which is sociological, rather than theological or philosophical; and b) why he opts for the term "perspective" rather than "method" or "theory," for example. Finally, we will note the essential ingredient in Berger's sociological perspective, namely, "humanism," and discuss the implications thereof.

In the second chapter, our task will be to establish the theoretical background for his sociological perspective. The theoretical background of Berger's sociological perspective is comprised of Alfred Schütz's phenomenology and Max Weber's sociology.

The third chapter consists of an overview of what Berger says about religion. In other words, our focus is on Berger's findings concerning religion. We will look first, at how he approaches the problem of defining religion, and the definition itself. In the second half of this chapter, we will review Berger's analysis of religion *qua* theologian. Here, we will look at three methodological models outlined by Berger with which religion can be approached, namely, the deductive, reductive and, his own preference, the inductive models. Following this, we will focus on Berger's reflection about two theological points, that of a) the existence of God, and b) the nature of God. The chapter will conclude with his proposal that contemporary theology adopt a "cosmopolitan motif" towards other religions.

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[25]This was confirmed as recently as December 1987 in conversation with Peter Berger.

In the final concluding chapter, we will test the pillars upon which Berger's sociological perspective rests, namely Weber's sociology[26] and the Schützian-based sociology of knowledge.[27] To critically assess the foundation for Berger's dual-citizenship approach to reality, we will pose the following questions in this fourth chapter: a) Does valuefreeness as a method of inquiry make sense if it proceeds from a valueladen base? b) What use does an approach which relativizes and debunks have if even it can be relativized and debunked? and finally, c) How well do valuefreeness and sociology of knowledge interact? Can valuefreeness withstand the debunking impetus of sociology of knowledge?

Let us turn our attention now to the sociological perspective undergirding Berger's dual-citizenship approach to religion.

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[26]We will devote most of our attention to *Wertfreiheit*, a notion which, as Berger and Kellner remark, has "been endlessly and often confusedly debated." *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 51.

[27]Berger and Thomas Luckmann introduced their own version of sociology of knowledge to the academic world in 1966 with the publication of *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Doubleday, 1966). Berger specifically applied the sociology of knowledge component of his sociological perspective to religion in two books which followed shortly thereafter, namely *The Sacred Canopy and, A Rumor of Angels.*

CHAPTER ONE

Concepts and Relations

Our examination of Berger's *modus operandi* for the study of religion will begin with his accounting of the "sociological perspective" with which he approaches phenomena. Quite simply, we will explore, first, Berger's conceptualization of "perspective" and "sociology" and second, his understanding of the relationship between a) sociology and theology, and b) sociology and philosophy. Let us begin, then, with the term "perspective."

A. "Perspective"

Rather than employing technical terms like "theory," "method," "system" or even "Weltanschauung," Berger opts for the language of sight to describe his approach to reality. This is not surprising since he views human life in terms of "a rich, powerful reality, which resists absorption into the 'engineering mentality.'"[1] Clearly, Berger is uncomfortable with a restricted framework by which to unravel living phenomena. "Sociologism" results

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[1]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 133.

when sociological theory becomes systematized, "neat, even aesthetically pleasing." Berger's aversion to building a system whose logic is "one-dimensional and closed within itself"[2] is plain as one reads his work.

Berger outlines the dimensions of his perspective in terms of four motifs, those of debunking, unrespectability, relativizing and cosmopolitanism. Guided by the goal to see what is "really going on" he employs two hermeneutics therefore, those of goodwill[3] and suspicion. Beginning with the cosmopolitan motif or "goodwill," we see that he calls for an openness towards the variety of cultural configurations located in our world-village:

> The sociological perspective is a broad, open, emancipated vista on human life. The sociologist, at his best, is a man with a taste for other lands, inwardly open to the measureless richness of human possibilities, eager for new horizons and new worlds of human meaning.[4]

Anyone who has travelled for any length of time in a different culture with its unfamiliar language and conventions, understands that a provincial attitude towards the strange place produces barren experiences and memories. The minimal and most basic task in new cultures (as in familiar at-home ones), is survival, which entails at least an acquaintance with a collection of everyday phrases, questions and answers in the new language. If we lack flexibility, a sense of humor, and maintain even the

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[2]Berger, *Invitation to Sociology*, p. 168.

[3]John Robertson equates the hermeneutic of goodwill with the "ideal of openness" and describes it as "neither sentimental affection nor guaranteed uncritical agreement" but rather "the willingness to take the other seriously, to allow our conversation partner's questions to engage us personally as real questions. . . ." "Hermeneutics of Suspicion versus Hermeneutics of Goodwill" *Studies in Religion* 8/4 (1979: Fall): 365-377, p. 376.

[4]Berger, *Invitation*, p. 53.

slightest sense of superiority towards the perhaps barbaric-like sounds heard around us, we are guaranteed a very short and miserable sojourn. If we are not deported "back home" by the guest authorities, it will not take long before we will clamor and whine to return to our own secure world.

The cosmopolitan motif guards, therefore, against "isms" in the theoretical field and particularly, in Berger's case, against "sociologism." He sees in sociologisms of all colours a dangerous gravitation towards isolation or "protectionism" culminating inevitably in a totalitarian system of cognitive control. Berger and Kellner contrast a totalitarian approach to reality with one which is democratic:

> Just as a totalistic understanding of science adumbrates a totalitarian approach to political power, so a non-totalistic, 'modest' understanding of science is conducive to democracy. Put differently, by understanding science as a partial, 'aspectual' approach to human reality, the scientist can never be accorded the status of a cognitive elite--and, in consequence, both the cognitive and the political rights of ordinary people are accorded the respect that is at the core of democracy.[5]

As already mentioned, Berger's perspective also includes motifs of debunking, unrespectability and relativization. Our picture, therefore, is not complete if we only discuss the "cosmopolitan" ingredient. Contrasted with goodwill is the hermeneutic of suspicion:

> Sociological perspective can then be understood in terms of such phrases as 'seeing through,' 'looking behind,' very much as such phrases would be employed in common speech. . . . We will not be far off if we see sociological thought as part of what Nietzsche called 'the art of mistrust.'[6]

This important motif should not be minimized since for Berger, to see what is "really going on" requires more than

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[5]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 105.

[6]Berger *Invitation*, p. 30.

an "open" mind. A critical edge is essential to the task of exposing, debunking and cutting through the superficial coverings of reality.

Berger, the cosmopolitan, "eager for new horizons and new worlds of human meaning," is never far away from Berger, the debunker, penetrating "verbal smoke screens to the unadmitted and often unpleasant mainsprings of action."[7] His dual-edged sociological perspective means that he is open to religious phenomena in a practical, prudent and cunning manner. Abstract philosophizing, theologizing or scientific theorizing is debunked and exposed so that one is brought closer to what is "really there."

The hermeneutic of suspicion (wisdom, cunning and debunking) corresponds with the individual who prepares for a journey; similarily, the hermeneutic of goodwill (innocence, openness and harmlessness) corresponds with those travellers who, with journey planned and arranged, turn their gaze to the enchanting and shocking sights around them. That is to say, it is possible to dynamically bring together the cosmopolitan and debunking motifs of Berger's perspective.

Absorbed with the world in which we live, Berger's determination is to clearly perceive, with as much accuracy as possible, what is "really going on." This determination calls for a strategy of both openness and suspicion, of goodwill and practical wisdom in order to successfully grasp the unfolding drama of human existence.

B. "Sociological"

We will focus on the concept "sociological" in this section. My question is: Why will Berger delineate his "perspective" as SOCIOLOGICAL? Why not use any of the

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[7]Berger, *Invitation to Sociology*, p. 42.

following labels?--theological, philosophical, or even sociology of religion?

Berger classifies the disciplines of theology and philosophy as "normative":

> At the heart of the modern sociological perspective is the perception of the autonomous and frequently covert dynamics of human collective entities. 'Society' is nothing but a name for whatever 'works away,' by rules that were yet to be discovered, 'underneath' the collective structures as they were 'officially' defined by such normative disciplines as theology, philosophy and law.[8]

A normative way of looking at reality contrasts with the sociologist's attempt to "be objective, to control his personal preferences and prejudices, to perceive clearly rather than to judge normatively."[9] Unlike the theologian and philosopher, the sociologist is determined "to see the social world as it is, regardless of [his or her] wishes and fears--that is, to separate what *is* from what one believes *ought to be*."[10]

Although they proceed on the basis of different assumptions (roughly stated, the theologian begins with revelation and the philosopher with reason and/or experience), their aim (in most cases) is somewhat similar. Not only do they diagnose the state of social reality, but proceed also to prescribe cures or medication with which to heal society's ills.

Even in his books specifically dealing with religion and society, Berger avoids applying the "sociology of

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[8]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 4.

[9]Berger, *Invitation to Sociology*, p. 16.

[10]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 10.

religion"[11] label to his work. In his preface to *The Sacred Canopy*, Berger states:

> The following argument is intended to be an exercise in sociological theory. Specifically, it seeks to apply a general theoretical perspective derived from the sociology of knowledge to the phenomenon of religion. . . . It should also be stressed that this book is not 'a sociology of religion.' An enterprise worthy of this name would have to deal with vast materials not even touched upon here--such as the relationship between religion and other institutions in society, the forms of religious institutionalization, the types of religious leadership, and so forth. The present argument, as an exercise in sociological theorizing, has a much more modest aim.[12]

It is understandable why some have designated Berger as a "sociologist of religion" since he reserves an important

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[11]Despite his clear statements to the contrary, many scholars labelled Berger as a "sociologist of religion" after reading *The Sacred Canopy*. Included in this group are: Drehsen, "Die Reprivatisierung des heiligen Kosmos," who states, "Berger has investigated the problem in his book *The Sacred Canopy*, which up until now probably can be acknowledged as his main sociology of religion work." (p. 251, my translation) Phillip E. Hammond, "Peter Berger's Sociology of Religion: An Appraisal," *Soundings* 52 (1969): 415-424. Harvey, "The Unburdening of Peter Berger," states: "Berger has always displayed a remarkable degree of self-consciousness about methodological matters, and it is interesting to see how he dealt with these conceptual strains in his major work in the sociology of religion, *The Sacred Canopy*." (p. 4) Wolfhard Pannenberg, "Signale der Transzendenz: Religionssoziologie zwischen Atheismus und religiöser Wirklichkeit," *Evangelische Kommentare* 7 (1974): 151-154. He writes: "In his book *A Rumor of Angels*, that was written only two years after his sociology of religion, but appeared earlier in German translation, the New York sociologist Peter Berger defended himself against the misunderstanding that his sociology of religion was an atheistic interpretation of religious phenomena." (p. 151, my translation) And finally, John Wilson, "The De-alienation of Peter Berger," writes: "Paradoxically, although *The Sacred Canopy* is something of a landmark in the sociology of religion there is not a great deal that is new in the book." (p. 433)

[12]Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, pp. v and vi.

role within his perspective for the contribution which a classical understanding of sociology of religion can make to both sociology and the humanities.[13] A better grasp of Berger's work as a unity, however, reveals that the sociology of religion is only a subdivision of the sociology of knowledge, which in turn is an important pillar in his sociological perspective.[14]

An answer has been provided as to why Berger calls his perspective sociological. At this juncture, it is appropriate to elaborate on our answer. While he groups theology and philosophy together, insofar as they are both "normative," he nevertheless distinguishes between them.

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[13]Regarding the status which Berger accords sociology of religion in his overall perspective, the following passages are relevant: Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Doubleday, 1966). The authors state: "Our understanding of the sociology of knowledge leads to the conclusion that the sociologies of language and religion cannot be considered peripheral specialties of little interest to sociological theory as such, but have essential contributions to make to it." (p. 185) In Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, the authors write: "That religious systems are such constructions--or, at any rate are ALSO such constructions, within the frame of reference of any empirical analysis--can be shown quite conclusively by the sociology of religion (which, within the discipline, is really a subsection of the sociology of knowledge)." (p. 84) In his preface to *Invitation to Sociology*, Berger writes: "My special prepossession in the field has been the sociology of religion. This will perhaps be evident from the illustrations that I use because they come most readily to my mind. Beyond that, however, I have tried to avoid an emphasis on my own specialty. I have wanted to invite the reader to a rather large country, not to the particular hamlet in which I happen to live." (p. viii) A final reference is found in Berger and Luckmann, "Sociology of Religion and Sociology of Knowledge," *Sociology and Social Research* 47 (July 1963): 417-427: "--The sociology of religion is an integral and even central part of the sociology of knowledge." (p. 423)

[14]See Appendix I, entitled "Berger's Sociological Perspective."

How do the relationships of sociology to theology on the one hand, and of sociology to philosophy on the other hand compare? What does Berger mean by "theology" and "philosophy?" We will be in a better position to understand what is distinct about a sociological perspective once we have answered the foregoing questions.

1. Sociology and Theology

Unlike the theologian, the sociologist *qua* sociologist is not concerned with whether "religious propositions about the world" are true or false.[15] The empirical nature of the discipline precludes such questions. Thus, both assertions about and questions concerning truth are bracketed by the sociologist since they are empirically unverifiable. This methodological principle means that the sociologist begins with an agnostic standpoint towards religious phenomena:

> Thus sociological theory must, by its own logic, view religion as a human projection, and by the same logic can have nothing to say about the possibility that this projection may refer to something other than the being of its projector. In other words, to say that religion is a human projection does not logically preclude the possibility that the projected meanings may have an ultimate status independent of man.[16]

Questions about the possible existence of a transcendent sphere are not excluded from the agenda when theologians and sociologists hold discussions. For the theologian, however, there is one proviso:

> Only after he (the theologian) has really grasped what it means to say that religion is a human

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[15]Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, preface.

[16]Berger, Appendix I, "Sociological and Theological Perspectives," *The Sacred Canopy*, p. 180.

> product or projection can he begin to search, WITHIN this array of projections, for what may turn out to be signals of transcendence.[17]

Despite the "severely discrete relevance structures" of the "two distinct disciplines of sociology and theology," they do "have an effect on each other."[18] The enriching dialogue between spokespersons for the two disciplines is premised, however, on the already stated "proviso," that the theologian has grappled with Feuerbach's view that religion is a human projection.

Theologians must possess a certain spirit, that of "classical Protestant liberalism." Berger is impressed with its "intellectual courage" and location, "equally removed from the cognitive retrenchment of orthodoxy and the cognitive timidity of what passes for neo-liberalism today."[19] At the time that *The Sacred Canopy* was published in 1967, Berger believed that such a theologian must possess the

> courage to find [himself] in a cognitive minority--not only within the church (which is hardly very painful today), but in the circles of secular intellectuals that today form the principal reference group for most theologians.[20]

Not only must the above "spirit" characterize the theologian with whom Berger would like to "converse," but he or she must also have seriously reckoned with the historicity of religion:

> Minimally, a sociologically sensitized theologian will have to reckon with the 'constructedness' of religious systems--and, minimally, this will pre-

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[17]Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, p. 185.

[18]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 89.

[19]Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, p. 184.

[20]Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, p. 185.

> clude certain forms of theological fundamentalism that are unable to acknowledge this.[21]

Such a theologian would recognize that insofar as religious systems are shaped and influenced by cultural, political and social factors, they are finite. Accordingly, he or she would adhere to a theology which "proceeds in a step-by-step-correlation with what can be said about man empirically[22]" and further, possess courage, openness and wisdom in order to face the *Feuerbach* of relativism without drowning or burning in the process.

If it is necessary that the theologian acquire a "sociological ear," so too is it vital that the sociologist acquire a "theological ear." Berger notes that classical sociology, unlike modern sociology (particularly in North America), stressed the important role that religion plays in society:

> Virtually all the classical sociologists understood--not only Weber, but also Durkheim, Simmel, Pareto and others--that religion is a central social phenomenon, since for most of human history it has been religion that has provided the ultimate meanings and values of life.[23]

While sociology and theology act upon one another, and while the acquisition of a 'theological ear' is "something more than a marginal skill for the interpretative sociologist,"[24] Berger concedes, nevertheless, that the effect of sociology on theology is greater than the converse: "One can certainly do a lot of sociology without any theological sensitivity at all."[25] Herein lies the essential difference between his understanding of philosophy and

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[21]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 89.

[22]Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, p. 185.

[23]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 90.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Ibid., p. 89.

that of theology. Ultimately, while Berger discusses theological matters with greater frequency than matters philosophical, the nature of his sociological perspective is more tuned to a specific branch of philosophy.

2. Sociology and Philosophy

Berger invites a specific breed of philosopher to converse with him. In an article entitled "Reification and the Sociological Critique of Consciousness,"[26] Berger and Stanley Pullberg map out a "meeting place" for philosophy and sociology. The authors begin by delineating one shared negative feature of both disciplines, namely, a penchant for building superstructures.[27] By "superstructure," Berger and Pullberg mean reified theoretical formulations in the academic field.

"Superstructures" are produced by two possible methodological extremes in sociology: "a narrow empiricism

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[26]Peter L. Berger and Stanley Pullberg, "Reification and the Sociological Critique of Consciousness," *History and Theory* IV (1965): 196-211.

[27]The following passage from *The Social Construction of Reality* clarifies the meaning Berger attaches to "*Überbau*" or superstructure: "The sociology of knowledge has been particularly fascinated by Marx's twin concepts of 'substructure/superstructure' (*Unterbau/Überbau*). . . . Later Marxism has tended to identify the 'substructure' with economic structure *tout court*, of which the 'superstructure' was then supposed to be a direct 'reflection' (thus Lenin, for instance). It is quite clear now that this misrepresents Marx's thought, as the essentially mechanistic rather than dialectical character of this kind of economic determinism should make one suspect. What concerned Marx was that human thought is founded in human activity ('labor' in the widest sense of the word) and in the social relations brought about by this activity. 'Substructure' and 'superstructure' are best understood if one views them as, respectively, human activity and the world produced by that activity." (p. 6)

oblivious of its own theoretical foundations," or the tendency to "build highly abstract theoretical systems emptied of empirical content."[28] In the field of philosophy, "superstructures" result from the inclination "for solitude, systematic seclusion and dispassionate self-contemplation."[29] In order to avoid superstructures, the intellectual must learn to balance the ascetic impulse with "actual, concrete, living human intersubjectivity,"--that is, the substructure.

While Karl Mannheim did not employ the term "*Überbau*," his appraisal of classical epistemology in *Ideology and Utopia* is similar to Berger and Pullberg's judgment on philosophical superstructures. According to Mannheim, classical epistemology was foundationless because it operated

> with this isolated and self-sufficient individual as if from the very first he possessed in essence all the capacities characteristic of human beings, including that of pure knowledge, and as if he produced his knowledge of the world from within himself alone, through mere juxtaposition with the external world. . . . Both individualistic epistemology and genetic psychology grew out of the soil of an exaggerated theoretical individualism which could have been produced only in a social situation in which the original connection between individual and group had been lost sight of.[30]

When philosophers and sociologists grapple with truth from a standpoint, not only concerned with theories about life, but also with life as it is experienced in the mundane, everyday sense, they soon discover that they are

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[28]Berger and Pullberg, "Reification and Consciousness," p. 211.

[29]Ibid., p. 210.

[30]Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, Translated by Louis Wirth and Edward Shils (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1936), p. 28.

compatriots rather than indifferent colleagues. To obtain an accurate understanding of the world, the philosopher must, as Husserl and Heidegger have shown, undertake a "critique of everyday life." Like their colleagues laboring in the workshop of philosophy, sociologists too must persistently "clarify everyday life."[31]

In his introduction to *Philosophy as Rigorous Science*, Husserl charts out the new path he envisages for philosophy:

> And what meaning should be given to the 'system' for which we yearn, which is supposed to gleam as an ideal before us in the lowlands where we are doing our investigative work? Is it to be a philosophical 'system' in the traditional sense, like a Minerva springing forth complete and full-panoplied from the head of some creative genius, only in later times to be kept along with other such Minervas in the silent museum of history? . . . Or is it to be a philosophical system of doctrine that, after the gigantic work of generations, really begins from the ground up with a foundation free of doubt and rises up like any skillful construction, wherein stone is set upon stone, each as solid as the other, in accord with directive insights? On this question minds must part company and paths must diverge.[32]

Rather than "springing forth complete and full-panoplied from the head of some creative genius . . . like a Minerva," Husserl wants to "begin from the ground up." The "ground" is founded on "true beginnings." As a "science of true beginnings, of '*rizomata panton*,'" philosophy must return to "the most basic field of work wherein things are given with absolute clarity."[33] Husserl explains:

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[31]Berger and Pullberg, "Reification and Consciousness," p. 211.

[32]Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*. Translated by Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 75-76.

[33]Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, p. 146.

> It is not through philosophies that we become philosophers. Remaining immersed in the historical, forcing oneself to work therein in historico-critical activity, and wanting to attain philosophical science by means of eclectic elaboration or anachronistic renaissance--all that leads to nothing but hopeless efforts. The impulse to research must proceed not from philosophies but from things and from the problems connected with them.[34]

He identifies the "impulse to research" with "philosophical intuition in the correct sense," or the "phenomenological grasp of essences."[35] This emphasis on "*eidos*" or essence earned Husserl the classification, "transcendentalist phenomenologist."

Heidegger's successful attempt to ground Husserl's phenomenological method in "*Existenz*" or facticity (the stuff, "*Sachen*"), in *Sein und Zeit* earned him the disfavor of his former professor (even though the treatise was dedicated to Edmund Husserl.) However, it is clear that Heidegger's stress on the "*Lebenswelt*" as a point of access to "Dasein's pre-ontological self-understanding," did not go unnoticed by Husserl. In his last work, *The Crisis of European Sciences*, Husserl devoted an entire section to an "Exposition of the Problem of a Science of the Lifeworld." Therein, he defined the life-world as

> a realm of original self-evidences. . . . All conceivable verification leads back to these modes of self-evidence because the 'thing itself' lies in these intuitions themselves as that which is actually, intersubjectively experienceable and verifiable and is not a substruction of thought; whereas such a sub-struction, insofar as it makes a claim to truth, can have actual truth only by being related back to such self-evidences.[36]

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[34]Ibid.

[35]Ibid., p. 147.

[36]Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendentalist Phenomenology*, Translated by David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern U. Press, 1970), pp. 127-128.

In *Sein und Zeit*, Martin Heidegger's investigation into the meaning of Being centered on the *Lebenswelt*. Through an "ontological analytic of Dasein" the "horizon" would be laid bare by which a probing into the meaning of Being could proceed. Thus he asked: "How can we gain access to Dasein's pre-ontological self-understanding?" The answer constituted one of the two tasks which he set for himself in *Being and Time*:

> We must rather choose such a way of access and such a kind of interpretation that this entity can show itself in itself and from itself (*an ihm selbst von ihm selbst her.*) And this means that it is to be shown as it is 'proximally and for the most part--in its average everydayness.' (*Alltäglichkeit*)[37]

Certainly not all philosophers and sociologists share Berger's criticism of theoretical superstructures divorced from the Lifeworld. From our brief look at Husserl and Heidegger, however, we can see an agreement in emphasis between Berger and what is called, "phenomenology" and "existentialism." The quality which binds together the three friends is their animosity towards the normative, 'superstructure' element which alienates the thinker from the world.

3. Berger's Sociological Perspective, Philosophy and Theology

For the most part, I have concentrated on the similarities between Berger's perspective and the disciplines of sociology and theology. As we probe deeper into the respective relationships, we see that Berger's crossing into the territory of philosophy is relatively tranquil compared to

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[37]Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 61-62.

his crossing into that of theology. His relationship with philosophy is like a good friendship where "iron sharpens iron" whereas with theology it is more like a stormy marriage. Several tentative speculations about the grounds for that "stormy" relationship include the following: a) His perspective has more in common with the temperament of philosophy which, unlike theology, does not begin with revelation. In the case of philosophy, a methodological atheism or agnosticism marks the point of departure for research whereas in theology, the belief that revelation is reliable constitutes the starting point for reflection. Since, for Berger, agnostic or atheistic theologians are anomalies, he did not endear himself to the trendy "death of God" theologians of the sixties and seventies. As he pointed out,

> Sociology has no choice but to bracket the ontological status of religious affirmations, all of which, insofar as they are properly religious, are beyond the range of empirical availability. Theology (Muslim, Christian or what-have-you) makes no sense whatever unless these brackets are removed. This, one should think, is a rather simple matter; it is a measure of the continuing influence of Feuerbachian reductionism that there are many Christian theologians who have not grasped it.[36]

b) If Berger's approach to reality is by temperament philosophical, his interests are predominantly religious and political, which brings him into the theological realm. This would be fine, except that Berger's professional training is in sociology, not theology. c) Berger's theological thinking changed from an early neo-orthodoxy to a later classical Protestant liberalism[37] leading to the

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[36]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 89.

[37]When questioned about his theological stance today, Berger told me that his theological approach to religious phenomenon remained in the liberal classical mode of Protestantism.

criticism that his theology is unstable and, *ipso facto*, unimportant.

In the next section I will attend to Berger's vision of a close alliance between sociology and the humanities. *Invitation to Sociology* documents his call for "an ongoing communication with other disciplines that are vitally concerned with exploring the human condition, the most important of which are history and philosophy."[40] Noteworthily, theology is not included in his plea for "ongoing communication."

Concerning Berger's relationship with philosophy, the first obvious point is that his distance from philosophy warrants calling his perspective "sociological" rather than "philosophical." Despite his request for an "ongoing communication" with philosophers, the introduction to *Social Construction of Reality* clearly distinguishes between a reconstructed sociology of knowledge *à la* Berger and Luckmann, and philosophy: "The theoretical formulations of reality, whether they be scientific or philosophical or even mythological do not exhaust what is 'real' for the members of a society."[41] They contend that if one's goal is an accurate understanding of the "real," more is needed than a philosophical approach to phenomena. A phenomenologically-based sociology of knowledge approach to reality would, therefore, fill in the vital gaps left behind by philosophy.

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[40]Berger, *Invitation*, p. 168. Filling this out further we read in the same section: "A humanistic understanding of sociology leads to an almost symbiotic relationship with history, if not to a self-conception of sociology as being itself a historical discipline (a notion still alien to most American sociologists but quite common in Europe). As to philosophical literacy, it would not only prevent the methodological naiveté of some sociologists, but would also be conducive to a more adequate grasp of the phenomena themselves that the sociologist wishes to investigate." (p. 169)

[41]Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, p. 15.

This may help to clarify why Berger has never written a systematic account of his sociological perspective. In many of his books, a chapter is included which sets out his conceptual instrumentarium, but that is the extent of his "philosophizing" (at least on paper.) These chapters, intimate in nature, allow us to grasp more readily the presuppositions of the books' contents. One difference, then, between Berger and philosophers is the form by which their respective messages are conveyed. Form, however, can always be reduced to a question of personal taste unless one follows Marshal McLuhan's dictum that "the medium is the message."[42] I think, however, that there is a more compelling factor which distinguishes Berger's perspective from a philosophical one.

Sociologists and philosophers take different approaches to reality. Both are concerned with persons and the world, but even with their emphasis on the "*Lebenswelt*," Husserl and Heidegger, for instance, devote their energy to the "*Überbau*" of that integral question concerning human reality and its place in the cosmos. In other words, they concentrate on ideas concerning man and the world. For example, Husserl highlights the philosophical turn of Descartes towards subjectivity. Heidegger underscores ancient Greek formulations about the nature of reality. As Berger and Luckmann state:

> . . . the philosopher is driven to decide where the quotation marks are in order and where they may safely be omitted, that is, to differentiate between valid and invalid assertions about the world. This the sociologist cannot possibly do. Logically, if not stylistically, he is stuck with the quotation marks. . . . It is our contention, then, that the sociology of knowledge must concern itself with whatever passes for 'knowledge' in a society, regardless of the ultimate validity or

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[42]Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 1964.

> invalidity (by whatever criteria) of such 'knowledge.'[43]

Berger's perspective diverges from both philosophy and theology because of the way he views the relationship between theory and praxis. To the extent that philosophers and theologians go beyond description to the prescription of "cures" for societal illnesses, a "one-to-one" relation between theory and praxis is evident in their academic activity. By "praxis," Berger means the commitment to "any pragmatic project, be it technical or political."[44] The correct relationship between theory and praxis would be a "broken relation."[45] He proposes, therefore, a "dual-citizenship" approach to the study of phenomena whereby one's activity *qua* sociologist is geared to understanding what is going on in society. Such a hermeneutical task requires the "bracketing" of one's values in an effort to understand the full dimensions of social reality. A dual-citizenship approach to reality, however, presupposes that values inhere in every individual, including the so-called "expert." Accordingly, one's activity, *qua* private citizen of the community, may be pragmatically geared towards the completion of projects, political or technical.

Berger recognizes, therefore, the impossibility of divorcing oneself from values. But at the same time, he believes that the success of the academic enterprise depends on the attempt to "see clearly," to conduct "valuefree research concerning mankind's ultimate values." By viewing reality AS IT IS regardless of their "wishes or fears," the sociologist objectively diagnoses his or her subject, society. Prescriptions for society's ills must be framed in such a way as to provide for options, that is, the

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[43]Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, pp. 2-3.

[44]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 139.

[45]Ibid.

prescription must be open-ended. This does not mean that he or she cannot be personally involved in controversial and weighty problems but it rather presupposes intense concern. When he or she actively sets about to implement beneficial proposals for society, it is done as a private citizen, not as a professional "expert."

C. "Humanism" as an essential Ingredient in Berger's Sociological Perspective.

An overview of Berger's sociological perspective would be incomplete without attention being paid to his view of humanhood. From around 1963 with the publication of *Invitation to Sociology* until 1981 with *Sociology Reinterpreted*, Peter Berger's concern that the discipline of sociology maintain a humanistic perspective is well documented. His humanism provides him with the impetus for his theoretical understanding of the task of sociology. In this way, sociology is a "calling" rather than a cold, theoretical enterprise centered on the analysis of societal functions or the transformation of revolutionary visions into reality.

Ironically enough, Berger's concern for ordinary people and their needs propels him to advocate a detached "sociological Machiavellianism" in the face of "conflicting fanaticisms."[46] He remains detached from the fanaticism of "a totalistic conception of science" (positivism) as well as that of "totalitarian social engineering" (utopianism.) In both cases, Berger detects a general formula whereby the freedom of the ruling class elite is realized at the expense of the freedom of ordinary people:

> In the case of positivism, freedom tends to disappear in rationality; that is, if freedom means anything, it is to live in as rational a manner as

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[46]Berger, *Invitation*, p. 170.

> possible and to rearrange society in accordance with rational principles. In the case of marxism, freedom becomes an eschatological hope--the 'leap into freedom' that will come with the revolution and the attainment of true communism--but IN THE MEANTIME no freedom makes sense unless it is a step toward this ultimate culmination.[47]

To protect "the freedom of ordinary people against the dictatorial ambitions of these cognitive elites,"[48] Berger strongly urges his colleagues to reappropriate into their sociological understanding that vital ingredient,--"humanism."

What does Berger mean by "humanism?" He answers:

> To be motivated by human needs rather than by grandiose political programs, to commit oneself selectively and economically rather than to consecrate oneself to a totalitarian faith, to be compassionate and skeptical at the same time, to seek to understand without bias--all these are existential possibilities of the sociological enterprise that can hardly be overrated in many situations in the contemporary world. In this way, sociology can attain to the dignity of political relevance as well, not because it has a particular political ideology of its own to offer, but just because it has not.[49]

Specific elements of Berger's assumptions about human nature will be analyzed in the next chapter. Generally speaking, Berger and Luckmann's dialectical view of the interaction between individuals and society owes much to both Hegel and the early Marx. As well, the biological assumptions of Arnold Gehlen and Helmuth Plessner figure prominently in Berger's sociology of knowledge.[50] His notion of humanhood

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[47]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 104.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Berger, *Invitation*, p. 171.

[50]Specifically, reference is made to Plessner's work entitled *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch*, (1928) and to Gehlen's *Der Mensch, seine Natur und seine Stellung in der Welt*, (1940) in *The Social Construction of Reality*.

revolves around the peculiar drive for order and meaning manifested by the human species. Unlike animals, humans are born with low instincts and are left with a multiplicity of possible horizons in which to carve out a world for themselves. Animals, by contrast, live a programmed existence without much room being left for manoeuver. Berger and Luckmann explain:

> Human being must ongoingly externalize itself in activity. This anthropological necessity is grounded in man's biological equipment. The inherent instability of the human organism makes it imperative that man himself provide a stable environment for his conduct. Man himself must specialize and direct his drives. These biological facts serve as a necessary presupposition for the production of social order. In other words, although no existing social order can be derived from biological data, the necessity for social order as such stems from man's biological equipment.[51]

The pregiven drive for a stable world manifests itself in that the newborn enters the world relatively "unprogrammed" compared to the animals' highly programmed structure. The drive for meaning or "nomos-building" achieves its best results in community with others. World construction is a social activity alive with significance for each individual.

Berger's humanism depends on this biologically grounded view of the human organism. The philosophical and religious implications of this essentially scientific understanding of humanhood are far-reaching as the following indicates:

> In the end, every society can be seen as a precariously put together fabric of meanings by which human beings seek to find guidance for their lives, to be consoled and inspired, in the face of finitude and death. It is only one short step from this vision to the explicitly moral judgment that all human meanings of this kind have great value and should not be lightly discarded. One might even speak here of a specific form of humi-

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[51]Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, p. 52.

> lity that is the property of all authentic social scientists.[32]

The significance of humanism for Berger is reflected in his methodological standards. We have already taken note of the interplay between the "cosmopolitan" and "debunking" motifs, of the criticism that positivism and utopianism dehumanize sociology, and of the crucial ingredient of humanism in Berger's sociological perspective. I will now focus on how he gives the above-listed features concrete expression. The following critical principles will be discussed: conceptualization and its extreme form, reification; evidence; objectivity; and application.

D. Critical Principles

1. Conceptualization and Reification

Conceptualization is an inevitable procedure in the hermeneutical enterprise. The basis upon which our concepts are formed is crucial to the pursuit of "seeing clearly." Berger emphasizes that the interpreter must probe beneath what appears to be happening, in the situation being studied, in order to more accurately grasp the meanings and intentions of the actors involved in the situation. In this connection, he refers to Alfred Schütz's distinction between "first and second order constructs." According to Schütz, sociological concepts are designated as "second order" constructs and must be meaning-adequate (*Sinnadäquat*, Weber.) This means that the sociologist must adjust his/her concepts to fit the intentions of the actors in any particular situation.

"First order constructs," on the other hand, belong to the concreteness of everyday life apart from the

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[32]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 74.

intentions of individuals. Berger's criticism of positivism is that the transposition of "first order constructs" into "second order constructs" which is at "the core of sociological interpretation" has been circumvented. That is, the interpretative task grinds to a halt after "first order constructs" have been ascertained. He pinpoints a faulty view of humanhood as the trigger for this crucial interpretative error. While conceding that valid knowledge MAY BE derived from such sterile methods, he concludes:

> The resulting statements about society tend to be very abstract, far removed from the social reality of living human beings--and, THEREFORE neither very illuminating nor very useful.[53]

Reification marks the point at which the *ad hoc* nature of sociological concepts hardens, becoming petrified. These frozen concepts then are imposed onto reality FROM OUTSIDE rather than grasped from the situation itself. Reification is a distortion of social phenomena.[54] Berger and Pullberg discuss how "theoretical reifications" (sociological concepts which have lost their *ad hoc* quality,) can become even more reified, "hardening into dogmas and cutting off the possibilities of the world as an expressive fabric."[55] They describe a bleak picture of sociologizing where "roles rather than people" are regarded as the prime reality and "no one exists any longer, but roles interact in a sort of ectoplasmic exchange."[56] The end result is "intrinsically alienating and de-humanizing," however very functional: "REIFICATION CONVERTS ACTION INTO PROCESS,

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[53]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, pp. 129-130.

[54]Berger and Pullberg, "Reification and Consciousness," p. 205.

[55]Ibid., p. 206.

[56]Ibid., p. 208.

which is precisely the core of its social functionality."[57] The convenience of reifying sociological concepts is due to the fact that action can then be defined "without the actor" and "praxis without its author."[58]

Berger has enlisted various terms to designate the phenomenon of positivism (together with its allies) in the social sciences. His depictions of "methodism"[59] and "positivism"[60] are similar. "Sociologism" and "functionalism" are also linked to "positivism" in Berger's thought. Even "marxism" and "freudianism"[61] with their "intellectual edifice . . . inviting to many orderly minds,"[62] contain the "appeal of positivism." Berger asserts that sociology "has been haunted from its beginnings" by the "positivist ideal." It entails

> the establishment of universal laws, in the fashion of the natural sciences, allowing for a system of causally connected relationships under which specific phenomena can be subsumed. If these laws are empirically valid, then the specific phenomena can be deduced from them as cases and predictions can be made as to their future course.[63]

This ideal solidifies in the various "isms" mentioned above. Berger agrees with the charge of "intellectual barbarism" levied at sociology (when it is monopolized by the positivist ideal) by those in the field of humanities.[64] He analyses this barbarity in terms of an "ignorance of history

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[57]Ibid.

[58]Ibid.

[59]Ibid., pp. 12-14.

[60]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 42.

[61]Berger, *Invitation*, p. 168.

[62]Ibid.

[63]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 42.

[64]Berger, *Invitation*, p. 12.

and philosophy, narrow expertise without wider horizons, a preoccupation with technical skills, and total insensitivity to the uses of language."[65]

Berger detects the positivist ideal in Durkheim's functionalist sociology:

> Although society is very clearly understood as a reality *sui generis*, the method of sociology is finally not determined by this quality of society but by an abstract concept of what science ought to be.[66]

Since the functionalist goal is to discover societal functions which occur independently from the intentions of social actors, this "abstract concept of what science ought to be" fails to account for the "reality *sui generis*" of those fundamental elements of society,--individual actors. Take, for example, the phenomenon of religious worship. Worshippers attending a religious ritual may think that reverence for God forms the focus of their experience. Sociologists of religion guided by the functionalist ideal, may decide, however, that the entire worship experience performs a functional service to society in that it maintains societal order. A softer line could be taken by other "functionalists" who use technical phrases like "latent function" or "unintended consequence" to explain the disparity between the intentions of the church-goers to worship God, and the actual function in society which they fulfill. Berger cautions that functionalism in the social sciences (whether "soft" or "hard,") is valuable SO LONG AS "it is clear that this is an explanation in the mind of the scientific observer only and is not imputed in any way to the social reality 'out there.'"[67]

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[65]Ibid.

[66]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 11.

[67]Ibid., p. 44.

If the public is "conned by the technocratic image of sociology offered by the priests of the "positivist church," a "scientization of everyday life" results. Sociologists are perceived by the duped public as "practical problem solvers" or "social engineers" and a mystique of the "expert" results. Berger speaks of the "broad vulgarization of sociology" which can be "observed with ease" in both North America and Western Europe whereby the "main purveyors of this practical wisdom" are the educational system and the mass media. In the extreme case,

> all of life may then be perceived as a laboratory in which the individual, in an attitude of cool detachment, tries on, puts over, tinkers with and abandons 'roles'--and the human relationships within which these 'roles' are performed.[68]

The tragic stage of the scientization of everyday life is attained when the "vulgarized sociology" of the mass media and the educational system becomes institutionalized as the only purveyors of meaning.

The aftermath in everyday life of an "imperialism of technocracy" is deeply troubling to Berger. Again, we return to his own view of human reality:

> To repeat: human life contains a rich, powerful reality, which resists absorption into the 'engineering mentality.' Sexuality, parenthood, marriage and all the joys, sorrows and terrors of human existence are such that they will, ever again, break through the fragile constructions by which 'social engineers' try to constrain and rationalize them.[69]

His analysis of the results of this frightening but real "aberration" of the sociological task in society constitutes a solid argument towards his case for a "broken connectedness" to exist between sociological theory and praxis.

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[68]Ibid., p. 132.

[69]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 133.

Functionalism fails the crucial test of incorporating into its strategy the proper relationship between theory and praxis. Berger writes: "There has been the notion that the demonstration that something is 'functional' in a particular 'social system' *ipso facto* bestows some sort of positive normative judgment."[70] His methodological corrective to the problem of "social engineering" is "TO BE AWARE OF THE DISCRETE RELEVANCE STRUCTURE OF SOCIOLOGY--AND, CONSEQUENTLY, TO UNDERSTAND THAT WHAT IS PROPER IN SCIENCE IS NOT PROPER IN LIFE."[71]

2. Evidence

In light of the preceding, it is imperative for Berger that evidence always "be framed in terms of meaning."[72] In his *Paris Lectures*, Husserl stressed that "the first procedure in Meditations I-IV is to awaken the guiding thought: the world is a meaning, an accepted sense."[73] If the "world is a meaning," it follows that data or evidence follow the principle of *Meaning-adequacy.* Accordingly, meaningful intentions of social actors must be screened from the body of available data to produce "evidence." Plainly, with this axiom, a great deal depends on how decisions are made concerning meaningful intentions. This will be discussed with more specificity in the next chapter.

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[70]Ibid., p. 11.

[71]Ibid., p. 133.

[72]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 45.

[73]Edmund Husserl, *The Paris Lectures*, Translated and Introductory Essay by Peter Koestenbaum (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), p. 52.

3. Objectivity

With the maxim of objectivity, we enter a sensitive region of debate in the academic milieu. Along with those scholars who are skeptical of the objective ideal, Berger admits that "the social location, the psychological constitution and the cognitive peculiarities"[74] of our interpreter influence the hermeneutical act. However, he contends that the "PASSION TO SEE" places on sociologists demands which must be met if they desire to perceive more than a "mirror image of his [their] own hopes and fears, wishes, resentments or other psychic needs."[75] *Wertfreiheit* is the idea that one can simultaneously preserve and transcend one's values. Values are neither denied nor allowed to slip away into the netherlands of unconsciousness. One's desire to grasp what is "really going on" will dictate a "systematic openness to the values of others as they are relevant to the situation being studied: seeing is not approving, but I cannot see at all if I constantly voice my own disapproval."[76] In this way, objectivity contributes to, rather than distorts our understanding of reality.

4. Application

With the final methodological problem of application we return to the central thesis. That is, the hermeneutical key with which we will comprehend Berger's approach to religion. Application is "necessarily value-based" and "what must be abandoned now is the bracketing of one's own values."[77] It presupposes "an altogether dif-

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[74]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 48.

[75]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 52.

[76]Ibid.

[77]Ibid., p. 53.

ferent relevance structure" than that of the theoretician. Berger maintains that

> one of the abuses of sociology has been the ignoring of this indirect relation between understanding and action, of the shift in relevance structure necessitated by the movement from the first to the second.[78]

His ideal of a humanistic sociology is violated when the pragmatic motif dominates the sociological enterprise. Human life is too fragile and complex, too mysterious and wonderful for it to be dominated by one narrative, one solution, one theory, metaphysic, method or worldview.

Berger directs his remarks concerning utopianism to any politically-striped sociology which, like positivism, does not retain a brokenness between theory and praxis. Accordingly, he criticizes "capitalists" and "marxists" in their respective efforts to "raise the consciousness" of peasants to their superior ideologies.[79] In *The War over the Family* (1983), written together with Brigitte Berger, he criticizes both left and right wings of American political solutions to problems concerning the family.

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[78]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 54.

[79]Peter Berger, *Pyramids of Sacrifice: Political Ethics and Social Change*, (New York: Doubleday, 1974). Berger's most recent book, *The Capitalist Revolution* (1986) demonstrates that he has altered his earlier balanced judgment regarding capitalism and socialism. Even though *qua* sociologist Berger "does not intend [this book] to constitute a moral argument in favor of capitalism," he nevertheless includes a final chapter where values are spelled out "on the basis of which one may . . . argue . . . in favor of capitalism." (p. 9) The "turning point" in his preceding balanced treatment of capitalism and socialism came when he "experienced Asia." As he puts it: "The experience of East Asia makes it difficult to remain evenhanded as between capitalist and socialist development models." (p. 12) From the preceding, we can surmise that, *qua* sociologist, Berger will not argue in this book that we jump on the capitalist express even though, *qua* ordinary citizen, he now believes that "capitalism is the morally safer bet." (ibid)

What is utopianism? In his book entitled *Ideology and Utopia*, Karl Mannheim describes "utopians" as

> incapable of correctly diagnosing an existing condition of society. They are not at all concerned with what really exists; rather in their thinking they already seek to change the situation that exists. Their thought is never a diagnosis of the situation; it can be used only as a direction for action. . . . It turns its back on everything which would shake its belief or paralyse its desire to change things.[60]

Normally, utopianism begins innocently as a mild reaction to the excesses of positivism. Berger's analysis of "modernization" and its cousin in the religious sphere, "secularization," is couched in the same language with which he analyses the excesses of positivism. For Berger, modern man is "homeless" as a result of modernization, "the imposition of rationality on ever-increasing sectors of social life."[61] Secularization is the religious counterpart of modernization as "traditional religious interpretations of the world" undergo a "progressive 'reality loss.'"[62] The effect of modernization is described in graphic terms:

> Modernization operates like a gigantic steel hammer, smashing both traditional institutions and traditional structures of meaning. It deprives the individual of the security which, however harsh they may have been, traditional institutions provided for him. It also tends to deprive him of the cosmological security provided by traditional religious world views.[63]

The "discontents of modernity" produce the phenomenon of individual quests for new ways of "being at home"

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[60]Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, p. 40.

[61]Berger, *Pyramids of Sacrifice*, p. 22.

[62]Ibid., p. 23.

[63]Ibid.

with others in a "redemptive community."[84] The quest can be "reactionary" or "progressive." The reactionary "locates the longed-for community in the past"; the progressive projects the new community into the future. Marxism weaves together various myths with dynamic potency and remains a powerful tool in effecting change today--both 'heady' and religious in its appeal. The myth of a future redemptive community combined with the countermodern myth of revolution results in a strange mix of hard science and utopian fervor. Marxism, according to Berger, promises that one can "have one's cake and eat it too." Berger cynically describes the marxist vision of the "promised land":

> Thus Marxism promises all the good things evoked in the vision of socialism just outlined, and, on top of that, maintains that the necessity of the vision can be scientifically demonstrated and its realization scientifically effected! It therefore appeals equally to the engineer with theological nostalgias and to the prophet who wants to be 'hard-nosed' in the eyes of statisticians. Its 'unity of theory and praxis' guarantees that no questions may be raised in this harmony of dreams, theories, and actions. And in the end, everybody will have everything--the fruits of progress without the price of alienation, redemption and technocratic control, community and individual choice.[85]

He makes it clear that his quarrel is not with those thinkers who agree with various marxian interpretations of the world. In fact, he relies upon Marx's early philosophical writings in order to explain how "knowledge" is produced in individuals and society.[86] Rather, his criticism is that scientific understanding has no autonomy under

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[84]Ibid., p. 24.

[85]Berger, *Pyramids of Sacrifice*, p. 27.

[86]See *The Social Construction of Reality* where in the introduction the authors state: "Our anthropological presuppositions are strongly influenced by Marx, especially his early writings. . ." (p. 17)

the marxian "Bull" that "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles."[87] If the weakness of positivism is that an artificial understanding of science is imposed on reality, then the flaw in marxism is its obedience to Marx's philosophy of history and interpretation of reality in light thereof. Finally, Berger and Kellner criticize sociological utopians for their attempt to redeem mankind:

> Most importantly, science can never provide moral guidelines for action. But the same understanding also precludes any form of utopianism, which sees the present as leading up to an inevitable and redemptive future. If science cannot provide a morality, even less can it provide a doctrine of salvation.[88]

Berger insists that the discipline retain, against the technocrats and ideologues, a fundamental respect for human values. Perhaps this is best achieved if one can be moved and humbled in the face of life's marvels. Berger invites a specific type of person to the study of social reality:

> People who are interested in human beings only if they can change, convert or reform them should also be warned, for they will find sociology much less useful than they hoped. And people whose interest is mainly in their own conceptual constructions will do just as well to turn to the study of little white mice. Sociology will be satisfying, in the long run, only to those who can think of nothing more entrancing than to watch men and to understand things human.[89]

The "humanistic justification of sociology" is that, by carrying out the task, "new and unsuspected facets of human

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[87]Berger cites the quoted excerpt from *The Communist Manifesto* in *Pyramids of Sacrifice*, (p. 25).

[88]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 12.

[89]Berger, *Invitation*, p. 24.

existence in society" are suddenly illuminated.[90] Our existence, then, becomes an adventure, as we explore the drama around us. As we participate in the glory and despair of the human spirit our religious sense is awakened.

E. Summary

We have unpacked the meaning of the terms with which Berger describes the frame of reference for his "dual-citizenship" approach to religion. This exercise has facilitated our grasping precisely what Berger's sociologial perspective is, and what it is not. We have also looked at the essential ingredient of humanism in Berger's sociologial perspective. Berger brings his humanism "down to earth," as it were, with the critical principles he incorporates in his study of social phenomena, those of conceptualization and reification; evidence; objectivity, and application. At this point we are ready to probe deeper, to investigate the theoretical sources of Berger's sociologial perspective.

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[90]Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO

Theoretical Origins

Among the plethora of intellectual strands woven together in Berger's sociological perspective, Weber's interpretive sociology and Schütz's phenomenology of the *Lebenswelt* stand out from the rest. This is not surprising given Berger's consistent depiction through the years, of his approach to reality as a sociological "way of seeing[1]" which draws most specifically on the theoretical achievements of both Weber and Schütz. Beginning with the first period (1959-1963),[2] Berger's reliance on the contribution of both Weber and Schütz is documented in *Invitation to Sociology*.[3]

Again in the second "period" (1964-1969), Berger and Luckmann underscore the significance of Schütz in their prefatory remarks to The *Social Construction of Reality*:

> How much we owe to the late Alfred Schütz will become clear in various parts of the following treatise. However, we would like to acknowledge here

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[1]The first chapter of Berger and Kellner's *Sociology Reinterpreted* is entitled "Sociology as a Way of Seeing."

[2]See Appendix II, entitled "Periodization of Berger's work."

[3]Berger, *Invitation*, bibliographical comments, p. 178.

> the influence of Schütz's teaching and writing on our thinking.[4]

The authors also cite the influence of both Weber and Durkheim on their sociology of knowledge: "Our understanding of Weber has profited immensely from the teaching of Carl Mayer as that of Durkheim and his school has from the interpretations of Albert Salomon."[5] The impact of Schütz is indirectly felt in *The Sacred Canopy* where Berger's aim was "to apply a general theoretical perspective derived from the sociology of knowledge to the phenomenon of religion."[6] Weber's influence is more direct, particularly in the second half of the study which analyzes the impact of secularization in the "west." Besides inheriting Weber's emphasis on modernization and secularization, Berger also adopts the valuefree approach for social analysis. This approach is showcased in *The Sacred Canopy* although a subdued Berger prefaces his next book on religion with the following critical comments on valuefreeness:

> In a recent book, *The Sacred Canopy*, . . . I attempted to summarize what seem to me to be certain essential features of a sociological perspective on religion and I tried to apply this perspective to an analysis of the contemporary religious situation. I have been trained in a sociological tradition shaped by Max Weber and so I tried, to the best of my ability, to keep my statements 'value-free.' The result was a theoretical work that, quite apart from the technical jargon in which it had to be presented, read like a treatise on atheism, at least in parts. The analysis of the contemporary situation with which it ended could easily be read (and, as far as my intentions

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[4]Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, p. vii.

[5]Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, p. vii.

[6]Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, preface.

> were concerned, misread) as a counsel of despair for religion in the modern world.[7]

The Weberian and Schützian strands in Berger's perspective are again prominent in *The Homeless Mind* co-written with Hansfried Kellner and Brigitte Berger which belongs to Berger's third period (1970–1978). Looking at the title of the introduction, "The Problem of Modernity and the Sociology of Knowledge," we note that Weber's focus on modernity and the theoretical contribution of Schütz to sociology of knowledge are accentuated. But more specifically, the authors refer to the vital contribution which Schütz makes to their understanding of social reality:

> We are convinced that a comprehensive understanding of any social reality must include this,--[the dimension of consciousness] and we regard it as our task in this book to focus on it. In trying to accomplish this, we base ourselves on the sociology of knowledge as it was redefined in the phenomenological approach of Alfred Schütz and subsequently developed by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann.[8]

The phenomenological contribution of Schütz must, the authors claim, be balanced with the analysis of institutions for "any attempt to delineate the character of modernity solely on the basis of a phenomenological description of intrinsic constellations of consciousness would . . . be methodologically inadmissible."[9] By studying societal institutions the authors hope to account for both "internal" and "external" reality. Weber's theory of rationalization constitutes the most satisfactory approach to the study of institutions because

> His basic theoretical intention was to give due credit to the effect of institutional processes on human ideas, values and beliefs, while at the same

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[7]Berger, *A Rumor of Angels*, preface, pp. ix–x.

[8]Berger, Berger and Kellner, *Homeless Mind*, pp. 11–12.

[9]Ibid., p. 98.

> time avoiding the one-sided determinism that he (rightly or wrongly) associated with Marx. Thus, according to Weber, certain historical transfigurations of consciousness are to be seen as preconditions for modern society.[10]

The authors follow Weber not only in his theory of rationalization to explain institutional change, but also in his concern with the effects of modernity on human life. They single out a pervasive sense of "homelessness" experienced by modern individuals and locate "its most devastating expression in the area of religion."[11]

Finally, as we turn to the last period of Berger's work covered here (1979-1986), Weber and Schütz retain their prominent status in his thought:

> We do not claim originality for the substance of our argument. It is a restatement of a central tradition in sociology, most directly identified with Max Weber, in our case strongly influenced by Alfred Schütz and other phenomenological writers. However, we have no wish to present here a sectarian manifesto, be it "Weberian" or "Schützian."[12]

The foregoing survey demonstrates a consistent intellectual undergirding for Berger's approach to reality and, in turn, religion. Schütz's philosophy of the social sciences is generally relevant to Berger's overall perspective and directly relevant to his sociology of

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[10]Ibid., p. 101. The institutional theories of Durkheim, Tönnies, Parsons and Levy are also mentioned but the authors "find the Weberian approach to these matters the most satisfactory." (ibid) They cite "Emile Durkheim's view of the transition from mechanical to organic solidarity, Ferdinand Tönnies' conceptualization of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, Max Weber's theory of rationalization, Talcott Parsons' view of the shifts in pattern variables, and Marion Levy's view of the shift in the structural features of society in the course of modernization." (ibid)

[11]Berger, Berger and Kellner, *Homeless Mind*, p. 184.

[12]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. vii.

knowledge which, in turn, is utilized in his approach to religion. Similarly, Weber's sociology is generally relevant to Berger's perspective and directly pertinent for his approach to religion. The important of Schütz for Berger is derived from the "phenomenological preface" which Schütz gives to Weber's "*verstehende Soziologie.*" Influenced by Schütz's investigation into how meaning is both individually and socially constituted, Berger and Luckmann set out to reconstruct classical sociology of knowledge.

Weber's influence on Berger lies in two areas: the first area is methodological and the second concerns substance. Concerning method, Berger adopts valuefreeness and, regarding substance, he is interested in the "big questions" that engaged Weber's attention, namely, rationality, Protestantism, "*Entzauberung*" and secularization. All of the foregoing themes can be grouped together under the overarching problem of "modernity," the prevailing subject of Berger's analysis.

Before we look at Weber and Schütz, brief mention should be made of other significant, albeit less frequently observed strands woven together in his perspective. In this eclectic group, we find individuals whose specialty ranges in scope from social psychology to anthropology, and from philosophy to political science. We find the "early" anthropological presuppositions of Marx, Sartre's notion of "bad faith," Heidegger's comparison between "authenticity" and "inauthenticity," George Mead's social psychology and the anthropology of Arnold Gehlen and Helmuth Plessner.

The variety of sources found in Berger's sociological perspective bears witness to its cosmopolitan motif. While a snapshot presentation of the above-mentioned ideas would deepen our view of his perspective, our focus in this dissertation does not allow that leisure. The names constituting the "other strands" in the tapestry

are merely pointed out in much the same way as signs along a highway indicate other possibilities for eventual exploration.

A. Max Weber

Weber's sociology is distinguished by his preoccupation with the gamut of problems surrounding the interpretation of human reality. In his "passionate and enduring dedication to the task of clarifying just what the sociological way of seeing is,"[13] Weber evinces, above all, an attitude of compassion for human "being."

In order to clarify Weber's sociology, Berger joins a group of sociologists who contrast Weber's approach with that of his contemporary Émile Durkheim.[14] Although he uses the nebulous phrase "different spirit" to partially explain what is different about their respective approaches, this should not deter us from endeavouring to pinpoint wherein precisely Weber differs from Durkheim.[15]

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[13]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 10.

[14]One example is Dennis Wrong, ed., *Makers of Modern Social Science. Max Weber*, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970). Wrong explains why he finds his own voice more in Weber's work than in that of Durkheim: "At the point where social science blends with social criticism and moral vision, American social scientists of widely different ideological persuasions have found sustenance for their views in Weber." (p. 71)

[15]It is not completely fair to say that Berger sides with Weber against the Durkheimian tradition in sociology. At least in Berger's early period an attempt to balance the two paths is manifest: "The Durkheimian and Weberian ways of looking at society are not logically contradictory. They are only antithetical since they focus on different aspects of social reality. It is quite correct to say that society is objective fact, coercing and even creating us. But it is

(continued...)

According to Berger, the essential difference between Durkheim and Weber is rooted in the central problem of this dissertation, that of the proper relationship between theory and praxis. While Weber's approach implies "the determination to see the social world as it is, regardless of one's own wishes and fears--that is, to separate what is from what one believes **ought to be**,"[16] the same cannot be said of Durkheim's method. Contrasted with Weber's preoccupation with "a clarification of the art of interpretation" insofar as "human phenomenon don't speak for themselves,"[17] is Durkheim's method of gathering up bits of data of human phenomena, into his analytical tool basket and

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[15](...continued)
also correct to say that our own meaningful acts help to support the edifice of society and may on occasion help to change it. Indeed, the two statements contain between them the paradox of social existence: That society defines us, but is in turn defined by us." (*Invitation*, pp. 128-129)

Berger's appreciation for the Durkheimian approach seems to be limited to this early period. By 1981, he was classifying Durkheim as a positivist, and attacking this "camp" for obscuring the difference between theory and praxis. At the same time, however, he isolates those notions in Durkheim's system with which he is in agreement: "The perspective of sociology discloses man's 'boundedness' in a two-fold way. First, from the moment of birth man is always in a social context that 'binds' him. . . . This elementary fact makes possible a statement of deceptive simplicity: man is in society. This society is experienced by him as a hard reality--outside himself, imposing itself upon him regardless of his hopes or wishes, precisely as an objective reality. This is what Emile Durkheim had in mind when he insisted that social facts are 'things' (*choses*). The 'thing'-like quality (*choséité*) of society is what, first of all, makes for its 'binding' effect." (*Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 91)

[16]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 10.

[17]Ibid.

treating its constituent parts as independent actualities.[18] In other words, Durkheim's work does not manifest the tension in "dual citizenship." It is as if Durkheim is oblivious to his own subjectivity. Here is a case, then, of a "divorce" or complete separation between theoretical and practical concerns. And yet, strangely enough, the model of divorce is, from a psychological standpoint, similar to that of a traditional marriage where "two become one." While the revolutionary is consumed with revisionary schemes for society, the technocrat is rubber stamping the status quo. Neither experiences the tension in "dual citizenship."

Insofar as Durkheim believes that the totality of social facts represent society--a "reality *sui generis*," the approach is troubling to Berger since the subjective factor is not accounted for. Indeed, the very condition for theorizing about society, i.e., the thinking subject, is not acknowledged. In other words, the fundamental point that sociologists themselves are "social facts" is ignored. This "ignorance," then, enables the theoretician to classify his or her approach as objective.

Ironically, this so-called scientific and "objective" method is, in fact, whimsical and idealistic since *a*

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[18]Salomon outlines Weber's method by comparing it with that of Durkheim: "Weber assumed at the outset that no individual science is capable of furnishing an authentic 'copy' of reality. The utmost that can be accomplished by such sciences, either in the historical or the social disciplines, is, through reasoned thought, to bring order into the world of reality, which is in a state of ceaseless flux. The principles of classification by which this order is to be achieved, cannot, however, draw upon reality, but must be imposed by the scientist himself." (p. 12) A. Salomon, "Max Weber's Methodology," as quoted in J.E.T. Eldridge, ed., *Max Weber: The Interpretation of Social Reality* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971). To add fuel to the fire, Salomon quotes Weber as saying: "There is no absolutely 'objective' scientific analysis of culture . . . of 'social phenomena' independent of special and one-sided viewpoints according to which . . . they are selected, analyzed and organised for expository purposes." (ibid)

priori, without questioning the starting point, the "Durkheimian" sociologist views society as a system of verifiable facts. Even more problematic for Berger is Durkheim's tendancy to equate "isness" with "oughtness."[19] For Durkheim, if society is a "reality *sui generis*," then it is as it ought to be. The tendancy, then, is to affirm the status quo.

Berger rejects the scientific method of gathering statistics about human behavior if this activity is not accompanied by a self-critical attitude on the part of the sociologist. In short, "social facts" do not exist in a vacuum. Weber was aware of the fact that if, for example, he was a member of the bourgeoisie, he and his views would be affected by his class. Insofar as he was conscious of his class-placement, he could guard his sociology from his own pre-theoretical world. He covenanted to be self-critical.

Weber's lament over the loss of subjectivity in modern civilization reveals a vital difference between his and Durkheim's respective approaches to social reality:

> Of this last stage of cultural development, it might well be truly said: 'specialists without vision, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved.'[20]

Weber's much-contested axiom of "valuefreeness" (*Wertfreiheit*) reflects his awareness that the sociologist does not stand in isolation from social facts, but rather is him or herself a "social fact." Valuefreeness is premised on the realization that we possess values, prejudices, hopes and fears. It is an ideal towards which we strive in our research. We cannot obliterate our values but we can

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[19]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 11.

[20]Max Weber, as quoted in D. Wrong, *Makers of Modern Science*, p. 5.

attempt to hold them in abeyance or "bracket" them while we endeavor to understand new problems. Berger explains the "bracketing" activity in the following:

> We know that in ordinary life people's interpretations are bound by their values. In principle, this is also true of sociologists. They are, after all, members of society and participate in its values. Clearly, in many cases these values will provide the motives by which a sociologist became interested in a particular phenomenon to begin with. . . . The point is that once these sociologists embark on their scientific inquiry, they must 'bracket' these values as much as possible--not, needless to say, in the sense of giving them up or trying to forget them, but in the sense of controlling the way in which these values might distort the sociological vision.[21]

Berger describes objectivity as the sociologist's attempt

> to control his personal preferences and prejudices, to perceive clearly rather than to judge normatively. This restraint, of course, does not embrace the totality of the sociologist's existence as a human being, but is limited to his operations qua sociologist.[22]

'Understanding for its own sake' is, for Berger, the theoretical task but he is careful to distinguish between his sociological task on the one hand, and applying his sociological know-how to everyday life on the other hand. The sociologist is, to reiterate, a citizen of two communities or countries. Values pertinent to each sphere are not lost when borders are crossed and, in fact, continue to affect the dual-citizen. Projects will succeed or fail to the extent that the individual is aware of the important role that values (bracketed or not) play in their life. The pragmatic use of theory must, therefore, occur in a systema-

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[21]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, pp. 51-52.

[22]Berger, *Invitation*, p. 16.

tic and disciplined manner distinct from the aura of theoretical expertise.

Perhaps no other document influenced Berger more than Weber's lecture in 1918 at Munich University entitled "*Wissenschaft als Beruf*."[23] Berger prefaces his comments on the lecture by retrieving the historical context of German social reality at that time:

> Despite the calm tone of Weber's exposition one can sense even today the climate of political desperation of Germany at this moment--in the wake of catastrophic military defeat, gripped by deepening economic crisis, threatened by violent revolutionary movements of both left and right.[24]

Weber's concern centered on the effect of the political turmoil in Germany on members of his own discipline in the social sciences. He pleaded with his colleagues to follow *Verantwortungsethik* rather than *Gesinnungsethik* in their influential posts:

> To take a practical political stand is one thing, and to analyze political structures and party positions is another. When speaking in a political meeting about democracy, one does not hide one's personal standpoint; indeed, to come out clearly and take a stand is one's damned duty. The words one uses in such a meeting are not means of scientific analysis but means of canvassing votes and winning over others. They are not plowshares to loosen the soil of contemplative thought; they are swords against the enemies: such words are weapons. It would be an outrage, however, to

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[23]The term "*Beruf*" has been most commonly translated as "vocation" and originated in the religious language of being "called" by God into a particular sphere of service. Historical circumstances since its earlier usage have transformed the meaning into 1. a professional, career-oriented attitude taken towards one's job or 2. the career or job itself, called one's vocation. Given the tone of Weber's essay, one's impression is that the older understanding influences his use of the term. "*Wissenschaft als Beruf*" would then be translated as "Science as a religious Call."

[24]Berger, *Pyramids of Sacrifice*, p. 248.

> use words in this fashion in a lecture or in the lecture-room.[25]

The "greatness" in Weber for Berger is his "overriding obligation" *qua* sociologist to look at "social reality with objectivity, without injecting his own values or taking into account his personal hopes or fears."[26] Moreover, Weber insists that *qua* politically engaged individual, moral responsibility be taken for one's actions. To conclude then, Weber was a "dual-citizen":

> Both in his thought and in his life he tried to bear without flinching the enormous tensions between detachment and engagement. And he had contempt for those who sought relief from this tension, be it by denying that moral options are real or by absolutely espousing one single option--the psychological escape routes of, respectively, the positivist and the doctrinaire ideologist.[27]

Berger and Kellner's essay entitled *Sociology Reinterpreted* follows the path marked out by Weber. Their concern with what it means to do sociology is doubly motivated,--both by the increased acceleration of change in the world and the altered vision of what it means to do sociology in the academic community. In the midst of the malaise of contemporary sociology, the authors call for a "*prise de conscience* by sociologists as to their own vocation among the sciences and in the larger society."[28]

Perhaps the most profound Weberian influence on Berger is the sense of calling or vocation which beats through the pages of his work. Karl Jaspers said of Weber whom he greatly admired: "*Er spürte die Härte der Wirklich-*

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[25]Max Weber, "Science as Vocation" as found in Gerth and Mills, editors, *From Max Weber. Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford U. Press, 1946), p. 145.

[26]Berger, *Pyramids of Sacrifice*, p. 248.

[27]Berger, *Pyramids of Sacrifice*, pp. 248-249.

[28]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 2.

keit, die Größe der Verantwortung, den Atem der unheimlichen Weltgeschichte."[29] As others leaped into utopian fantasies or retreated behind the veil of cynical realism, Weber sought a path of responsibility in the face of the harshness of reality.

In working through "the possibility of theological thinking in our present situation,"[30] Berger feels towards the theological carnage of the sixties an attitude of responsibility similar to that of Weber towards the social and political reality of his day. Written primarily without the aid of sociological brackets, *A Rumor of Angels* is Berger's effort to think through present social realities from the standpoint of a Christian.[31] A moral understanding of his task (whether as theologian or sociologist) propels him to face reality *as it is*, and then to propose tentative solutions or programs from the standpoint of *Ver-*

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[29]Karl Jaspers, *Max Weber. Politiker Forscher Philosoph*, (München: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1958). "He felt the harshness of reality, the magnitude of responsibility, the breath of disquieting world history." (p. 8, my translation)

[30]*Berger, A Rumor of Angels*, preface.

[31]Ibid., "For better or for worse, my self-understanding is not exhausted by the fact that I am a sociologist. I also consider myself a Christian, though I have not yet found the heresy into which my theological views would comfortably fit." Preface.

antwortungsethik.[32] The concluding remarks illustrate his call for Christian responsibility:

> We are, whether we like it or not, in a situation in which transcendence has been reduced to a rumor. We cannot escape our situation with one magical jump. . . . We must begin in the situation in which we find ourselves, but we must not submit to it as to an irresistible tyranny. If the signals of transcendence have become rumors in our time, then we can set out to explore these rumors--and perhaps to follow them up to their source.[33]

A sense of vocation permeates Berger's analyses of a variety of topics. Our central concern is with his approach to religion and a more in-depth analysis of this approach will occupy us in the next chapter of this dissertation. We have looked at Weber's influence on Berger's approach to religion in terms of *Wertfreiheit*, Application and Vocation. It is time to turn to the important contribution to his perspective that we find in the phenomenological sociology of Alfred Schütz.

B. Alfred Schütz

The determining feature of Schütz's thought for Berger's approach to religion is his emphasis on the constituting function of the primordial life-world for man's

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[32]Berger explains what an ethic of responsibility involves: "Again: sociology cannot offer moral guidance. Nevertheless, and paradoxically, it has a curious relation to ethics, or at least to a particular kind of ethics. This is what Max Weber called the *ethics of responsibility* (*Verantwortungsethik*)--that is, an ethic that derives its criteria for action from a calculus of probable consequences rather than from absolute principles." The latter type, *Gesinnungsethik* refers to an ethic of absolute ends where one's actions, regardless of the consequences, are determined by the principles one espouses. (*Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 75)

[33]Berger, *Rumor of Angels*, p. 95.

consciousness. By locating the genesis of consciousness (meaning, language and thought) in the "pre-theoretical" sphere of everyday experience, Schütz manifests a direct link to the "science of true beginnings, origins, of *rizomata panton*," as Husserl defined philosophy.[34] This connection was not accidental, since, as Maurice Natanson noted, "It was Husserl's theory of intentionality and his notions of intersubjectivity and of the *Lebenswelt* which were to guide Schütz's thought and to give it its specific character."[35]

In contrast to the classical tradition of sociology of knowledge,[36] largely comprised of separate investigations by Max Scheler, who first coined the term "*Wissenssoziologie*" and Karl Mannheim, Berger and Luckmann reroute the discussion away from its preoccupation with "theoretical thought, 'ideas', *Weltanschauungen*," to "what people 'know' as 'reality' in their everyday, non-or pre-theoretical lives."[37] The reconstructed sociology of knowledge's focal point on "commonsense knowledge" as opposed to "theoretical formulations of reality" does not preclude the significance of the latter, but rather realigns power structures previously weighed in favor of sophisticated theories

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[34]Husserl, *Philosophy as Rigorous Science*, p. 146.

[35]Maurice Natanson, ed. and introduction to *Alfred Schütz, Collected Papers: The Problem of Social Reality*, Vol. I (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), introduction.

[36]Traditionally understood as "concerned with the relationship between human thought and the social context within which it arises . . . . [it further] constitutes the sociological focus of a much more general problem, that of the existential determination (*Seinsgebundenheit*) of thought as such . . ." The authors note that "the general problem has been the extent to which thought reflects or is independent of the proposed determinative factors." (Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, pp. 4-5).

[37]Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, p. 15.

about reality. Following Husserl's "famous marching order for philosophers: *Zurück zu den Sachen!*--loosely translated as 'Back to things as they are!"[38] Berger and Luckmann's task is to penetrate behind theoretical articulations of reality to their primordial origins.

Interestingly enough, Schütz was indebted to both Weber's *"verstehende Soziologie"* and Husserl's transcendental phenomenology. This is evident in his 1932 work, entitled *The Meaningful Construction of the Social World*. We will focus, therefore, on the intricate connection between the sociology of Weber and the phenomenology of Husserl as they are woven together by Schütz and, in turn, drawn upon by Berger for his sociology of knowledge. Weber's sociology, then, not only directly influences Berger's approach to religion, but, moreover, is intricately connected to the sociology of knowledge component of Berger's method. We will attend first to the manner in which Schütz fashions an approach to social reality grounded in the insights of both Weber and Husserl.

1. *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt* as a bridge between Weber's *"verstehende Soziologie"* and Husserl's phenomenology, and as precursor to *Die Strukturen der Lebenswelt*, a key source for Berger and Luckmann's sociology of knowledge

George Walsh has correctly identified the form which Schütz's "phenomenological study of the basic concepts of the social sciences" takes in *The Meaningful Construction of the Social World* as "that of a phenomenological 'preface to interpretive sociology,' namely, the sociology of Max

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[38]Husserl as quoted [in M. Natanson], *Edmund Husserl* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern U. Press, 1973), pp. 42ff.,[as found] in Berger, *Heretical Imperative*, p. 59. A better translation is "To the things themselves" from the German, *"Zurüch zu den Sachen selbst."*

Weber."[39] Schütz lauds Weber's recognition that the problem of meaning is the "fundamental and basic principle of knowledge in the social world,"[40] but at the same time points to a serious flaw in Weber's methodology. Weber's methodology is weakened by his uncritical use of an everyday interpretation of meaning. Schütz describes this average mindset from which Weber derives his understanding of "meaning" as follows:

> For in the simple process of living we directly experience our acts as meaningful, and we all take for granted, as part of our natural outlook on the world, that others, too, directly experience their action as meaningful in quite the same sense as we would if we were in their place.[41]

Since Weber does not critically assess the average notion of "meaning,"[42] Schütz harnesses his efforts in this essay to

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[39]George Walsh, introduction to Schütz, Alfred, *The Phenomenology of the Social World* (Northwestern U. Press, 1967), p. xvi. First published in Vienna by Julius Springer in 1932 as *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt.*

[40]Ibid., p. 43. He adds the following: ". . . Weber's work, drawing together as it does so many of the currents of his age, is throughout the unique product of an astonishing genius. It was he who gave present-day German sociology its direction insofar as it is a science rather than an ideology, and it was he who gave it the tools it needed for its task. . . . He defined the task of sociology not as metaphysical speculation but as the simple and accurate description of life in society." (p. 5)

[41]Schütz, *Phenomenology of Social World*, p. 9.

[42]Schütz explains that Weber "naively took for granted the meaningful phenomena of the social world as a matter of *intersubjective agreement* in precisely the same way as we all in daily life assume the existence of a lawful external world conforming to the concepts of our understanding. . . . We also believe that our interpretations of the meanings of the actions of others are, on the whole, correct. But when common-sense assumptions are uncritically admitted into the apparatus of a science, they have a way of taking their revenge. . . . If this danger hangs over every science, its threat to sociology is especially acute." (*Phenomenology of Social World*, p. 9.)

"anchor the methodological apparatus of interpretive sociology at a more accurate point than Max Weber was able to do" by determining "the precise nature of the *phenomenon of meaning* and to do this by an analysis of the constituting function."[43]

Schütz occupies an intermediate position between Weber's uncritical employment of the "natural" understanding of meaning, and Husserl's project to radically bracket the "Natural Standpoint" in his phenomenological investigations into the *"Lebenswelt."*[44] Schütz's method of inquiry into the everyday experience of meaning, takes the form of critical scrutiny rather than naive acceptance, or radical doubt. If we follow Schütz's method, we recognize that persons in the Natural attitude experience everyday life in a meaningful manner, but we do not stop at this recognition. Rather, we then organize and interpret everyday meaning in a rigorous manner based on a careful awareness of how meaning is itself constituted. We do not take for granted the idea that social reality is meaningful, but rather, rigorously attempt to understand the phenomenon of meaning. In this way, the crucial transformation "at the core of sociological interpretation" takes place whereby the first-order constructs or typifications of everyday life[45] are "transposed into a different world of meanings, namely that

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[43]Schütz, *Phenomenology*, p. 13.

[44]The technical term for the bracketing of the Natural Attitude is the "phenomenological reduction" or *epoche* which requires a disconnection of the 'world given-to-me-as-being there' (*als daseiende*). Schütz cites Husserl's *Ideas* as his source for this fundamental phenomenological principle. Schütz, *Phenomenology*, p. 43.

[45]"First order constructs" are defined by Schütz as "the already constituted meanings of active participants in the social world . . . , the concepts people have of the meaning of their own and others' behavior and the concepts they have of the meaning of artifacts of all kinds." Schütz, *Phenomenology*, p. 10.

of the social scientist."[46] This is the sphere of second-order typifications, equally as significant as the former for the task of sociological interpretation.[47]

Before we embark on our voyage into the conceptual regions of Schütz's thought, a few cautionary words are necessary. First, while Schütz relies on Bergson's analysis of "the phenomenon of inner duration"[48] and Husserl's "analysis of the constitution of subjective experience" in order to anchor Weber's "*verstehende Soziologie,*" we ourselves are limited to mere "port-calls" at the harbors of Bergson and Husserl. The mundane factors of time and resources play a crucial role in our decision and while the intellectual benefits of an extended sojourn in these regions would be certain to result, these benefits can only be noted in passing, as it were.

(a) Concerning Weber's distinction between *"Aktuelles Verstehen"* and *"Erklärendes Verstehen"* or Direct observational understanding and explanatory or motivational understanding

In order to grasp Schütz's critique of Weber's distinction between these two types of understanding, we must first acquaint ourselves with Weber's position on the matter. Observational understanding is direct and immediate, basing itself on a simple "noting" of outward

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[46]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 42.

[47]Positivism results when second-order constructs are imposed onto a situation without first taking cognizance of the meanings already operative within the situation [first order]. See *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 40.

[48]Schütz describes Bergson's central notion of the *"durée"* in *"Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience"* (poorly translated as *Time and Free Will, 1888*), as "the inner stream of duration" or "living within the stream of experience" as opposed to "living within the world of space and time." Schütz, *Phenomenology*, p. 45.

movements of behavior. Weber illustrates this type of understanding with the activity of a woodcutter at work in a forest. "He is chopping wood," we immediately surmise as we stroll by his work area. We understand his activity by observing his actions.

Motivational understanding contrasts with the former since, in addition to our observation of the woodcutter's feverish activity, we are also aware of the circumstances under which he labors. Accordingly, cognizance of the woodchopper's reasons for his activity (i.e., he chops the wood for his own use, for recreation or to work off a fit of rage[47]) locates the witnessed event in a context of meaning (*Sinnzusammenhang*). Weber claims that any science which is concerned with the "subjective meaning of action" is dependent on the "*Sinnzusammenhang*" of action. In simple terms, then, observational understanding notes that something is happening; clarifying or motivational understanding notes why the event occurred. Weber argues that if one grasps the *"gemeinter Sinn"* (the intended meaning) of an action, then one's explanation will be more accurate and scientific than if the event is simply observed.

Schütz contends that Weber's distinction between the two types of understanding is superficial. It is superficial to say that motivational understanding provides a more accurate portrayal of "meaning" than observational, because "meaning" is constituted in the person's activity prior to the interpreter's observation or questions.

Weber does not probe into the problem of how we can comprehend the "other" but adopts the average notion

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[47]This illustration is found in Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, pp. 96-98, translated by A.M. Henderson and T. Parsons under the title, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (Glencoe, 1957) See Schütz, *Phenomenology*, p. 25.

that if we inquire into the whys and wherefores of a person's activity then somehow our understanding will be adequate. Schütz complains that Weber

> does not try to identify the unique and fundamental relation existing between the self and the other self, that relation whose clarification is essential to a precise understanding of what it is to know another person.[50]

Our purpose is not to discuss the problem of intersubjective knowledge but rather, to pinpoint Schütz's solution to the gaps he finds in Weber's interpretative sociology. That solution is to provide a foundational understanding of meaning. His investigation led him to an analysis of subjectivity and the *durée* wherein meaning is pre-phenomenally constituted. According to Schütz,

> What is given to both the acting self and the interpreting observer is not only the single meaningful act and the context or configuration of meaning to which it belongs but the whole social world in fully differentiated perspectives.[51]

Along with a proper awareness of context, the interpreter requires "knowledge of the actor's past and future"[52] in order to better grasp an actor's motivations. Accordingly, Schütz supplements Weber's loose employment of "motivational understanding," with the concepts of "in-order-to motives" (*Um-zu-Motiv*) directed towards the future, and "because-motives" (*Weil-Motiv*) coming at the present from the past. But yet, the temporal dimension is not sufficient to give an adequate portrayal of "intended meaning." Even though one can receive a reply oriented in terms of past or future when the question is posed to the woodcutter, "why are you cutting the wood?," Schütz makes it clear that "the statement of the 'motive' by no means gives

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[50]Ibid., p. 27.

[51]Schütz, *Phenomenology*, p. 8.

[52]Ibid., p. 27.

an exhaustive account of the whole structure of 'intended meaning.'"[53] In fact, Schütz claims that the woodcutter already has taken for granted the meaning of his action and accordingly, chops the wood.

Delving further into the solution which Schütz supplies to Weber's naive utilization of "meaning," we approach a radically different understanding of temporality from the traditional understanding based on space and clocked time. In order to grasp Schütz's notion of temporality, we must note his distinction between lived experience and reflected-upon experience. Aided by Bergson's distinction between "living within the stream of experience and living within the world of space and time,"[54] Schütz describes our experience in duration as "a constant transition from a now-thus to a new now-thus," rather than "a being that is discrete and well-defined."[55] Reflection, which is closely related to attention, takes place when we turn back against the stream. Schütz explains:

> However, when by my act of reflection, I turn my attention to my living experience, I am no longer taking up my position within the stream of pure duration, I am no longer simply living within that flow. . . . What had first been constituted as a phase now stands out as a full-blown experience, no matter whether the Act of attention is one of reflection or of reproduction. For the *Act of attention*--and this is of major importance for the study of meaning--presupposes an elapsed, passed-away experience--in short, one that is already in the past, regardless of whether the attention in question is reflective or reproductive.[56]

Therefore, argues Schütz, the interpreter's knowledge of the meaning of action is restricted to past actions: "Only from

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[53]Schütz, *Phenomenology*, p. 29.

[54]Schütz, *Phenomenology*, p. 45.

[55]Ibid.

[56]Schütz, *Phenomenology*, p. 51

the point of view of the retrospective glance do there exist discrete experiences. Only the already experienced is meaningful, not that which is being experienced."[57] Meaning then, is not something which can be tacked on to a given experience,[58] but rather, is *"a certain way of directing one's gaze at an item of one's own experience . . .* [it is] a peculiar attitude on the part of the Ego toward the flow of its own duration."[59]

The implications of this phenomenological definition of meaning for the social sciences will be disclosed in more detail as we turn our "reflective gaze" to Schütz's commentary on Weber's distinction between meaningful action and meaningful behavior.

(b) Concerning Weber's distinction between meaningful action and meaningful behavior

If, to illuminate what has to this point been said, I were to link together observational understanding with meaningful behavior; and motivational understanding with meaningful action, the crucial insight which separates Schütz from Weber would be manifest. The problem with Weber's distinction between the two forms of "*Verstehen*" and between action and behavior, is that he uncritically assigns a legitimate hermeneutical status to action and motivational understanding. Schütz argues that Weber's belief that action involves conscious activity, and behavior unconscious activity, is superficial since meaning is already

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[57]Ibid., p. 52.

[58]Schütz asserts the following: "By no means is meaning a *predicate* of an individual experience--a conclusion suggested by such usages as 'having meaning,' 'meaning-bearing,' and 'meaningful.'" Ibid., p. 42.

[59]Schütz, *Phenomenology*, p. 42.

constituted at the primordial levels denoted by behavior and observational understanding.

Even though meaning is already constituted at the level of behavior, we cannot articulate what the meaning of experiences "x, y, and z" is while we are living through these experiences. Any speech about meaning presupposes an abruption of the *durée*, an *Act of attention* or the reflective turning-back of one's gaze on behavior already experienced. Schütz concludes then

> that the concept of meaning and its problematic have no application to life considered as duration. It would be trivial at the very least to say that the unreflected-upon Here and Now is meaningful. The Acts of the cogito in which the Ego lives, the living present in which the Ego is borne along from each Here and Now to the next--these are never caught in the cone of light. They fall, therefore outside the sphere of the meaningful. On the contrary (and this also emerges from our argument): the actual Here and Now of the living Ego *is the very source of the light*, the apex from which emanate the rays spreading out cone-like over the already elapsed and receding phases of the stream of duration, illuminating them and marking them off from the rest of the stream.[60]

In short, the basis for Schütz's assertion that it is trivial to assign the predicate "meaningful" to the flow of lived experience, is that life IS meaningful whether we attentively turn our gaze to it or not. It is constituted at its most primordial level by meaning. This constitution provides the ground upon which we can live, reflect and assign to our experiences the predicate "meaning."

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[60]Schütz, *Phenomenology*, p. 70.

(c) Summary

The question which naturally arises out of this brief excursion through Schütz's critique of Weber's *"verstehende Soziologie"* is whether the first pillar upon which Berger's sociological perspective rests (Weber's sociology,) is sufficient for a successful approach to religion. I propose that the work of Schütz and Weber must be seen to build upon one another. While Weber contributes to the social sciences the axiom that "the essential function of social sciences [is] to be interpretive . . . to understand the subjective meaning of action," Schütz provides the systematic foundation for applying the axiom with his clear analysis of the "characteristics of understanding (*Verstehen,*) of subjective meaning (*gemeinter Sinn*) and of action (*Handeln.*)"[61] A positive assessment of Weber's role in sociology is found in several places throughout *Der sinnhafte Aufbau.*[62]

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[61]G. Walsh in A. Schütz, *Phenomenology*, p. xxi.

[62]Schütz prefaces his 1932 study with the following comments: "The present study is based on an intensive concern of many years' duration with the theoretical writings of Max Weber. During this time I became convinced that while Weber's approach was correct and that he had determined conclusively the proper starting point of the philosophy of the social sciences, nevertheless his analyses did not go deeply enough to lay the foundations on which alone many important problems of the human sciences could be solved. Above all, Weber's central concept of subjective meaning calls for thoroughgoing analysis. As Weber left this concept, it was little more than a heading for a number of important problems which he did not examine in detail, even though they were hardly foreign to him. Almost all these problems are closely related to the phenomenon of the lived experience of time (or internal time-sense), which can be studied only by the most rigorous philosophical reflection. Only when we have grasped the nature of the internal time-consciousness can we attack the complicated structure of the concepts of the human sciences." *Phenomenology*, p. xxxi.

Clearly, Schütz is committed to building upon rather than destroying Weber's "primitive" notions of meaning. I believe that the "phenomenological preface" which Schütz gives to Weber's notion of meaning not only illuminates but also enriches Berger's sociology of knowledge approach to religion. Finally, there is no quarrel between Schütz and the Weberian legacy of sociology so far as the methodological procedures of valuefreeness, objectivity and application are concerned. Schütz asks: "Now in what does Max Weber's great achievement consist?" With his answer I will conclude this section:

> In the first place, he was one of the first to proclaim that the social sciences must abstain from value judgments. He took up the battle against those political and moral ideologies which all too easily influence the judgment of the social scientist, whether this influence is conscious or not. In the same vein, he defined the task of sociology not as metaphysical speculation but as the simple and accurate description of life in society.[63]

2. Terminology taken from *Die Strukturen der Lebenswelt* employed by Berger and Luckmann in their revised sociology of knowledge as outlined in *The Social Construction of Reality*

The "phenomenological preface" which Schütz gives to Weber's "*verstehende Soziologie*" not only serves to enrich our understanding of Weber's sociology, but also provides the "springboard" for the final section of this chapter. In the pages to follow, we will examine the technical notions pertinent to Berger's sociology of knowledge approach to religion garnered from Schütz's analysis of the structures of the Lifeworld. For the purpose at hand, a brief reconnaissance of a) the Pre-scientific Lifeworld and

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[63]Schütz, *Phenomenology*, p. 5.

b) language and symbols, will satisfy our purpose to comprehend the central notions of Berger's sociology of knowledge.

(a) The Lifeworld

In the preceding section, I endeavored to retrieve from Schütz's earliest published study, *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt*, his analysis of how meaning constitutes itself prior to reflection. Just as on the individual level, meaning is constituted in internal-time-consciousness (the *durée*), so, on a larger scale, societal meaning is already constituted in the intersubjective lifeworld shared with others.[64] Since "all social sciences are objective-meaning-contexts of subjective meaning-contexts,"[65] Schütz makes it his task to scientifically assess this pre-scientific world. He is impressed by the fact that "the basis of meaning *(Sinnfundament)* in every science is the pre-scientific lifeworld which is the one and unitary lifeworld of myself, of you, and of us all."[66]

Schütz's methodological procedure cuts a middle course between that of Weber and Husserl. This has already been noted but it is worth repeating. While Weber uncritically incorporated an everyday interpretation of "meaning"

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[64]Concerning the intersubjective character of the lifeworld, Berger and Luckmann write: "The reality of everyday life further presents itself to me as an intersubjective world, a world that I share with others. This intersubjectivity sharply differentiates everyday life from other realities of which I am conscious. I am alone in the world of my dreams, but I know that the world of everyday life is as real to others as it is to myself." *Social Construction*, p. 23.

[65]Schütz, *Phenomenology*, p. 241.

[66]Schütz, "Phenomenology and the Social Sciences," article in Joseph Kockelmans, ed. *Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and its Interpretation* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), p. 452.

for his study of social reality, Schütz insisted on a thorough philosophical inquiry into the phenomenon of meaning. Although Schütz adopted Husserl's vital insight that

> every reflection finds its evidence only in the process of recurring to its originally founding experience within this lifeworld, and it remains the endless task of thought to make intelligible the intentional constitution of the contributive subjectivity in reference to this its basis of meaning,[67]

he did not advocate Husserl's method of bracketing the natural attitude. Against Husserl's *epochē* which suspends the natural belief that the world is ordered and meaningful, Schütz incorporates his own *epochē*, an "*epochē* of the Natural Attitude." This *epochē* suspends the doubt of the phenomenologist. Schütz begins, in other words, with the Natural Attitude. He commences his study of social reality by "bracketing the phenomenological brackets."

Sociological analysis, then, accomplished in the manner advocated by Schütz, takes a mediate position to that of Weber and Husserl on the problem of meaning. Armed with a sophisticated grasp of how meaning is constituted in the subjectivity of the individual and extending outward into

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[67]Schütz, *"Phenomenology and the Social Sciences" Collected Papers*, Volume I.

the intersubjective lifeworld,[68] the sociologist, then, analyses "what is going on" in the reality around him or her.

What, then, is the significance of the lifeworld for a sociology of knowledge approach to religion? Since meaning is constituted pre-reflectively in consciousness, a sociology of knowledge approach to religion will analyse religion first, in terms of its pre-analytical constructs situated in the *Lebenswelt*. The lifeworld, therefore, is the workshop of meaning for society, and religion "implies the farthest reach of man's self-externalization, of his infusion of reality with his own meanings."[69] In fact, Berger defines religion as "the audacious attempt to conceive of the entire universe as being humanly significant."[70] Equipped with the insight that meaning is pre-phenomenally constituted in consciousness, Berger locates the pre-theoretical origins of religion in the lifeworld, the world of human solidarity, activity and experience.

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[68]A.N. Whitehead, author of *Process and Reality*, is also in the company of those thinkers who locate the foundations of thought and knowledge in the *Lebenswelt*. He argued that "all modern philosophy hinges round the difficulty of describing the world in terms of subject and predicate, substance and quality, particular and universal. The result always does violence to that immediate experience which we express in our actions, our hopes, our sympathies, our purposes, and which we enjoy in spite of our lack of phrases for its verbal analysis. We find ourselves in a buzzing world, amid a democracy of fellow creatures; whereas, under some disguise or other, orthodox philosophy can only introduce us to solitary substances, each enjoying an illusory experience." *Process and Reality* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1929), pp. 78-79.

[69]Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, pp. 27-28.

[70]Ibid.

(b) Language and Signification

Having its origin in everyday life, language "as the most important sign system of human society," embodies the original expressions of meaning in pre-reflective consciousness. Berger and Luckmann note, in fact, that "through language an entire world can be actualized at any moment."[71]

Berger and Luckmann distinguish between "objectivations,"[72] "signification," and "symbolism" to portray the fullness and extent of human meaningfulness,--from humble origins to "mansions on high." At the primitive level we find those "products of human activity" which may or may not have served as "an index of subjective meanings."[73] "Objectivations," such as the first crudely fashioned weapons intended for the purpose of survival, were not explicitly meant to express the subjectivity of our

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[71]Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, p. 39.

[72]Despite its clumsiness, I use the term "objectivation" in faithfulness to the text. Berger distinguishes between the more natural-sounding term, "objectification" and its next of kin, "objectivation." He describes objectivation as "that process whereby human subjectivity embodies itself in products that are available to oneself and one's fellow men as elements of a common world." (Berger and Pullberg, "Reification and Consciousness," p. 199) These products are both material and non-material. (p. 200) Tools are an obvious example of material objectivations. "Signs" and Language are non-material objectivations. Objectification, on the other hand, is defined as "the moment in the process of objectivation in which man establishes distance from his producing and its product, such that he can take cognizance of it and make of it an object of his consciousness." (p. 200) Accordingly, "man produces material tools in the process of objectivation which he then objectifies by means of language, giving them 'a name' that is 'known' to him from then on and that he can communicate to others." (ibid) Simply stated, then, objectivations are a product of pre-reflective consciousness; objectifications are reflections about the products of pre-reflective consciousness.

[73]Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, p. 35.

ancient progenitors. Those weapons may or may not have constituted political statements of power with which to intimidate the hostile neighbors. Given certain exigencies, however, our forbearers may have convened a council to deliberate over a strategy for survival and power. A plan may have evolved to construct one hundred slingshots and fifty crossbows, word of which would have restrained any unfriendly designs on the vulnerable group. By this process, weapons, prereflectively constructed to hunt animals for sustenance, became charged with significance.

"Signification," as a "special but crucially important case of objectivation," has language as its paramount example. While objectivations do not explicitly convey meaning, signs are intended for that purpose as illustrated by the weapons produced by our crafty and prudent forbearers. Signs do not rely on the "here and now" for the transmission of their significance. Language, with its "variety and complexity" recurringly transcends the limits of one particular space-time continuum.

We enter a region of symbols at the point where the significatory scheme of language transcends the "paramount reality" of everyday life. Like the fluid connections between objectivations and signification, symbols maintain their uniqueness while weaving themselves into the everyday world. Symbols mediate between everyday reality, and what Berger and Luckmann term "finite provinces of meaning"[74] which are enclosed within the "paramount reality" of everyday life. To enter a finite province of meaning

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[74]"Finite provinces of meaning" are defined as "enclaves within the paramount reality marked by circumscribed meanings and modes of experience." (*Social Construction*, p. 25) They are characterized by a "turning away of attention from the reality of everyday life." (ibid) Berger and Luckmann list art and religion as "endemic producers of finite provinces of meaning." (ibid)

involves escaping or "turning one's back" on the order of everyday life.

A "coffee break" illustrates how this rupture takes place. After three hours of steady hammering and nailing, the carpenter ambles over to his truck and pulls out a thermos of steaming coffee. Or, a financial advisor for a prestigious downtown investment firm leaves her office after four hours of consultation with clients, takes an elevator to the ground floor and purchases a hotdog and coke from a street vendor. In both cases, a conscious choice to "take a break" marks the point of departure for entry into a "finite province of meaning" or, as it is also called, an "enclave." In both cases, the disciplined structure under which their thought had been organized is relaxed. Momentarily, our carpenter and financial advisor are transported to another world of meaning, still rooted in the ground of everyday parameters of behavior. For a few brief moments, the pressing concerns of the previous three or four hours have been superceded by a splendid form of forgetfulness. Berger and Luckmann are correct to point out that art and religion "are endemic producers" of these "enclaves" but as we saw in the above examples, there are other more down to earth instigators for "aesthetic holidays."

Through signification, symbols abstracted from everyday experience are constructed and brought back to confront us in our everyday shared experience. Accordingly, a primitive shrine constructed over the grave of our forbearer's first victim to the power-politics of their hostile neighbors, takes center stage in the experience of our ancient mothers and fathers. Fires are maintained and conch-shells sounded to the accompaniment of rhythmic drumbeats every dawn and sunset until the completion of the project to construct one hundred slingshots and fifty crossbows. The victim's death is recalled as the ritual reminders are sounded every morning and evening in the busy village. With the

first victim of war, the weapons previously constructed to check any intention of aggression by the enemy are now constructed to destroy the enemy. The weapon's significance, therefore, has changed for the second time. Meanwhile, the victim's death has become a tangible symbol for encroaching chaos and *Anomie*, something which can only be overcome with the group's determination and solidarity.

Through language, we build highly complex symbolic worlds which "appear to tower over the reality of everyday life like gigantic presences from another world."[75] Berger believes that religion, science and art constitute our most important constructed symbolisms. He defines religion as "the establishment, through human activity, of an all-embracing sacred order, that is, of a sacred cosmos that will be capable of maintaining itself in the ever-present face of chaos."[76]

In order to familiarize ourselves with Berger's approach to religion, it will be necessary to outline his idea of religion. The preceding reconnaissance of the origin of symbols in pre-reflective consciousness and everyday life serves as a *prolegomenon* to a fuller treatment of his idea of religion in the next chapter of this dissertation.

C. Summary

We have emphasized that Berger's approach to religion must be understood in terms of his sociological perspective. In the first chapter we examined what Berger means by "sociological" and "perspective" in order to determine what his approach is and what it is not. The present chapter constituted an excavation beneath Berger's explanation of what his sociological perspective entails, to

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[75]Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, p. 40.

[76]Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, p. 51.

the theoretical sources for his approach. We have focussed on the two intellectual "giants" in Berger's thought, Max Weber and Alfred Schütz. We have also demonstrated the consistency with which Berger has adhered to his sociological perspective throughout the period of time covered in this dissertation. The substance of the next chapter consists of a look at what Berger has achieved with his approach to religion. In other words, we will concentrate on his analysis of religion, an analysis rooted in the sociological perspective with which the phenomenon is viewed.

CHAPTER THREE

Berger's Analysis of Religion

Underlying the preceding two chapters has been the proposition that a substantial grasp of Berger's reflections concerning religion, both *qua* sociologist and *qua* "lay theologian," depends on an adequate account of his sociological perspective. Accordingly, we have looked at his "*modus operandi*" in some detail. Our scrutiny of Berger's sociological perspective has, to this point, been fairly abstract, concentrating on its cognitive presuppositions. Our present aim is, therefore, to view it in relation to a specific sphere of inquiry,--that of the social reality of religious phenomena.

Our focal shift, therefore, will be from form to content. To this point, our assessment of Berger's approach to religion has concentrated on the approach itself. It is therefore appropriate, at this juncture, to review what Berger has to say about religion. In other words, before we can evaluate dual-citizenship as an approach to religion, we must acquaint ourselves with Berger's analysis of religion based on the approach he takes. Is his analysis of religion consistent with the approach he takes? How does a dual-citizenship approach to religion work out in practice? In the pages to follow, we will find that, indeed, Berger's analysis of religion harmonizes with his approach, and, moreover, that Berger "practices what he preaches." That

is, Berger's analysis of religion provides an excellent example of "dual-citizenship" at work.

As we begin our probe into Berger's analysis of religion it is relevant to point out two conceptual shifts in his work. The first concerns his switch from a neo-orthodox to a classical Protestant liberal approach to theology,[1] and the second involves his move from a "relaxed" to a "more militant" substantive definition of religion.[2] Our discussion will focus, first, on the reasons for these conceptual shifts, and second, on his analysis itself, of religion.

We will begin by looking at how Berger approaches the perennial question in the study of religion, namely,

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[1]Berger mentions this shift in the second appendix to *The Sacred Canopy* (1967) entitled "Sociological and Theological Perspectives: "The differentiation between 'religion' and 'Christian faith' was an important ingredient in the argument of *The Precarious Vision* which took a neo-orthodox approach at least at that point (something, incidentally, that was perceived more clearly by some critics than by myself at the time). This differentiation, and the consequences drawn from it, now seem quite inadmissible to me." He then goes on to elucidate the weaknesses with his earlier approach to theological matters and outlines the reasons for his affinity with "the spirit of classical Protestant liberalism." (pp. 183-184)

[2]This change occurred in the third Period, "1970-1978" and is marked by an address given to the American Academy of Religion (1973) entitled "Some second Thoughts on Substantive versus Functional Definitions of Religion." In that address, Berger compared his revised position with one previously held: "But my old position (I stated it briefly in an appendix to my book, *The Sacred Canopy* in 1967) was that there is little point to arguing about definitions. After all, definitions are always *ad hoc* constructs. They don't fall from heaven. They have a specific cognitive purpose. To some extent, definitions are a matter of taste. Consequently, my attitude to different definitions of religion was one of relaxed ecumenical tolerance. It is this attitude that I would like to revise now: I have become more militant in my opposition to functional definitions." (*Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 13 1974, June, p. 127)

"what exactly is religion?" The reasons for his substantive approach to the task of defining religion coupled with the theoretical components informing his preference, will constitute the framework for our initial analysis. Equipped with a handle to the question of *how* he gains access to religious phenomena, we will then look at the definition itself. Here, our attention will be drawn to two central categories, "the sacred" and "the supernatural." A sorting out of the relationship between these categories will precede a more precise account of his definition. Following Berger's definition of religion, we will look at the distinctions he makes between three different forms of religion, namely,--experience, tradition and reflection. Finally, we will look at Berger's reflections concerning religion, that is, his "theology."

A. Religion Defined

Berger follows "Weber's methodological premise, . . . that any human meaning must, first of all, be understood in its own terms, 'from within,' in the sense of those who adhere to it."[3] He opts for a substantive approach, therefore, one which focusses on what the subject means and involves. He differs from Weber, however, concerning the proper sequence of definition and research:

> I am not at all convinced by Weber's position on the proper sequence of definition and substantive research, since the latter can only proceed within a frame of reference that *defines* what is relevant and what is irrelevant in terms of the research.[4]

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[3]Berger, "Second Thoughts on Definitions of Religion," p. 127.

[4]Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, pp. 175-176.

Using the metaphor of mountain climbing, we can translate the above to mean that one must be properly equipped for the trek prior to setting forth. Or, before ascending the mountain, one should have a clear idea of "mountain peak." In this case, Berger requires an explicit definition of religious phenomena before it is investigated. The consequence of avoiding a specific definition is too costly for Berger's taste: "*Either* . . . the area of research becomes fuzzy *or*, . . . one operates with implicit rather than explicit definitions." Accordingly, "the more desirable course" is that of "explication."[5]

Berger's "relaxed ecumenical" posture concerning the question of "functionalist" versus "substantive" definitions of religion in 1967 had, by 1973, become hardened. He articulated his "more militant" opposition to functionalist definitions of religion at the 1973 meeting for the American Academy of Religion in Chicago. In the interim he had become increasingly concerned with the phenomenon of secularization, concluding that a functional definition of religion played into the hands of those individuals who advocated a worldview bereft of the supernatural.

His critique of functional definitions of religion has not changed since 1967. Carefully distinguishing between the functionalism of Luckmann and Durkheim respectively, Berger nevertheless criticizes both for their uncritical interpretation of religion. Durkheim, for example, believed that religion as a "social fact" was no more or no less than an institution. Even though his formal definition of religion includes the concept of "sacred," his understanding of the term is limited.[6] As Roger O'Toole points out,

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[5]Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, p. 176.

[6]Durkheim defines religion as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to

(continued...)

Durkheim excludes any connotation of mystery, "the unknown, the unutterable and the infinite" in his usage of the term "sacred."[7] Moreover, by excluding mystery from his definition and emphasizing collective "beliefs and practices" which glue together a fixture called "the church," Durkheim's definition of religion could accommodate itself to traditionally "unreligious" social institutions such as Government, the TSE or even Harold Ballard's "Cathedral," otherwise known as Maple Leaf Gardens (a good example of religion in decline, despite its profits and regular full-house attendance.) Berger criticizes the functionalist approach because it casts over the topic too broad a "definitional net." With functionalism, religion could "include such meaning-complexes as nationalism, or revolutionary faiths, or the nobility ethos."[8]

His critique of Luckmann's definition of religion, "very clearly in the Durkheimian tradition,"[9] slightly di-

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[6](...continued)
say, things set apart and forbidden--beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them. The second element which thus finds a place in our definition is no less essential than the first; for by showing that the idea of religion is inseparable from that of the church, it makes it clear that religion should be an eminently collective thing." Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Translated by J.W. Swain (New York: Collier books, 1961. first published in 1912), pp. 62-63, as quoted in Roger O"Toole, *Religion: Classic Sociological Approaches*, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1984), p. 78.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Berger, "Second Thoughts on Definitions of Religion," p. 128.

[9]As contained in *Das Problem der Religion in der modernen Gesellschaft* (1963) translated in English the title reads *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1967). Luckmann writes: "It is in keeping with an elementary sense
(continued...)

verges from that of Durkheim. Since Luckmann's definition is "augmented by general anthropological definitions," religion is more than the sum total of historically relative institutions. Berger paraphrases Luckmann's conception of religion as "the capacity of the human organism to transcend its biological nature through the construction of objective, morally binding, all-embracing universes of meaning."[10] While he shares Luckmann's anthropological presuppositions, Berger is unhappy that once again too broad a "definitional net" is cast: "Everything genuinely human is *ipso facto* religious." He fears that this premise could be ideologically employed to level off the genuinely "supernatural:" "It is one thing to point up the anthropological foundations of religion in the human capacity for self-transcendence, quite another to equate the two."[11]

Berger's solidified critique of functional definitions of religion did not emerge out of a vacuum. Living through a period of time which saw secularization become the norm and "death of God" theology dominate religious thought, Berger decided, against the stream, in favour of a substantive definition of religion. The consequences of a functional approach violated his emphasis on the profound meaning of that phenomenon which is situated in the experiential realm where the "sacred" and "supernatural" overlap. He believed that without religious meaning, which *ipso facto* brings order and stability, individuals and societies would not survive. From a functional standpoint, the experience of the "sacred" and "supernatural" is glossed

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[9](...continued)
of the concept of religion to call the transcendence of biological nature by the human organism a religious phenomenon." (p. 49 as quoted in O'Toole, *Religion: Classic Approaches*, p. 224.)

[10]Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, p. 176.

[11]Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, p. 177.

over or repudiated. It is this very experience[12] which, according to Berger, constitutes the beginning and end of religion. Clearly, then, a functionalist approach would miss the essence of religion. When "*religious phenomena*" is vaguely associated with "the truly human" or an institution, "it is no longer perceived"; it becomes "absorbed into a night in which all cats are grey." He pinpoints the "greyness" as

> the secularized view of reality in which any manifestation of transcendence [is], . . . meaningless, and therefore can only be dealt with in terms of social or psychological functions that can be understood without reference to transcendence.[13]

Andrew J. Weigert raises the appropriate point that substantive definitions of religion are not immune to ideological misuse.[14] Unfortunately, he does not illustrate his argument but church history records instances where a sacred-supernatural definition of religion went hand in hand with such "inspiring" events as heretic-burning and blood-thirsty crusades against "infidels," in order to ensure its place of authority over everyone.

In order to answer Weigert, it is important to see that Berger does not necessarily subscribe to or believe in the categories inherent to religious phenomena but rather, posits "the supernatural" and "the sacred" as

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[12]Berger is clear about where the study of religion must begin and end: "Beyond all the relativities of history and of mundane reality as such, it is this core experience, in its various forms, that must constitute the final objective of any inquiry into the religious phenomenon." *The Heretical Imperative*, p. 50.

[13]Berger, "Second Thoughts on Definitions of Religion," p. 129.

[14]Andrew J. Weigert, "Comment and Reply: Functional, Substantive, or Political? A Comment on Berger's 'Second Thoughts on Defining Religion'" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 13 (1974), 483-486.

phenomenologically-derived terms based on an analysis of religion "from within." In other words, the terms describe the phenomenon of religion. They indicate "what is," not what "ought to be."

Phillip E. Hammond fears that by refraining to cast too broad a "definitional net" over religious phenomena, Berger excludes too much from the investigation:

> By insisting on the substantive characteristic 'transcendence,' Berger keeps a clear focus on what he *does* study, it is true; but it is a focus--because of secularization--on a smaller and smaller category.[15]

Berger's response is that one should not be unduly influenced by an apparent tidal wave of secularization. The "smaller and smaller category," in fact, works to Berger's advantage because he is able to concentrate on his topic, "religion." He is not misled by the pseudo-religious.[16]

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[15]Phillip E. Hammond, "Religion in the Modern World" in Hunter, James Davison and Ainlay, Stephen C., editors. *Making Sense of Modern Times: Peter L. Berger and the Vision of Interpretive Sociology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), p. 158.

[16]To Hammond's article Berger responded: "I have been concerned for a long time to define religion *substantively* rather than *functionally*; both my Weberian and my phenomenological prejudices have compelled me in this direction: Only after the meaningful substance of religion is apprehended by way of *verstehen* should one, logically, turn to the question of how religion functions in society; the reverse starting point, typical of structural functional theories, puts the cart before the horse. So far, so good. But I don't agree with Hammond that this procedure precludes the sociological study of new religious meanings that may appear under the garb of secularity. If these meanings really are religious, then one will not be misled by the secular garb; if, by the aforesaid definition, one will call these meanings quasi-or even pseudo-religious, this appellation by no means precludes their being studied sociologically." Berger, "Epilogue" in Hunter and Ainlay, editors, *Making Sense of Modern Times*, pp. 230-231.

Critics will demand that Berger relinquish the scientific label he attaches to his study *qua* sociologist, since he chooses a definition which stresses the "supernatural" element of religious experience. What they overlook is the methodological requirements which he imposes upon himself. In other words, there is a crucial difference between believing in the supernatural on the one hand, and analysing it on the other. For the study of religion to succeed, there must be a fundamental distinction between reason and faith; science and metaphysics; reflection and belief.

1. The Definition

Rudolf Otto concluded, in his classic analysis of religious phenomena, that within the "real innermost core" of every religion lived an "unnamed Something" which he designated as the "numinous."[17] Unsatisfied with the traditionally understood meaning of "holy" as "absolute goodness," Otto sought for a term which would express the "unique original feeling-response, which can be in itself ethically neutral," at the core of religion. Accordingly, he coined the word "numinous," from the Latin "*Numen*" (meaning "divine nod.") Otto cautioned against endeavouring to define "numinous" stating, instead, that one must be "awakened," receive a "divine nod" as it were, in order for it to be accurately understood:

> This mental state [a 'numinous' state of mind] is perfectly *sui generis* and irreducible to any other; and therefore, like every absolutely primary and elementary datum, while it admits of being discussed, it cannot be strictly defined. .

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[17]Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. by John W. Harvey (New York: Oxford U. Press, 1981. First published 1923), p. 6.

> . . There is only one way to help another to an understanding of it. . . . In other words our Christianity cannot, strictly speaking, be taught, it can only be evoked, awakened in the mind; as everything that comes 'of the Spirit' must be awakened.[18]

Otto's topography of religious experience together with Schütz's analysis of how the "paramount reality" of everyday life is breached, constitute the two key sources for Berger's own definition of religion. Approaching religion "from within," he relies both on the substantive categories employed by Otto ("numinous," i.e., that which is "*totaliter aliter*,") and Schütz's phenomenological description of the manner by which the "paramount reality" of "everyday life" is breached creating a multiplied "real" texture of experience. Located within that texture of experience are "enclaves," whose existence suggests another, possibly more real reality than that of the mundane.

The central categories in Berger's definition of religion are "the sacred" and "the supernatural." His employment of these fundamental terms can be readily documented in the primary source literature over the past thirty years. As we follow the intriguing development of Berger's definition of religion we witness a growing and maturing conception of "the sacred," "the supernatural" and their relationship to one another.

In *A Rumor of Angels*, for instance, Berger uses the terms "supernatural" and "sacred" synonymously. "Sacred" is identified as the reality encountered in religious experience. In the language of Otto, it is "'totally other' than ordinary, human phenomena, and in this 'otherness' [it] . . . impresses man as an overwhelming, awesome, and strangely fascinating power."[19] Similarily,

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[18]Otto, *Idea of Holy*, p. 7.

[19]Berger, *Rumor of Angels*, p. 2.

"supernatural" is defined as a reality which stands in juxtaposition to the everyday world: "It is [in contrast] to this domain of taken-for-granted, 'natural' experience that religion posits a 'supernatural' reality."[20]

Ten years later we are provided with a more precise use of terminology, one which distinguishes between the meanings of "sacred" and "supernatural."[21] Firstly, we see that "the supernatural and the sacred are not to be equated" although, secondly, they share a similar feature in that they designate a specific experiential reality.[22] The authors contend that of the two, the "supernatural" is the more fundamental, denoting "the uncanny," mysterious and totally other. At the core of the experience of the "supernatural" is a radical "ontological intentionality":

> This other reality is perceived as 'waiting for me'--more accurately, as 'having waited for me all along.' It forces itself upon consciousness as ultimate reality. It is experienced as a force bidding one to enter it, contesting the reality of the mundane with irresistible power. The other world thus opened up is clearly 'out there' what is disclosed is a cognitive map that is not of one's own consciousness but of a cohesive and fully objective reality independent of one's own consciousness.[23]

The "sacred," on the other hand, is encountered in "particular instances of the experience of the supernatural" but "not all supernatural reality has the quality of sacredness" just as "there are many cases where the supernatural origin of the sacred symbols is no longer

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[20]Ibid., p. 3.

[21]Peter L. Berger and Hansfried Kellner, "On the Conceptualization of the Supernatural and the Sacred" *Dialog* 17 (Winter, 1978), p. 40.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Ibid., p. 39.

present to consciousness."[24] Of the two, therefore, supernatural reality constitutes the foundation for religious experience but religion is not complete without the "sacred" ingredient. It is possible, moreover, for an experience to be supernatural but not religious, and/or for an experience to be sacred, but not truly religious.

What is lacking in the experience of the supernatural is the redemptive element of the sacred. Sacred reality is experienced "as being of immense and indeed redemptive significance for human beings."[25] Sacred reality is both "totally other" (or supernatural) and invitational but not in an overwhelming fashion where one is "knocked off one's feet," as it were; it is like the warmth one experiences upon entering a cozy cabin after a lengthy hike through the woods. One *wants* to enter into the *Gemütlichkeit* of this arrangement. At the same time, a certain tension is experienced, "a curious ambivalence within the religious consciousness--an ambivalence of attraction and retreat, of being drawn toward the sacred and wanting to take flight from it."[26] One wants to believe the apparent signs of goodwill exuding from the cabin's warm ambiance but cannot restrain the disquieting thought that it may all be a plot or trap. In any case, the terms *sacred* and *supernatural* designate experiential realities with distinctive features.

Berger defines religion "as a human attitude . . . one of reverence and moral commitment . . . in the face of the sacred."[27] Even though "sacred" forms the fundamental category for Berger's definition of religion, its experience

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[24]Ibid., p. 40.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Ibid., p. 40.

[27]Ibid., pp. 40-41.

is dependent on a "supernatural" matrix. Phillip Hammond correctly perceives in the relationship between sacred and supernatural a peculiar feature of Berger's theory of religion:

> Where most see the supernatural as a subset of the sacred, Berger sees the sacred as a subset of the supernatural. Put another way, most sociologists of religion operate with a functional definition: Whatever results from encounters with the sacred, if it is systematic and institutionalized, is religion, whether or not it is expressed in supernatural terms. Berger operates otherwise. For him, the experience of the supernatural is indispensable to religion, and 'the sacred is a phenomenon within the reality of the supernatural.'[28]

Berger clarifies the relationship between sacred and supernatural in his reply to Hammond:

> . . . It has occurred to me recently that perhaps the best way to conceptualize the phenomena at issue is to think of the 'supernatural' and the 'sacred' as two intersecting circles. Only the common area of the two circles contains what traditionally has been known as religious experiences. There has always been a relation to the supernatural without a sense of the sacred--magic, and such of its latterday embodiments as parapsychological research. The effects of secularization might then be described as an increase in the area denoting the sacred without supernatural aspects--as in the sanctification of such secular entities as science, or the nation, or the revolutionary movement.[29]

With this matured articulation of the relationship between "supernatural" and "sacred" we are provided with a firm grounding for Berger's definition of religion. Starting out we were faced with a synonymous use of the terms and, consequently, a fuzzy picture of sacred and supernatural. At the midway point a clear effort to draw a

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[28]Hammond, in Hunter and Ainlay, editors, *Making Sense of Modern Times*, p. 157, quoting from Berger and Kellner, "Conceptualization of Sacred and Supernatural," p. 40.

[29]Berger, "Epilogue," in Hunter and Ainlay, *Making Sense of Modern Times*, pp. 230-231.

line between the two was duly observed, coupled with an emphasis on the primacy of the supernatural matrix for sacred reality. Finally, having reached our destination, we are provided with a clear picture of how the two realities converge in a common region of "religious experience." The question of which is more important,--sacred or supernatural reality is not directly answered but can be inferred insofar as both are depicted as separate intersecting circles. Insofar as religious experience mediates between them, we can assume that Berger has transferred to "religious experience" the primacy originally attached to supernatural reality. This transfer strikes a conceptual balance between sacred and supernatural in his definition of religion.

What then is Berger's definition of religion? He defines it quite simply in the following:

> Empirically speaking, what is commonly called religion involves an aggregate of human attitudes, beliefs, and actions in the face of two types of experience--the experience of the supernatural and the experience of the sacred.[30]

2. Mediums of Religion: Tradition, Reflection and Experience

For Berger, the "core experience" is that which is located at the intersection of supernatural and sacred reality, and "must constitute the final objective of any inquiry into the religious phenomenon."[31] He describes the nature of this experience as "prereflective" and "pretheoretical."[32] Hearkening to Husserl's demand to "return to things as they are" (*Zurück zu den Sachen!,*) Berger's defin-

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[30]Berger, *The Heretical Imperative*, p. 38.

[31]Berger, *Heretical Imperative*, p. 50.

[32]Ibid., p. 34.

ition of religion hinges on whether or not one grasps what is experienced prereflectively "in the face of two types of experience--the experience of the supernatural and the experience of the sacred."[33] Without grasping that experience, one cannot understand religion. In returning to this "core experience" one must cut through the surrounding underbrush of "religious tradition" and "religious reflection" (theology,) in order to confront its bare simplicity and beauty.

Mysticism must not be confused with Berger's idea of "religious experience." Its association with "the supernatural" rather than "the sacred," means that it is unlike the balanced mix which we find in Berger's idea of the religious. He stresses that the experience of the supernatural "is not coextensive with the phenomenon of religion, or for that matter with what is commonly called mysticism."[34] While mysticism "is an important source for accounts of the experience of the supernatural . . . it is not the only one."[35] Berger defines mysticism "as an avenue to the supernatural by means of immersion in the putative 'depths' of an individual's own consciousness."[36] It is not the only avenue, however, since one can also encounter the supernatural confrontationally, such as lightening bolts and thunder claps from Mount Olympus or Job's encounter with the "heart of the tempest."

I have referred to the "underbrush" which surrounds religious phenomena consisting of tradition and reflection. Berger defines religious tradition as "a collective memory of those moments in which the reality of ano-

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[33]Ibid., p. 38.

[34]Ibid., p. 40.

[35]Ibid., p. 41.

[36]Ibid., p. 41.

ther world broke into the paramount reality of everyday life."[37] Tradition *both* mediates between the experience of everyday reality and that of "another world," *and* domesticates that "potentially dangerous" experience of "the religious."[38] With tradition, the experience of the "other world" is transposed into the mundane, the everyday: "The unutterable is now uttered--and it is *routinely* uttered. The sacred has become a habitual experience; the supernatural has, as it were, become 'naturalized.'"[39] Understood as "the careful management of an exceedingly dangerous human experience,"[40] religious tradition is a sharp contrast to religious experience.

With religious reflection, we move one step further away from religious experience. Berger argues that

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[37]Berger, *Heretical Imperative*, p. 45-46.

[38]In his earlier book, *The Sacred Canopy*, we find a fuzzy distinction between sacred and supernatural. Nevertheless, his description of "sacred" experience therein, illuminates the manner by which two worlds are juxtaposed: "By sacred is meant here a quality of mysterious and awesome power, other than man and yet related to him, which is believed to reside in certain objects of experience. . . . The sacred is apprehended as 'sticking out' from the normal routines of everyday life, as something extraordinary and potentially dangerous, though its dangers can be domesticated and its potency harnessed to the needs of everyday life. . . . The sacred cosmos is confronted by man as an immensely powerful reality other than himself. Yet this reality addresses itself to him and locates his life in an ultimately meaningful order." (pp. 25-26).

[39]Berger, *Heretical Imperative*, p. 44.

[40]Ibid., p. 46. Berger and Kellner refer to the 'naturalization' of the supernatural as 'domestication' in the following: "The domestication of the experiences of the supernatural and the sacred may indeed be seen as being at the core of all religious institutions. *Homo religiosus* always stands at the borderline of this world and another world; religious institutions are prudent constructions to ensure that the border remains intact." ("Conceptualization of Supernatural and Sacred," p. 42.)

anthropological necessity and the need for social legitimation give rise to religious reflection:

> Quite apart from the root anthropological fact that man is a reflective animal, apparently compelled by his own inner nature to reflect about his experience, a religious tradition must develop reflective thought because of the social requirement of legitimation.[41]

The important distinctions between religious experience, tradition and reflection enable us to better grasp what Berger intends by the term "religion." While religious phenomena comprises itself of this triumvirate, it is the "core experience . . . that must," for Berger, "constitute the final objective of any inquiry into the religious phenomenon."[42] While the horizons of inquiry are seemingly endless, certain signposts are available for a fruitful journey. At the intersection of sacred and supernatural reality as it is prereflectively experienced, our journey to the "core experience" of religion ends, our labor of understanding begins.

B. Berger *qua* Theologian

In this final section I will focus on Berger's "labor of understanding" *vis-à-vis* religious experience. This "labor" takes the form of "systematic reflection about religion" or "theologizing," a task which, for Berger is "too important to leave to the theological experts."[43] We will begin by looking at his description of three methodological models, deductive, reductive and inductive with which to uncover the "core experience," the target of

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[41]Berger, *Heretical Imperative*, pp. 48-49.

[42]Berger, *Heretical Imperative*, p. 50.

[43]Berger, *Rumor of Angels*, p. x.

religious inquiry. Once again, it is important to understand that Berger clearly distinguishes between Approach or theory and Substance or faith in his theological activity:

> It is important to distinguish religious faith from all exercises in theorizing. A good portion of my 'Protestant liberalism' is a matter of theological method rather than religious content. This is why a number of Evangelicals, for example, have felt themselves to be close to me in faith while not much liking my theology.[44]

Following our overview of three approaches to religious phenomena, we will focus on Berger's systematic reflection about religious experience. Here, we will stop at two well-known theological points: a) First, the existence of God: Berger proposes that the "existence of God" can be induced or inferred from "prototypical human gestures," or, "signals of transcendence;" and b) the nature of God. To round out the previous depiction of "religious experience" in terms of where it is located (in the area where supernatural and sacred reality overlap,) we will see that an association can be made between Berger's depiction of supernatural reality and the old testament God, and sacred reality with the God of the new testament or Christ. Finally, we will look at his proposal that the discipline of contemporary theology become engaged in a *"prise de conscience"* from within, and second, that the discipline confront religious traditions other than its own.

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[44]Berger, "Epilogue" in Hunter and Ainlay, *Making Sense of Modern Times*, p. 232. This is Berger's response to Stan Gaede's evaluation of the reductive, deductive and inductive models.

1. Theoretical Approaches

(a) The Deductive Model

After emphasizing the strictly typological nature of his proposed models Berger describes what is involved in each approach. The deductive model reasserts "the authority of a religious tradition in the face of modern secularity."[45] He calls it "deductive" because analysis and research will not override already established dogma. The "cognitive advantage" of this option is that religious reflection is provided "with objective criteria of validity." Practically speaking, however, it is difficult to sustain "the subjective plausibility of such a procedure in the modern situation."[46]

Berger chooses the theological approach of Karl Barth to illustrate the model. With Barth, the desire to understand religious phenomena utterly depends on an *apriori* acceptance of and obedience to the authority of the Word of God, an acceptance made possible through grace alone. "Grace," in this case, means that one does not "decide" to make the Word of God one's authority. Rather, this authority is conferred on one regardless of one's wishes or preferences. For Barth, God's revelation is absolutely given in the Word of God and is only accessible to the individual on whom God's grace has come to rest.[47]

According to Barth, liberal theology, together with modern thought, erred in assuming that humans can gain

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[45]Berger, *Heretical Imperative*, p. 56.

[46]Berger, *Heretical Imperative*, p. 57.

[47]Berger succinctly outlines Barth's position on this matter: "The reality of God's Word--in its original revelation, in the Scriptures, and in the proclamation (Kerygma) of the Church--is founded in nothing but itself, posits itself, and cannot be arrived at by any 'method' whatsoever." (*Heretical Imperative*, p. 69.)

access to divine reality by means of an innate capacity. Berger lists a variety of "anthropologically given" qualities by which "liberals" suggest God's Word can be experienced, including "will," "conscience," "emotionality" and "reason." Barth's avenue to faith excludes each of the foregoing. "Faith," as the only acceptable avenue to faith "is not a human possibility. It happens if and when God wants it to happen."[48] Berger comments that while "there is something grandiose about this answer" and "one can greatly admire it . . . one can also, with all respect, disbelieve it."[49]

The debunking motif in Berger's sociological perspective is in full operation as he assesses the deductive model. He suspects there is more to Barth's uncompromised position on "faith, only given by grace, as an avenue to truth," than meets the eye. Piecing the clues together, he "sniffs out" Kierkegaard's method of "leaping," a method "peculiarly determined by the situation of modernity." The method of "leaping" from unbelief into belief is motivated by the experience of profound *Angst*:

> In the situation of doubt and despair, the individual confronts once again the message embodied in the tradition and, by a wrenching existential effort, jumps into the position of saying, 'Yes, I believe.'[50]

Barth, therefore, is not the guardian of the tradition under which, by grace, he miraculously finds himself kneeling in submission and whose truth it is his task to proclaim, but rather, he resembles more the "knight of faith" which Kierkegaard describes in *Fear and Trembling*. The modern situation is such that apart from sheer will-power, belief in a transcendent God would be abandoned because,

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[48]Berger, *Heretical Imperative*, p. 70.

[49]Ibid., p. 73.

[50]Berger, *Heretical Imperative*, p. 74.

cognitively speaking, it would be considered madness. Thus, the will-power of a "knight of faith" is required in the contemporary milieu.

Insofar as "the road" is denied and "the destination as its starting point" is claimed, Berger criticizes the neo-orthodox approach to the "core experience" of religion.[51] Since "concrete human beings" exist "as troubled Swiss pastors, French-speaking Arabs who also want to be Muslims, American college students with access to paperback editions of the Tibetan Book of the Dead" and so on, the desire to magically escape reality, while understandable, is, nevertheless, for Berger equivalent to acting in "bad faith."

Berger's assessment of the deductive approach should not blind us to his positive evaluation of its founding experience: "To reject the neo-orthodox model theoretically is not necessarily to reject its practical (that is, experiential) foundation."[52] Employing the language of Mircea Eliade, Berger calls the root experience "hierophanic." A hierophany is defined as the experience of "the breaking-in of another reality into the reality of ordinary human life."[53] It is this cataclysmic moment in one's experience that precipitates an apodictic certainty of truth. Berger does not think that the experience which undergirds neo-orthodox affirmations of truth is an original

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[51]Berger argues as follows: "Barth wanted to remove from the agenda: What are the reasons for being a Christian? One asks this question in a particular historical and biographical situation. If that situation is the modern one, the question is beset with all the relativizations of modernity. Neo-orthodoxy seeks to cut through these relativizations in a heroic act of the will and, in consequence, to gain a sort of immunity against the heretical imperative." (*Heretical Imperative*, p. 80)

[52]Berger, *Heretical Imperative*, p. 81.

[53]Ibid.

hierophany, but is, rather, "the renewed power of the tradition in which this or that hierophany has been embodied."[54] The problem, then, with the deductive option is that one's religious experience, that of "the renewed power of tradition," becomes absolutized, that is, it becomes the standard by which all other moments of one's lived reality are evaluated.

In absolutizing one's religious experiences a strong psychological security is established. This "umbilical cord" to truth is particularly attractive for the individual who is surrounded by threats to that bond. But the insecurity undergirding this posture suggests that one's "absolute" experience has somehow lost its power. One's only recourse, then, is to possess one's faith with a Herculean strength of will.[55] This psychological phenomenon manifests a certain "untruthfulness" to experience since the decision has been made to hinge one's entire life on an experience. This decision is not as honourable as it would initially appear because it is dominated by a pragmatic motif, namely, "if I do not make the decision to base my entire life on one experience, then I will certainly lose my new-found faith."

The deductive model is deceptive, therefore, because one wills to believe against all odds while maintaining that one's will has nothing to do with belief. One denies one's facticity or rootedness in a particular socio-political context, imagining oneself standing on a plateau of constant immediacy to the Eternal. Unfettered by whims, drives, prejudices and relationships with others, one's knowledge of the Absolute knows no bounds. The

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[54]Ibid., p. 84.

[55]Since "religious truth has nothing to fear from reason," leaps of faith may well appear as "acts of premature closure--and, perhaps, of a less heroic faith than one first thought." (*Heretical Imperative*, p. 86)

apparent *élan* produced by the knowledge that "one is right," covers over the reality of less certain moments when one struggled hard to hang onto the memory of religious certainty.

(b) The Reductive Model

The reductive approach to religious phenomena constitutes an inversion of the deductive, exchanging the authority of tradition or revelation for that of the prevalent consciousness of one's age--in this case, "modern secular consciousness." In order to retain any sort of "meaning," affirmations, beliefs and reflection about religious experience are *reduced* to secular categories. The *"Deus dixit* of old" is replaced by an "equally insistent *Homo modernus dixit."*[56] The strength of this approach is "that it reduces cognitive dissonance;" its weakness, "that the tradition, with all its religious contents, tends to disappear or dissolve in the process of secularizing translation."[57]

Stan Gaede correctly notes that, speaking strictly in terms of "Approach," the reductive model is an unnecessary addition to Berger's theoretical models because it is identical with the deductive. Its substantive conclusions, however, are clearly differentiated from those reached via "orthodox-Deduction."[58] We will look at those conclusions bearing in mind that in terms of approach alone, the reductive and deductive models are identical. Their starting points are different but as interpretive models they operate in the same way.

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[56]Berger, *Heretical Imperative*, p. 57.

[57]Ibid., p. 58.

[58]See below Appendix III entitled "Gaede's schematization of Bertger's terminology in *The Heretical Imperative.*"

Berger illustrates the reductive model with Rudolf Bultmann's theological program of "demythologization." Bultmann's project to demythologize the language of the New Testament stemmed from his belief that Christianity would become extinct if the Kerygma was not radically translated into language appropriate to "electric light and radio users."[59] Apparently, Bultmann believed that modern cosmogonies are somehow more adequate than all former attempts at understanding reality. Berger's main criticism of Bultmann's strategy is that Bultmann uncritically accepted the "canons" of secular consciousness (that is, God is dead; scientific knowledge has eliminated from our world all traces or rumors of the supernatural; the traditional three-storey universe [Heaven above, earth here and hell below] must be relegated to the status of childhood imagination, and so on):

> A grasp of the sociological determinants of modern consciousness (including the key determinant of pluralism) makes it difficult either to absolutize or to radically denigrate that consciousness. History brings forth and dissolves one structure of consciousness after another. Each one is to be taken seriously and looked at in terms of its possible insights. In this respect, modern consciousness is one among many historically available structures--no more, no less. To see the matter in this way precludes any apodictic statements as to what modern men 'can no longer' believe.[60]

Through the years, Berger's repudiation of the reductive model has been consistent and well publicized. In

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[59]This phrase is derived from what Berger suspects is "probably the most often quoted sentence in Bultmann's essay: 'One cannot use electric light and radio, call upon modern medicine in case of illness, and at the same time believe in the world of spirits and miracles of the New Testament.'" (Bultmann, *Kerygma und Mythos*, ed. by Hans-Werner Bartsch, Hamburg: Reich, 5 volumes published between 1948 and 1955, Vol. I., p. 18, Peter Berger's translation as quoted in *Heretical Imperative*, p. 96.)

[60]Berger, *Heretical Imperative*, p. 110.

1967, he advised theologians to "find something better to do with their time" if their answer to the question, "Is man alone in reality?" was "yes." Believing that "the essence of religion has been the confrontation with an *other*, believed to exist as a reality in the universe external to and vastly *different from man*--*something* that is indeed 'out there,' as Robinson puts it,"[61] Berger found the spectre of "death of God" theology repugnant to his taste, to put it mildly. It is one thing to buy into secular consciousness and work for IBM. It is another thing to buy "the spirit of one's 'God-less' age" and retain a chair in theology at a leading university.

(c) The Inductive Model

The *inductive option turns away from authority*,[62] religious or secular, in order to move toward experience--"one's own experience, to whatever extent this is possible, and the experience embodied in a particular range of traditions."[63] This approach requires a particular attitude, "deliberately empirical," controlled and open to possible new insights stemming from one's encounter with religious phenomena. Thus, it is "unwilling to impose closure on the quest for religious truth by involving any authority whatever," suggesting a Heraclitian view of

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[61]Referring to Bishop John Robinson's "sensational" *Honest to God* published during the sixties.

[62]Berger states: "This position must necessarily repudiate authority as the final source of religious affirmations; at the same time, it can also maintain critical distance to the new authority of modern secularity, and by doing so avoid the self-liquidating procedure of the reductionists." (Berger and Kellner, "Conceptualization of Supernatural and Sacred," p. 36.)

[63]Berger, *Heretical Imperative*, p. 58.

experience in contrast to the stoical view of the writer of Ecclesiastes that "there is nothing new under the sun."[64]

Gaede criticizes Berger's inductive approach for being unduly influenced by his own theology:

> . . . Berger considers these 'prototypical human gestures' to have faithful qualities and to be 'signals of transcendence,' not because that is unarguably the case, but because he *believes* it to be the case. In other words, the linkage between these gestures, faith, and transcendent reality is a Bergerian metaphysical assumption . . . . Here is a point at which Berger's religious metaphysics has informed his sociological understanding.[65]

Berger answers that the section in *A Rumor of Angels* to which Gaede referred (wherein Berger proposes a theological program of inquiry centered on the matrix of everyday experience, and specifically five "human gestures," as an approach to a position of faith or religious affirmation--, "This I believe!,") was *not* written from a sociological standpoint: "I never suggested that the transcendent meanings can be discovered by sociological or any other scien-

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[64]The stoicism of the author of Ecclesiastes is evident in the following well-known passage: "A generation goes, a generation comes, yet the earth stands firm for ever. The sun rises, the sun sets; then to its place it speeds and there it rises. Southward goes the wind, then turns to the north; it turns and turns again; back then to its circling goes the wind. Into the sea all the rivers go, and yet the sea is never filled, and still to their goal the rivers go. All things are wearisome. No man can say that eyes have not had enough of seeing, ears their fill of hearing. What was will be again; what has been done will be done again; and there is nothing new under the sun. Take anything of which it may be said, 'Look now, this is new.' Already, long before our time, it existed. Only no memory remains of earlier times, just as in times to come next year itself will not be remembered." (Ecclesiastes 1:4-11, *The Jerusalem Bible*)

[65]Gaede in Hunter and Ainlay, *Making Sense of Modern Times*, p. 169.

tific discipline in these empirical phenomena."[66] As he stated in the preface, "sociology is of little if any use" in answering the question of how to go about the business of thinking through religious matters. Its use is limited to answering whether "such thinking is possible."[67] He notes, further, that an "act of faith" is required if one is to claim that human gestures such as "the propensity for order," "play," "hope," "damnation" and "humor,"[68] verify the reality of a transcendental sphere. Treating Gaede's critique with goodwill, Berger suggests that Gaede interpreted the term "induction" in a conventional manner and was thus "thrown off the mark":

> The theological procedure advocated in that book (*A Rumor of Angels*) is 'inductive,' *not* in the sense of modern scientific method, but in the sense of taking ordinary human experience as its starting point. The same meaning of 'induction' is applied to religious experience proper in *The Heretical Imperative*. Perhaps I invited this misunderstanding by the use of the term. Using more conventional Christian language, I might say that my approach is 'sacramental'--an apprehension of God's presence 'in, with and under' the elements of common human experience--though this usage might invite yet other misunderstandings.[69]

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[66]Berger, "Epilogue" in Hunter and Ainlay, *Making Sense of Modern Times*, pp. 231-232.

[67]Berger, *Rumor of Angels*, preface.

[68]These five "signals of transcendence" are filled out in detail on pages 53-72 of *Rumor of Angels*.

[69]Berger, "Epilogue," in Hunter and Ainlay, *Making Sense of Modern Times*, pp. 231-232. It should not be overlooked (as Gaede obviously has done) that in *The Heretical Imperative* Berger specifies what he means by the term 'induction:' "The term 'induction' is used here in its most common sense--arguing from empirical evidence. This means two things: taking human experience as the starting point of religious reflection, and using the methods of the historian to uncover those human experiences that have become embodied in the various religious traditions." (*Heretical Imperative*, p. 115)

As an approach to religious phenomena, induction presupposes a degree of uncertainty (humility) in the face of the cosmic drama. Uncongenial to the "religious temperament" which is more at home with "proclamation" than "hypothesis," it nevertheless inspires other religious virtues such as joy when truth is grasped in a fresh way; peace even though uncertainty is the norm; and hope that future epiphanies will occur.

Berger suggests that the advantage of induction "is its open-mindedness and the freshness that usually comes from a nonauthoritarian approach to questions of truth." He praises it for its capacity to bring about a "distinctive experience of inner liberation," in keeping with the qualities of "joy," "peace" and "hope" mentioned earlier. The weakness, however, is that the "deep religious hunger for certainty" can be easily frustrated under the parameters of this model. Thus, it is "not a terribly easy attitude" to take. It neither condemns nor celebrates "modernity," but is, rather, detached towards contemporary experience. While it provides "some safeguards both against reactionary nostalgia and against revolutionary overenthusiasm," all too often it falters down a slippery slope which ends in reductionism or "alternatively its frustrations lead to surrender to the old certainties."[70]

Taking his cue from Karl Barth, Berger chooses the theology of Friedrich Schleiermacher as paradigmatic for the inductive model.[71] Barth repudiated Protestant liberalism

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[70]Berger, *Heretical Imperative*, p. 59.

[71]Berger further explains his choice of Schleiermacher for induction: "It takes a paradigmatic figure to spot another one. Karl Barth, . . . characterized F. Schleiermacher as the paradigmatic figure of Protestant liberalism. Indeed, throughout his work Barth was engaged in an ongoing dialogue with Schleiermacher. . . . If one wants to understand the cognitive model of induction in its

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and criticized Schleiermacher for his part therein. According to Barth, Schleiermacher erred by taking human experience as his point of departure for religious reflection. For Barth, the foundation of faith cannot be our experiences of the supernatural or sacred but rather divine revelation itself. One's faith, therefore, cannot rely on experience but rather on the given revelation of the divine in the Word or Scripture.[72] We have already outlined how Berger debunks this neo-orthodox assertion of faith through grace on the basis of revelation alone.

Schleiermacher's understanding of revelation departs from that of Barth in terms of substance and access. Revelation is not relegated to scriptural formulations of truth nor is it accessible only to the chosen few,--whose part in the matter of receiving the "truth" is nil. Rather, Schleiermacher defines revelation as "every original and new disclosure of the universe and its innermost life to man."[73] The entire universe of which we are members, observers and partakers "is a symbol of the infinite . . . it is 'miraculous' in that it is ongoingly permeated with signals of the latter's transcendent reality."[74] Berger points out how this view contrasts with that of Feuerbach who "sought to

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[71](...continued)
Protestant form, it is to Schleiermacher that one had best turn." (*Heretical Imperative*, p. 116)

[72]The words of the Apostle Paul to the community of believers in Ephesus reinforce this tenet of neo-orthodoxy: "Because it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith; not by anything of your own, but by a gift from God; not by anything that you have done, so that nobody can claim the credit." (Ephesians 2:8-9, *Jerusalem Bible*)

[73]Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion: Reden an die Gibildeten unter ihren Verächtern*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, I (Berlin: Reimer, 1843), p. 249 as quoted and translated by Berger in *Heretical Imperative*, p. 119.

[74]Berger, *Heretical Imperative*, p. 119.

reduce infinity to finitude, to translate theology into anthropology."[75] Against the reductionary posture of Feuerbach, Schleiermacher begins with the empirical world but leaves no doubt that the world as we experience it on its most natural and common level, is an intimation of the divine--"shot through with manifestations of the infinite." As Gerard Manly Hopkins exclaimed: "The world is charged with the grandeur of God. It will flame out, like shining from shook foil."[76]

Berger describes Schleiermacher's approach to religious reflection as both phenomenological and historical.[77] If the original religious experiences frozen beneath ages of religiosity, custom and practice are close to what Schleiermacher calls the essence (*Wesen*) of religion, then the theological task must entail a return to those relevant building materials for reflection and systematization. What is the essence of religion? For Schleiermacher, that essence is defined as the experience "of the infinite or of God." The central characteristic of the experience is the feeling of "absolute dependence," of awe before the majesty of the infinite.[78] In the words of Schleiermacher,

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[75]Ibid.

[76]Gerard Manly Hopkins, Poem entitled "God's Grandeur."

[77]He argues that "a case can be made that Schleiermacher was also the father of the disciplines of comparative religion and history of religion (*Religionsgeschichte*) in the nineteenth century, disciplines that have enormously magnified the knowledge available on every expression of human religiosity. Schleiermacher is certainly at the methodological roots of what came to be known in the twentieth century as the phenomenology of religion. Its foremost representative if not founder, Rudolf Otto, acknowledged his indebtedness to Schleiermacher." (*Heretical Imperative*, p. 126)

[78]The Fourth Proposition found in the Section entitled "The Definition of Dogmatics" of Schleiermacher's classic

(continued...)

> . . . it can indeed be said that God is given to us in feeling in an original way; and if we speak of an original revelation of God to man or in man, the meaning will always be just this, that, along with the absolute dependence which characterizes not only man but all temporal existence, there is given to man also the immediate self-consciousness of it, which becomes a consciousness of God. In whatever measure this actually takes place during the course of a personality through time, in just that measure do we ascribe piety to the individual.[79]

I do not have to elaborate further on Schleiermacher's careful and polished analysis of the consciousness of God, given in one's experience.[80] The crucial factor here is that Schleiermacher's phenomenological approach is a model for Berger's own approach to religion.

In opting for the inductive model of inquiry, Berger follows the Husserlian imperative to "return to things as

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[78](...continued)
The Christian Faith reads as follows: "The common element in all howsoever diverse expressions of piety, by which these are conjointly distinguished from all other feelings, or, in other words, the self-identical essence of piety, is this: the consciousness of being absolutely dependent, or, which is the same thing, of being in relation with God." (*The Christian Faith*, ed. by H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart, Fortress Press: Philadelphia, first printed 1928, this edition 1976), p. 12.

[79]Ibid., p. 18.

[80]To this discussion Berger adds the following pertinent commentary. Schleiermacher, notes Berger, stresses that religious consciousness is not to be reduced in our understanding to "consciousness of oneself." Schleiermacher insists, rather, "that religious consciousness is consciousness *of something beyond itself*--indeed, so much beyond itself that the human subject feels himself to be utterly dependent on that other reality or being at the center of the experience. In other words, to start with human consciousness does not mean that one must also end there; on the contrary, in Schleiermacher's case, human consciousness is of interest to the theologian only insofar as it bears the marks, the 'intimations,' of a God who is utterly beyond human measure. Again, the experience of absolute dependence is designated as the core experience of religion." (*Heretical Imperative*, p. 122)

they are!"[81] Emphasizing the primacy of experience, the inductive approach steers away from reified thought and is motivated by the "urge to find out 'how it really was.'"[82] Berger and Kellner summarize the location, substance and strength of the inductive approach:

> In between Deduction and Reduction lies an understanding of the theological task as one of induction--that is, an understanding that acknowledges and accepts the primacy of experience brought on by the modern situation and that proceeds to examine religious traditions and institutions in ongoing reference to human experience. This position must necessarily repudiate authority as the final source of religious affirmations; at the same time, it can also maintain critical distance to the new authority of modern secularity, and by doing so can avoid the self-liquidating procedure of the reductionists.[83]

2. Substance of Berger's Theology

It could be argued that in arriving at this portion of our voyage, we have reached the "unmoved mover" for Peter Berger's thinking in the distinct and varied spheres of sociology, theology, political and economic theory. Certainly, in terms of the thrust of our study this section is crucial. Although a great amount of care has been exercised to delineate Berger's approach to religion (theory) from his beliefs concerning religion (praxis), our evaluation of the model of "broken connectedness" between the two spheres requires an analysis of each in terms of the other. I have

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[81]Edmund Husserl, "*Zurück zu den Sachen!*," found in Maurice Natanson, *Edmund Husserl* (Evanston, Ill.: NWU. Press, 1973), pp. 42ff. As quoted by Berger in *Heretical Imperative*, p. 59.

[82]Berger quotes Ranke's "*wie es wirklich gewesen ist.*" (*Heretical Imperative*, p. 115)

[83]Berger and Kellner, "Conceptualization of Supernatural and Sacred," p. 36.

concentrated on portraying Berger's model for approaching religion. But, as has been noted over and over again, such elements do not mysteriously arise in a solipsistic bubble but rather grow from the seeds of what existentialist philosophy calls "facticity" or "situatedness"--"accidents of birth and biography."[84] This is not to say that his orientation towards religion strictly results from "accidents of birth and biography," but rather, to stress the fundamental relatedness of his approach with a Lifeworld, its contextual rootedness in a given world.

At the outset, it is important to note that the moves which Berger makes between pre-theological and theological frames of reference are undertaken in a manner similar to those between scientific and religious frames of reference. Under the heading "While Waiting for the Dark Drums of God," Berger appends his own "explicitly Christian" observations to the foregoing pre-theological argument.[85]

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[84]Berger describes "facticity" in the following: "Human beings do not choose their situation. At best, they may choose how to cope with the situation into which they have been thrown by the accidents of birth and biography. *This is as true of the practical as of the cognitive aspects of any situation* (my emphasis). . . . All of this, though, does not alter the fundamental fact of the human condition that existential philosophy has aptly termed its 'situatedness' or 'thrownness:' Human beings are indeed thrown into a world that is not of their own making. This fundamental fact is the starting point as well as the limitation of any acts of self-assertion, rebellion, or change. *The same applies to the cognitive aspects of any situation.* An individual does not choose his native language, with all the implications this has for his perceptions of the world and his thinking about the world. *Nor does an individual, even if he should be a great philosopher, choose the cognitive milieu within which he must move as an adult, although* (if he is very persuasive or very powerful, or both) *he may modify it somewhat before he leaves the scene.*" (*Heretical Imperative*, pp. 87-88.)

[85]For Berger, theology is "reflection on the basis of faith and within a framework given by faith." (*Heretical Imperative*, p. 165.)

The move to a position of faith (or theology) is signalled in (what is by now) very familiar language:

> . . . None of the foregoing was based on a Christian faith commitment (at least not intentionally). In conclusion, however, it may be appropriate to give up this, as it were, theoretical asceticism and to make some observations from an explicitly Christian standpoint.[84]

Whether we take the view that "society" as a whole or "the present age" *must* be held accountable for the "dark drums of God," *or* that God has arbitrarily decided to "take a holiday," the fact remains that his drumbeat "can barely be heard amid the noises of the world." Paradoxically, God's silence has become unbearably loud. It is this facticity that marks Berger's point of departure for his observations *qua*-Christian. These observations are significant for two reasons: a) we are told *what* Berger believes and b) by stating *what* he believes we can better reflect about the *merits* of his inductive approach to religion, since at least some sort of connection exists between Berger's approach *to* religion and beliefs *about* religion.

Let us look first at *what* Berger believes. It is important to grasp the context from which he launches into his own "statement of faith," as it were. He has just outlined a proposal for theological reflection in the eighties, one which would see a "contestation" with other religious traditions in order to learn from their *experiences*. I will take up the details of this proposal in the final section of the chapter but at this point I wish to outline Berger's own conviction concerning religious phenomena. His conviction, stated quite simply, is that "the core contents of the Christian message provide the

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[84]Ibid.

fullest and most adequate interpretation of one's own experience of God, world and self."[87]

Berger's "confession" of faith directly follows a full-scale inquiry into the religious experience inherent to two cluster-groups--those centered around the confrontational mode of Jerusalem (Islam, Judaism and Christianity,) and those in the interior mode of Benares, encompassed by Hinduism and Buddhism. Leaving no doubt as to his "*hairesis*," Berger articulates the dimensions of his faith:

> Christian faith here means to express the conviction that the universe ultimately makes sense in the light of Sinai and Calvary. It also means, if one wills, to take one's final stand in Jerusalem. *Such a stand, needless to say, is not simply the taking of an intellectual position, of a particular theoretical approach. Rather, it involves the person as a whole, is 'existential' in this simple sense.*[88] (my emphasis.)

In the following section I will extrapolate from portions of *A Rumor of Angels* to lend substance to the "sense" which the universe makes for Berger in "light of Sinai and Calvary." Our intention here is to focus on the "theological face" of Berger's sociological definition of religion. First, let us recall Berger's sociological definition of religion. While he acknowledges that religion can be found in the form of tradition, reflection and experience, he places the highest priority on religious experience for the study of religion. In order to locate religious experience, one must be equipped with an accurate understanding of sacred and supernatural reality and their relationship to one another. For Berger, then, religious phenomena locates itself at the intersection of the interlocking realities of the sacred and the supernatural.

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[87]Berger, *Heretical Imperative*, p. 165.

[88]Ibid.

Given Berger's definition of the sacred, a correlation can be made between "sacred reality" and the new testament portrayal of God in the person of Christ. Similarly, "the supernatural" can be correlated with the old testament God. Without attending to the gamut of theological points expressed, for example, in the Nicean Creed, we will limit this section to Berger's theology of God (specifically in terms of "Father" and "Son.")

Like his definition of "supernatural reality," Berger depicts the old testament God as "totally other, . . . the polar antithesis of the great identity proclaimed by the mystics."[69] Unlike other conceptions of God developed by their neighbors in the mid-eastern basin, Israel's God was "an unheard-of novelty." While this God "stood outside man and outside the world, . . . He was also the creator of both man and world."[70] If the old testament God is perceived in "terrible confrontation with the world of man," the new testament Christ is perceived as "present within it as suffering love."[71] With our understanding of "sacred reality," we became acquainted with an element lacking in "the supernatural"--that of redemption, or the experience that one's reality has been transformed from a posture of "fear and trembling" in the face of an Almighty God, to one of confidence and peace in the arms of the Shepherd who has found his lost sheep. With the experience of "the sacred," the sense of abandonment is obliterated. The reality of "thrownness,"--of boundedness to "accidents of birth and biography," is modified by the added feature of destiny. With the idea of destiny, one believes that life may, after all, be meaningful. The horizons of one's life fill in as

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[69]Berger, *Rumor of Angels*, p. 89.

[70]Ibid., p. 88.

[71]Ibid., p. 91.

one confidently makes plans believing in the "goodwill" of a loving God. This experience of sacred reality contrasts with the paralysis one experiences in the face of a capricious, whimsical, sometime merciful-sometime vengeful God. Berger argues that with Christ, "the hope that human suffering has redeeming significance" is vindicated.

Berger's christology diverges from conventional reflection about the subject. He detects the reality of this Christ, *not* in communities who trace their origins and *raison d'être* back to "a certain point in the past," but rather, "wherever communities gather around acts of redeeming love."[92] Thus, Berger's christology is *not* exclusively tied to the manifestation of the historical Christ "given once and for all in the particular historical events reported on in the new testament."[93] Rather, he looks for manifestations in our present context of Christ's presence wherever

> the redeeming gestures of love, hope, and compassion are reiterated in human experience . . . wherever these gestures are understood in relation to the God who both created and redeems the world, who may well have been 'in Jesus,' but who is ever again present in the human imitations of redemptive love.[94]

This means that it is not enough to hold to the cognitive belief that "Jesus is Lord," the theoretical view that salvation is found "through Christ alone." The religious quest must culminate in an ever-growing unity between right beliefs and concrete acts of love, or praxis. Prior to all cognition (i.e., so-called "right beliefs,") is the "core religious experience" which discloses itself in redemptive human gestures of "love, hope and compassion."

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[92]Berger, *Rumor of Angels*, p. 93.

[93]Ibid., p. 92.

[94]Ibid., p. 93.

It is with this understanding of the religious reality at the ground of Christianity that Berger identifies himself as a Christian, although he has not yet found a "comfortable fit" for his theological views.[95] His paradoxical stance is reminiscent of the lyrics found in a song performed by the contemporary Irish band "U2:"

> I believe in the Kingdom Come
> Then all the colors will bleed into one
> But yes I'm still running
> You broke the bonds
> You loosed the chains
> You carried the cross
> And my shame . . .
> You know I believe it
> But I still haven't found
> What I'm looking for. . .[96]

Berger manages to combine the stance of "believer" with that of "student." He demonstrates the compatibility of both and as we shall see, shows how such a stance can flower into a better understanding of our co-religionists, members of other faith groups. A matured faith is evident as Berger recommends that Christian theologians attempt to better understand the religious reality at the core of their own tradition through dialogue with other traditions, rather than centering their attention on proving or disproving the latest curves thrown their way by the secularized "they."

Fully aware of the fact that "nothing in human life can be understood in terms of clear-cut and generally applicable antitheses, and [that] religion is no exception to this,"[97] Berger nevertheless proceeds to divide the religious realm into two types. The polarized types originate in the geographical locations of western Asia (Jerusalem) and India (Benares):

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[95]Ibid., preface.

[96]"U2," *Joshua Tree Album*, "Still haven't found what I'm looking for."

[97]Berger, *Heretical Imperative*, p. 145.

> Western Asia and India have given birth to the two most comprehensive religious world views, and the antithesis between them constitutes the most important problem for contemporary ecumenicity.[98]

He characterizes the religious experience inherent to each "pole" as a) *"confrontation with the divine":* This experience, he states, is inherent to "the three great monotheistic religions coming out of the biblical experience"--that is, Judaism, Christianity and Islam,[99] and b) *"interiority of the divine":* This experience inheres in the two great traditions of "the East"--namely Buddhism and Hinduism.

Berger concretely demonstrates how it is possible for an inductive approach to religious phenomena to enrich one's faith. Although Jerusalem and Benares have had about as little to do with one another (from an orthodox standpoint,) as Athens and Jerusalem in the time of Tertullian (third century A.D.,) Berger proposes that Christian theologians pay special attention to Benares. This attention, however, should not take any of the following forms: (i) detached scholarship (ii) "reciprocal antidefamation" (iii) a *Missionswissenschaft* approach or strategy of evangelization. Finally, (iv) he warns that with his recommended approach he does not *predict* or *hope* for "any kind of grand synthesis" in the style of a religious esperanto! The damage would be too great. The living fire of religious traditions would be reduced to ashes and warm coals, a reduction to the "lowest common denominator." With such a "night in which all cats are grey," Berger argues that "it would be better if no contestation took place."[100]

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[98]Ibid., p. 144.

[99]Ibid., p. 153.

[100]Berger, *Heretical Imperative*, p. 152.

The type of attention Berger enjoins upon Christian theologians is one which is *open-minded*, where one is, "at least hypothetically, [open] to the proposition that this other religion is true." In other words, one is "prepared to change one's own view of reality."[101] He will not settle for anything less than this type of *inductive* approach to religious phenomena.

Why engage in such a labor of understanding? Berger provides us with two reasons. The first is that ALL human experience is significant. Against prejudicial problems such as the western "strong, built-in bias against mysticism" and conversely, the deceptive "proverbial tolerance of Benares,"[102] Berger calls for a humanistic perspective towards religious phenomena. Furthermore, within each experiential matrix it is possible to locate elements of the "other" side of the spectrum: "There are Benares-type phenomena within the Jerusalem matrix, and Jerusalem-type phenomena within the Benares matrix."[103] The second reason is that such labor will, Berger believes, bear fruit in the area of personal growth as one's views are challenged: "*Once this contestation is entered, it is unlikely that its participants will remain unchanged.*"[104] Not for the timid at heart, Berger's proposal appeals most to the instinct for travel, the impulse to explore.

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[101]Ibid, p. 152.

[102]Berger points out that behind the apparent "openness" of Benares-type religiosity towards western religion, one finds the following view: Confrontational type religious experience is understood as "being of an inferior religious status, at worst expressing a state of spiritual benightedness, at best being useful stages toward a higher form of experience in which they are to be dissolved." (*Heretical Imperative*, p. 154)

[103]Ibid., p. 155.

[104]Ibid., p. 153.

In conclusion, Berger's approach to and beliefs about religious phenomena demonstrate the qualities of peace in the midst of uncertainty; joy in the quiet confidence of faith; and hope for future signals of transcendence in the midst of everydayness. While "waiting for the dark drums of God," Berger will "remain open to all the possibilities of a future that lies in God's hands."[105] "Openness" means that one has not already decided either a) that God has spoken and there is nothing left to say, nor b) that God has never spoken:

> There are times in history when the dark drums of God can barely be heard amid the noises of this world. Then it is only in moments of silence, which are rare and brief, that their beat can be faintly discerned. There are other times. These are the times when God is heard in rolling thunder, when the earth trembles and the treetops bend under the force of his voice. It is not given to men to make God speak. It is only given to them to live and to think in such a way that, if God's thunder should come, they will not have stopped their ears.[106]

Berger's mature proposal for inductive theology harmonizes with his balanced view of reality,--rooted in a "core faith," it is open to "reality-ruptures" and all the potential chaos and change such ruptures can precipitate in one's experience.

C. Summary

We have seen Berger's dual-citizenship at work in this chapter. Berger contends that one can both sociologically analyse religious phenomena and grapple theologically with the same reality. In fact, the two "relevance structures" have much to learn from each other

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[105]Berger, *Heretical Imperative*, p. 172.

[106]Ibid., p. 172.

and ultimately, Berger argues, serve to enhance one's understanding of religion. The important proviso to carry the right "citizenship papers" in the country through which one travels, and to clearly signal one's moves to the relevant onlookers prior to border-crossings, is consistently practiced by Berger in his own study of religion.

CHAPTER FOUR

Testing Berger's Sociological Perspective

To critically appraise something means that we assign a certain value to the material under investigation. Having delved into the perspective of Peter Berger we are in a strategic position to grapple with and question his intellectual framework. The purpose here is to assess the theoretical model with which Berger approaches religious phenomena in social reality.

Our assessment of Berger's sociological perspective will be directed, first, at its the two leading components, valuefreeness and sociology of knowledge; and second, at the perspective "as a whole." In the first step we will ask, concerning valuefreeness: Is there a contradiction in recommending a valuefree approach as a value (scientific or otherwise) in and of itself? The second question will be directed at sociology of knowledge: What use does an approach which relativizes and debunks have if it can itself be relativized and debunked? Finally, we will inquire into Berger's perspective as a whole: How well do valuefreeness and sociology of knowledge interact? Can valuefreeness withstand the debunking impetus of sociology of knowledge? In other words, Can Berger adhere both to a motif of openness (implied in the methodological requirements intrinsic to objectivity and valuefreeness) and

one of suspicion (incorporated in the relativizing thrust of sociology of knowledge theory?)

A. Valuefreeness

At first glance the question which I wish to raise may seem to fall under the category of sophistry. Why quibble about the logical flaws involved with advocating the value of maintaining a valuefree approach? After some reflection however, several aspects of the case emerge which suggest the gravity of the question.

There are two factors which make Berger's use of valuefreeness questionable. The first has to do with the way it is described, namely with valueladen language. Berger and Kellner describe valuefreeness as, "above all a *passion to see*, . . . regardless of one's likes or dislikes, hopes or fears."[1] Elsewhere they characterize their approach as a vocation: "Sociology has been and continues to be a vocation with a form of consciousness informed by a specific scientific method, and a vocation carrying its own existential burden."[2] Berger's language with or without Kellner, reveals the value he places on valuefreeness.

The second factor concerns Berger and Kellner's critique of marxism. They argue that marxists derive their analysis of social reality from an unscientific base,[3]

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[1]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 52.

[2]Ibid., p. 171.

[3]Berger and Kellner contend that marxists see society "under the aspect of a philosophy of history, to the point where scientific understanding is deemed impossible except as an integral part of this philosophical procedure. At the end of the procedure stands a utopian vision of the future, without which the entire procedure loses its plausibility." Berger & Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 12.

rendering their work sociologically invalid. According to them, an "unscientific base" results when there is an *a priori* commitment to a specific philosophical interpretation of reality. Their solution is to opt for a valuefree approach, one which is free from philosophical commitments.

As we will see, however, valuefreeness *à la* Berger, while not ostensibly rooted in a specific philosophy *per se*, presupposes nonetheless a specific value structure.[4] That value structure revolves around one virtue, namely, "scientific integrity."[5] By "scientific integrity" Berger means that one is guided by the following aims: 1. a "democratic focus" such that "everything that human beings are or do, no matter how common place, can become significant for sociological research";[6] 2. the "art of listening" to other viewpoints no matter how different or contradictory. Berger contrasts this quality with "procedures of normative disciplines, such as theology or jurisprudence, where one meets with the constant compulsion to

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[4]Armin Kreiner gives clear expression to this observation in the following: "The analysis of Berger's theory has revealed, however, that sociological access to social reality does not succeed without implications of both metaphysical and normative-judgmental statements and consequences." (My translation) *Religionssoziologie zwischen Theorie, Apologie und Kritik der Religion*, (Frankfurt a.M.: Verlag Peter Lang, 1986), p. 440.

[5]According to Berger, the "sociologist will normally have many values as a citizen, a private person, a member of a religious group or as an adherent of some other association of people. But within the limits of his activities as a sociologist there is one fundamental value only--that of scientific integrity. Even there, of course, the sociologist, being human, will have to reckon with his convictions, emotions and prejudices. But it is part of his intellectual training that he tries to understand and control these as *bias* that ought to be eliminated, as far as possible, from his work. It goes without saying that this is not always easy to do, but it is not impossible." Berger, *Invitation to Sociology*, p. 5.

[6]Berger, *Invitation*, p. 166.

squeeze reality into the narrow frame of one's value judgments";[7] and 3. Openness of mind and catholicity of vision which invites "an ongoing communication with other disciplines that are vitally concerned with exploring the human condition."[8] It should not be surprising, then, that the vocational "activity" of valuefree sociology "has human values over and beyond its strictly scientific purposes."[9]

The unmistakable impression is that Berger appears to operate with a blind spot towards his method. He cannot, in contrast to the marxist, argue that his approach is more scientific insofar as it is valuefree because "science" itself *is* a value. The choice for "scientific integrity" involves values and is inspired by a specific philosophical outlook on life. If there is a weakness in Berger's overall perspective it is precisely at the point where he seems to ignore the philosophical implications involved in passionately advocating a position of valuefreeness. It is one thing to argue that a valuefree approach to reality ensures the best possible interpretation thereof, but quite another to claim it is superior to marxist and functionalist approaches because it is independent of philosophical assumptions. One's hermeneutical approach is ultimately a question of choice, a choice intimately related to the values one holds.

To place valuefreeness on a secure footing, I suggest therefore, that two steps be taken. First, one has to acknowledge that values feed into an approach which is

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[7]Ibid., p. 167.

[8]Berger, *Invitation*, p. 166.

[9]"Strictly speaking, the vocation of the sociologist is to do sociology. But as he does sociology, 'cleanly' and without false pretensions, it turns out that this activity has human values over and beyond its strictly scientific purposes." Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 74.

valuefree. The second recommendation concerns the term "praxis." This point was previously raised in my introduction but it is worthwhile to review the important distinction between "academic" praxis and "pragmatic" praxis.

In *Sociology Reinterpreted*, Berger and Kellner use the term "praxis" roughly to mean being committed to a "pragmatic project," technical or political.[10] Ideologues, of which marxists are the paradigmatic example,[11] and technocrats, operate with a "'one-to-one' relation between theory and praxis."[12] I suggest that "praxis" involves more than being committed to "pragmatic projects." "Praxis" implies activity and the involvement of one's own being with an idea, theory or plan. This would mean that Berger's vocational understanding of sociology represents a praxis of the intellectual variety. His passionate commitment to valuefreeness, therefore, represents a 'one-to-one' relation between theory and praxis, since he "lives out," i.e., acts upon his commitment to a specific mode of investigation. Berger should acknowledge, therefore, that his vocational understanding of sociology is also a "praxis," one of the theoretical variety.

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[10]Recalling the passage, Berger and Kellner argue as follows: "The general problem both in the technocratic and ideological uses of sociology is the relation between theory and praxis. In our view, there certainly can be a relation, but it is not a direct, 'one-to-one' relation. Rather, it is a 'broken' relation. The sociologist who is committed to any pragmatic project, be it technical or political, must remain aware of this 'brokenness' if he is *not* to be pulled into a pragmatic mentality that in the end threatens the survival of the scientific attitude. Again, he must remain conscious of his 'dual citizenship.'" Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 139.

[11]Ibid., p. 143.

[12]Ibid., p. 139.

Let me outline this point in more detail. I am arguing that in addition to the more commonly understood meaning of praxis, as pragmatic activity, we should expand our interpretation of the term to refer to theoretical activity. By theoretical praxis I mean the lived activity of investigating phenomena in accordance with specific norms. Berger would argue that so long as one is engaged in the academic enterprise, academic values must be adhered to in the manner of a "calling." This "academic or theoretical praxis" is significantly different from "pragmatic praxis," a praxis which should only be undertaken *qua* "private" person. Pragmatic praxis refers to the political or technocratic use of theory to support political projects in the community.

To summarize, the overall goal of valuefreeness is achievable within the dual-citizenship model provided by Berger *if* the foregoing suggestions are followed. To repeat, I propose that Berger acknowledge the role which his values play in the "call" for valuefreeness, and secondly, that he broaden his use of "praxis" to include an understanding of the type of academic praxis he envisages for the classroom.

B. Sociology of Knowledge

As a strategic weapon in the sociologist's arsenal, sociology of knowledge theory, with its relativizing and debunking capabilities, renders *all* theoretical legitimations, theodicies and sacred canopies suspect as purveyors of revealed truth. By explicating the social constructedness of reality by means of the dialectical relationship between self and society, sociology of knowledge theory effectively demonstrates Pascal's well-known saying that

"what is truth on one side of the Pyrenees is error on the other".[13] Sociology of knowledge constitutes the "fiery brook" through which, Berger contends, the theologian ought to pass.[14] If there is any consolation for the theologian, however, it is that in the wake of the fiery destructiveness of relativizing dissection of what is considered holy and true, like a phoenix rising from the ashes or the translation of calvary death into resurrection life, the simple facticity of truth, like Spring's first bloom, emerges and reemerges time and again.

The present discussion develops in two steps: (1) A brief depiction of Berger and Luckmann's theory of how self and society dialectically relate to one another,--the integral component in their "reconstructed sociology of knowledge"; and (2) A discussion of how seriously we are to treat sociology of knowledge when on the one hand, *qua* sociologist, Berger uses it to diagnose social reality, and on the other, he turns it on its head in *Rumor of Angels*.

1. Salient Features of Sociology of Knowledge

The relativizing impetus of sociology of knowledge is derived from the fundamental insight that all knowledge is socially constructed:

> What remains sociologically essential is the recognition that all symbolic universes and all legitimations are human products; their existence has its base in the lives of concrete individuals, and has no empirical status apart from these lives.[15]

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[13]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 56.

[14]Berger, *Rumor of Angels*, p. 29.

[15]Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, p. 128.

Painstakingly, the authors of *Social Construction* detail the manner by which symbolic universes of meaning pre-reflectively originate in the lifeworld.

The outward directed "home-building" propulsion of the self is rooted in the biologically derived need for security and order. In contrast to the highly developed instinctual constitution of animals at birth, humans are "thrown" into a place and time with seemingly endless horizons. A combination of "world-openness" and low instinctual capabilities at birth set the stage for "world-producers," persons in tandem constructing homes, villages, cities, societies and symbolic universes of meaning stretching over and beyond the workshop of daily life.

From the initial externalization of a world, we proceed to the second dialectical moment, "objectivation" where the human-constructed world *confronts the individual as an opus alienum.* The world registered as *ganz anders* in the person's consciousness is, however, not the final truth about the world. To understand how the products of the original creative drives come to stand over humans in oppressive, thing-like fashion, we must review Berger's theory of institutions.

Institutionalization begins innocuously enough with habitualization. The necessity for habitualization is due to the underdevelopment of human instincts. In order to accommodate and direct their chaotic drives, our progenitors attempted to habitualize their activities. This activity relieved the "accumulation of tensions that result from undirected drives."[16] Institutionalization was just a step away from the initial ordering activities of our unspecialized forbearers. With institutionalization, individuals relate to one another according to specific patterns. Berger's theory of institutions rotates on the fundamental

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[16]Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, p. 53.

human propensity for order. When that order is threatened by competing worlds or anomic disturbances, men and women draw on their creative resources to ensure that their institutionalized world retains its "accent of reality." Berger calles this process "legitimation."

Legitimation, comprised of "simple traditional affirmations," begins at the pre-theoretical level. Moving ahead we reach the next level of folklore, proverbs and maxims, which reinforce the ordered world. Explicit theories characterize the third level of legitimation followed closely by "symbolic universes" in the fourth level. Berger and Luckmann summarize the voyage from pre-*theoria* to "sacred canopy" or symbolic universe:

> The origins of a symbolic universe have their roots in the constitution of man. If man in society is a world-constructor, this is made possible by his constitutionally given world-openness, which already implies the conflict between order and chaos. Human existence is, *ab initio*, an ongoing externalization. As man externalizes himself, he constructs the world *into* which he externalizes himself. In the process of externalization, he projects his own meanings into reality. Symbolic universes, which proclaim that *all* reality is humanly meaningful and call upon the *entire* cosmos to signify the validity of human existence, constitute the farthest reaches of this projection.[17]

Dehumanization results when legitimations are imbued with an "ontological status independent of human activity and signification."[18] At this juncture, it is appropriate to retrace our thoughts to the original problem posed by sociology of knowledge. By now the relativizing propensities of the theory should be evident. If one's daily praxis is bound by the belief that the Koran is the revealed word of God, then one has not been initiated into

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[17]Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, p. 104.

[18]Ibid., p. 90.

the "liberating" sociology of knowledge insight that symbolic universes are constructed by people. For the ignorant, the world of Allah and the Koran looms over the mundane world exerting its ominously omnipotent influence in every nook and cranny. The Koran-believer is caught in a web of negations harmful to the realization of his or (more likely) her full humanity. And yet the "ontological status" accorded to those beliefs ensures for the believer a stable and ordered world. Berger and Luckmann contend: "Through reification, the world of institutions appears to merge with the world of nature. It becomes necessity and fate, and is lived through as such, happily or unhappily as the case may be."[19]

Finally, with "internalization" the individual appropriates within him or herself the objectivated world. In this vital move the objective facticity of the world becomes subjectively meaningful for the individual. Internalization marks the beginning of true being with one another,--"we participate in each other's being."[20] Moreover, it is "the basis . . . for an understanding of one's fellowmen and . . . for the apprehension of the world as a meaningful and social reality."[21] The establishment of a stable identity hinges on the success or failure of this vital dialectical movement.[22] Sociology of knowledge rests on the premise knowledge results from three dialectical movements which occur between the individual and the world,--externalization, objectivation and internalization.

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[19]Ibid., pp. 90-91.

[20]Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction*, p. 130.

[21]Ibid., p. 130.

[22]Ibid., p. 133.

2. "Relativizing the Relativizers"

In 1967, *The Sacred Canopy* was published. Its purpose was "to apply a general theoretical perspective derived from the sociology of knowledge to the phenomenon of religion."[23] Berger concluded therein, that "sacred canopies" are human constructions. Order and stability, human needs *par excellence*, propel individuals to actively construct a home for themselves in social solidarity. Religion is rooted in this biologically based anthropological constant of man.

Slightly uneasy about what might have been construed as its "methodological atheism," he included a provocative appendix entitled "Sociological and Theological Perspectives." There, Berger discussed the theoretical possibility that man's "projected meanings may have an ultimate status independent of man."[24] Following up that possibility two years later in *A Rumor of Angels*, he argued that the faint and obscure signals of transcendence (rumors) surrounding our existence in a secularized world, announce an eternal source.

It is important to note that the argument of *A Rumor of Angels* presupposes that of *The Sacred Canopy*. Accordingly, theological inquiry can only begin when one has "really grasped what it means to say that religion is a human product or projection." At that critical point, one is then ready to "search, *within* this array of projections, for what may turn out to be signals of transcendence."[25] In other words, recognition of the limits of human reasoning

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[23]Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, p. v.

[24]Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, p. 180.

[25]Ibid., p. 185.

(including sociology of knowledge,) constitutes the only valid soil out of which a quest for infinity, for God, for religious truth, can blossom and grow.

Passage along the "road less travelled" requires an initial demolition derby of the pervasive nature of modern consciousness. To achieve this, Berger suggested that we "relativize the relativizers,"[26] demythologizing the myth of modernity[27] in order to clear the path for authentic theological inquiry and experience.

In appraising the sociology of knowledge component of Berger's sociological perspective we are led to the question of its internal logic. How valid is Berger's claim that religion is a human construction if his claim's supporting framework (sociology of knowledge) can be dismantled with one blow ("relativizing the relativizers?")

It is crucial to note his prefatory remarks in both *Sacred Canopy* and *Rumor of Angels*. Simply stated, the first book was written from within a sociological frame of reference and the second from within a theologically oriented one. Although a "broken connectedness" certainly exists between the two relevance structures, Berger explicitly discloses his standpoint in each book. His concern in *Rumor of Angels* is "with the possibility of theological thinking in our present situation."[28] With the help of sociology of knowledge he demonstrates that

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[26]Berger, *Rumor of Angels*, p. 42.

[27]By the "myth of modernity" Berger means the assumption that this age is intellectually superior to all others, "intellect" being measured by scientific progress and technological know-how. See *A Rumor of Angels*, p. 41.

[28]Berger, *Rumor of Angels*, preface.

possibility.[29] While Berger *qua* sociologist certainly influences Berger *qua* theologian and vice versa, the two milieus are carefully demarcated; signals are decisively flashed prior to lane-changes between sociology and theology. The problem of consistency is solved if we account for the frame of reference with which he begins. It would be surprising if conclusions derived from within a sociological perspective precisely correlated with those inspired by a theological one.

To answer the question more fully, it is significant to note the character of sociology of knowledge. Sociology of knowledge, we discover, is essentially a philosophically neutral tool which, depending on our perspective, will elicit varying conclusions.

A closer inspection, moreover, of the substance of *Sacred Canopy* reveals that Berger does not deny the possibility that human projections of God may, in actuality, point to the reality of God. In other words, his sociologically derived "conclusion" does not necessarily contradict the theologically derived "conclusion" of *Rumor of Angels*. His conclusion is just not quite the same in the two books. Berger's point is that *qua* sociologist and given the evidence, he can only outline options. The evidence is that within human experience are found many "human projections of God." He articulates his position very well in the following:

> If one grants the fundamental religious assumption that an other reality somehow impinges or borders upon the empirical world, then these features of the sacred will be dignified with the status of genuine 'experience.' *Needless to say, this assumption cannot be made within a sociological or*

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[29]The overall approach is sociological, not exclusively tied to a sociological theory. However, Berger focusses on the "profound dimension" of sociology's challenge to theological thought--sociology of knowledge, in chapter two of *A Rumor of Angels*. (p. 34)

> *any other scientific frame of reference* (my emphasis). . . . 'Other worlds'. . . are only available as meaning-enclaves within this world, the world of human experience in nature and history. . . . Whatever else the constellations of the sacred may be 'ultimately,' empirically they are products of human activity and human signification--that is, they are human projections.[30]

Fair enough. The reader is told that sacred constellations are, from the empirical standpoint, human projections. This leaves the door open for other valid conclusions derived from other perspectives. Berger simply takes a different perspective towards sacred constellations of meaning in *Rumor of Angels*, a perspective which, rather than contradicting, complements that of the empirical.

In this way, we see that sociology of knowledge theory is a tool which, in the hands of a theoretician with "scientific integrity," can elicit new disclosures of the phenomenon under scrutiny. Accordingly, religion, from the standpoint of sociology of knowledge, is a human construction. But the "sociologist of knowledge" understands two things. First, that the "constructed" character of knowledge implies that sociology of knowledge is itself constructed and, therefore finite. This means that it can be relativized as it, in turn, relativizes. Second, the "sociologist of knowledge" is not so naive as to think that his or her perspective is the only one which exists. Other equally valid perspectives such as theology are available for the person intent on scrutinizing all the angles. The strength of sociology of knowledge is its self-consciously finite standpoint. Thus, it can relativize and be relativized and, to answer the guiding question of this section,--therein lies its usefulness.

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[30]Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, pp. 88-89.

C. Berger's Sociological Perspective "as a Whole"

In the preceding pages we examined the sociology of knowledge and Weber's sociology to the extent that they enter into Berger's sociological perspective. To complete our analysis, we will endeavour to ascertain how well the two blend in Berger's perspective as a whole. In short, like Van Harvey, we will ask:

> How is it that all knowledge is relative except that of the sociologist who demonstrates that all knowledge is relative? On what grounds does the sociologist claim empirical and value-free knowledge?[31]

Two years after Van Harvey's question appeared in print, Berger and Kellner formulated the same question (with more precision,) in response, perhaps, to Van Harvey's query: "*If science, along with all other cognitive systems, is socially constructed, how can one claim objectivity for it?*"[32] Their answer may help us place the questionable aspects of valuefreeness (already discussed) in a new light.

Berger and Kellner answer Van Harvey that one cannot claim objectivity for science without recognizing its boundaries. The quest of objectivity is, of course, a human quest. The objectivity which science pursues is bounded by the constructed character of science itself. Berger's ability to "relativize relativizers" is due to the constructed, and thereby, finite character of the scientific relevance structure under which sociology of knowledge operates. Berger's acknowledgement therefore, of the constructedness of science enables us to soften our earlier criticism of his "blind spot" *vis-à-vis* valuefreeness. By

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[31]Van Harvey, "Religious Faith and the Sociology of Knowledge," p. 4.

[32]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 61.

recognizing the fallible soil out of which the scientific enterprise grows, Berger indirectly points to the existence of human values feeding into valuefreeness.

To answer Harvey, then, rather than cancelling one another out, sociology of knowledge and valuefreeness enjoy an excellent working relationship. Sociology of knowledge pinpoints the finitude of knowledge, including itself. Through it, we recognize the inexorable link which binds our loftiest theories, worldviews, with our biases, beliefs and values. In this way, the "impossible struggle" for valuefreeness begins precisely with the recognition that we are connected to personal values. The relevance structure of science, under which sociology of knowledge and valuefreeness operate, strives to "see" accurately what is "there." It attempts to be philosophically neutral *vis-à-vis* phenomena.

The most important consequence of philosophical neutrality is the morality it inadvertently generates. Subjective qualities inherent to this morality include soberness, modesty, respect and empathy for others. Berger and Kellner explain:

> *To be a listener of the many stories of human meanings--and then to retell the stories as faithfully as one is able*--this description of what a sociologist does is a restatement of certain methodological principles. It is *also* a statement with a certain moral status.[33]

The "moral status" of being a good listener also has a profound practical value if one regards education as practical. Since the activity of learning requires an open mind and a desire to broaden one's horizons, the "art of listening" is an undisputed asset for all involved, teacher and student alike.

We can formulate the question of how well valuefreeness and sociology of knowledge blend in Berger's

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[33]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 75.

sociological perspective in another way. How can Berger's sociological perspective accommodate the discrete (and discrepant?) motifs of openness and debunking under the "same roof?" Connected with this question are several others. By housing the two motifs under one "roof," does Berger intend that a temporal sequence characterize their employment such that one is first open to the phenomenon and then suspicious, or vice versa? Or, do the two coexist as layers such that openness functions as the basement for the ground-floor of Mistrust, or vice versa? Are they equally significant and powerful? Does Berger hope that sociologists are both open and suspicious? How does the ideal of objectivity withstand the relativizing perspective of sociology of knowledge? Conversely, how does sociology of knowledge theory withstand the openness of valuefreeness? Are the two motifs not doomed to either syncretistic banality or an exhausting state of steady warfare?

For Berger, it is unproblematic to integrate the cosmopolitan and debunking motifs in his overall perspective. In his "preface on Perception" to The *Noise of Solemn Assemblies*, we find an apt homily on the Matthew 10:16 passage by which we can perhaps come to better terms with the two extremes in his perspective.[35] The passage reports Jesus' injunction to his disciples to be "wise as serpents and innocent as doves" as they carried the "evangelium" into the world. Berger employs this scriptual passage to relate his concern that Christian students (for whom the book was written) "will truth" in their "perception of the social dimensions of our religious situation."[36]

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[35]This was a "sociologist's study written for the National Student Christian Federation." Peter Berger, *The Noise of Solemn Assemblies: Christian Commitment and the Religious Establishment in America* (New York: Doubleday, 1961.)

[36]Berger, *Noise of Solemn Assemblies*, p. 12.

The activity which engenders a clear perception of reality is both cosmopolitan and provincial; constructive and destructive; open and closed. "Innocence" translated from the Greek, means "unmixed," "pure," "simple" and "without guile."[37] Berger claims that "innocence" is a quality of the heart rather than the head. It is the will to truth, truth which is unmixed. The will to clear perception must therefore be coupled with the practical intelligence of "wisdom." Together they will unmask the idols of our age.

At face value, innocence and prudent wisdom, like trust and suspicion are difficult ingredients to mix together. The "telos" which binds them together is a "will to truth." Openness to social phenomena, no matter how distasteful or conversely, awe-inspiring, is a direct result of the passion to see social reality "as it is." Similarly, the "art of mistrust" springs from the same "will to truth."

We have seen how the valuefree component of Weber's sociology dovetails with sociology of knowledge. They cooperate so well, in fact, that it may be unnecessary to treat them as separate components. There is, however, another feature of Weber's sociology which Berger cites as a reason for requiring *more* than sociology of knowledge to assess reality. That is, Weber's emphasis on "unintended consequences." Since sociology of knowledge "deals with the relation of structures of consciousness and institutional structures," it cannot account for those phenomena which appear to have no connection with intentions of social actors.[38] Berger is clearly unhappy with the implicit determinism of sociology of knowledge and wants to leave room for freedom in his theory.

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[37]Berger, *Noise of Solemn Assemblies*, p. 12.

[38]Berger and Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted*, p. 67.

To summarize, Berger's sociological perspective is not composed of contradictory elements but rather its components cooperate to produce a compelling model for the study of religion.

CONCLUSION

Our guiding question concerned the "workability" of Berger's "dual-citizenship" for the study of religion. We began our investigation with a look at what the model entails and compared it with two alternative approaches, the technocratic and ideological. We noted the paradox that our intimate connection to values does not deter, but rather motivates us towards valuefreeness in our study of religion. The ideologue stops at the first point, concluding that our inexorable connection to values spells futility for the academic ideal of fair play *vis-à-vis* theories which conflict with our own. The technocrat, on the other hand, leaps over the first point and incorporates a learned approach to reality utterly divorced from a contextual understanding of the self and world. They both evade the existential tension involved with being a citizen of two worlds.

Berger and Kellner call the individual who is both "religious" and a student of religion, a "dual-citizen." So long as one is clear about the citizenship requirements of the two countries, the "republic of scholars" and "religious community," one has unlimited access to both without jeopardizing the identity of either. One of the best examples of Berger's "dual-citizenship" is his analysis of religion during the late sixties. His approach to religion

in *The Sacred Canopy* was distinctly sociological and, conversely, in *A Rumor of Angels* his approach was that of a "lay theologian."

To answer the question then with which this dissertation began, Berger's "dual-citizenship" works. My conclusion is grounded in four points. The first point is Berger's loyalty, from early in his career to the present to the same recipe for approaching a diversity of topics ranging in scope from "third world" development to religion, and varying in format from the novel to theoretical treatise form.

Second, the structural toughness of his hermeneutical apparatus, able to withstand several critical assaults without collapse. Berger has been consistent, from early in his career to the present, about the Weberian/Schützian foundation for his "sociological perspective." From our separate treatment of a) Valuefreeness (Weber), b) Sociology of knowledge (Schützian-based phenomenology), and c) Berger's sociological perspective as a whole, we concluded the following:

Concerning A/, the question whether Berger contradicts himself in adhering to the value of valuefreeness, we concluded, initially, that this aspect of his sociological perspective seemed to be weak. That initial assessment was based on two points: First, Berger's discussion of the values ("scientific integrity") inherent to a valuefree approach; and second, his charge that marxists are not "really" scientific because they are philosophically biased towards social reality. Taken together, we concluded that Berger seemed to operate with a blind spot towards his own use of valuefreeness, since, presumably, valuefreeness is also not "really" scientific given the *a priori* philosophical bias towards reality such a tool entails.

I suggested therefore, that the problem could be alleviated if Berger would broaden his understanding of "praxis." Recalling the discussion, Berger criticized marxists for the "one-to-one" relationship between theory and praxis in their work. Praxis was understood in that passage as the pragmatic use of theory, whether political or technical. Moreover, implied in this pragmatic use of theory is the impression that there is a corresponding inability to criticize one's personal values. A broadened use of "praxis" would include the practice of academic norms, something which Berger passionately enjoins upon his colleagues in the field. I do not think, then, that Berger would have any quarrel with the marxist committed to academic freedom, where having a "democratic focus," "listening to others" and viewing one's own perspective with a certain humility, was the rule of thumb. In other words, his complaint is not with the marxist scholar who practices a kind of "dual-citizenship" in his/her profession, but rather with the fanatical marxist.

Berger's criticism of marxist scholars requires, therefore, a delineation between two meanings of praxis, namely, 1) academic praxis, of which valuefreeness is a crucial ingredient, and 2) pragmatic praxis, where one's commitment to the pragmatic use of theory precludes any kind of reflection and criticism about the values which feed into the pragmatic project. In accordance with a "dual-citizenship" approach to religion, one's praxis in the "republic of scholars" would be academic-oriented and, outside of that sphere, pragmatic-oriented.

Our analysis, in the third part, of the combined product of valuefreeness and sociology of knowledge in Berger's sociological perspective, enabled us to soften our criticism of his use of valuefreeness. There, we noted the "constructed" and *ipso facto*, finite character of both sociology of knowledge *and* valuefreeness. By pinpointing

the finite ground of the relevance structure of science, Berger indirectly acknowledges the existence of values which feed into valuefreeness.

Concerning B/, the logic involved in relying on an approach which relativizes and can itself be relativized, Berger effectively demonstrates that this *is* its strength. The fact that sociology of knowledge can be "turned on its head" as it were, demonstrates its own constructedness, and thereby its usefulness.

Concerning C/, the "debunking" impetus of sociology of knowledge does not negatively affect valuefreeness because valuefreeness, too, is a social construction and therefore, rooted in values. Taken together, Weber's sociology and sociology of knowledge provide Berger with a penetrating sociological perspective on religion.

We have shown that the basis for Berger's dual-citizenship approach to religion, his sociological perspective, is durable, consistent and strong despite a few weak links in the valuefree "pillar." I have suggested two steps which would strengthen that aspect. We have, moreover, seen how his dual-citizenship approach works "in practice." Taken together, then, Berger's sociological perspective coheres internally, and worked out externally, as it were, demonstrates an overall consistency and effectiveness.

The third point in favour of the thesis that Berger's dual-citizenship approach to religion "works," is that through that approach, he achieves a fruitful analysis of religion. For those concerned with how religion is to be defined, Berger's lucid and thorough discussion of the issue constitutes an excellent entry point into the debate. From a "relaxed ecumenical tolerance," (it being a "matter of

taste")[1] to a more "militant opposition" towards functional definitions of religion, his argument for moving to a firm "substantive" definition is instructive.[2] By setting forth definitional terms ("sacred" and "supernatural"), we are given something solid to work with. Berger's focus on defining religion challenges us with the ongoing importance of this particular task.

Besides the matter of how it is to be defined, Berger emphasizes that the modern individual is confronted with the necessity to choose one's religion or worldview. Whereas traditional societies provided little choice concerning religious truth, the present reality is such that we must choose between an array of options including that of disbelief. Hence, the "heretical imperative":[3]

> In premodern situations there is a world of religious certainty, occasionally ruptured by heretical deviations. By contrast, the modern situation is a world of religious uncertainty, occasionally staved off by more or less precarious constructions of religious affirmation. . . . *For premodern man, heresy is a possibility--usually a rather remote one; for modern man, heresy*

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[1]Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, Appendix I, "Sociological Definitions of Religion," p. 177.

[2]Berger, "Some Second Thoughts on Substantive versus Functional Definitions of Religion," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 13 (March 1974): 125-133.

[3]Title of Berger's most substantial treatment of religion, published in 1979. The etymology of "Heresy" is central to the argument: "The English word 'heresy' comes from the Greek verb *hairein*, which means 'to choose.' A *hairesis* originally meant, quite simply, the taking of a choice. A derived meaning is that of an opinion. . . . For this notion of heresy to have any meaning at all, there was presupposed the authority of a religious tradition. Only with regard to such an authority could one take a heretical attitude. The heretic denied this authority, refused to accept the tradition *in toto*. Instead, he picked and chose from the contents of the tradition, and from these pickings and choosings constructed his own deviant opinion." (*The Heretical Imperative*, p. 25)

> *typically becomes a necessity.* Or again, *modernity creates a new situation in which picking and choosing becomes an imperative.*[4]

Finally, he points out three paths along which one can move from an academic scrutiny of religious options to a "*hairesis.*" To summarize, Berger's sociological approach to religion aids our understanding of ourselves and the world in which we live.

The fourth and final point in favour of our thesis that Berger's dual-citizenship approach to religion succeeds, concerns the implicit philosophy of education at the core of his approach. As I showed in the early pages of this dissertation, "humanism" is the crucial ingredient in his approach. Berger's approach reflects his view that at the heart of reality is a mystery that defies ultimate solutions, and in that mystery a sense of order and belonging. Retrieving the original documents of our existence means that we are confronted with an inexplicable presence, something larger ourselves.

Religious experience, the experience of "the holy," "the sacred," is that which occurs at the above-mentioned juncture in one's journey. Understood along these lines, Berger's approach to social phenomena translates into a pilgrimage to the religious source of our empirical existence. In this context, our conventional ideas about religion have to be revised. Prior to doctrinal statements, churches, a national ethos or family traditions, religion begins with the experience of finitude. Our frailty is experienced against the backdrop of God's majesty.

The philosophy of education at the core of Berger's approach presupposes "a stance of soberness, an intellectual if not personal modesty."[5] It requires the

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[4]Berger, *Heretical Imperative*, p. 25.

[5]Ibid.

"postulate of ignorance," the capacity for self-criticism. All of this goes a long way towards producing the right climate for learning, surely an indispensable task for any enterprise whose purpose it is to educate.

My investigation into Berger's work from 1958 to the present revealed a consistent frame of reference from which he tackled a variety of subjects. My reading of the secondary literature on Berger, particularly those who charged Berger with inconsistency and a kind of methodological flamboyance, revealed a startling gap in their assessment of Berger. What was this gap? Namely, that the frame of reference which Berger uses had not been grappled with. Therefore, I perceived that this missing portion of scholarship on Berger constituted a good place to make a contribution to the field.

How does this study of Berger's dual-citizenship approach to religion contribute to the field? First, let me say what the thesis has *not* tried to do. It was not a comparative study of approaches to religion; neither was it a proposal for a brand new model for enquiry into religion. Rather, its purpose was to ground the approach demonstrated and briefly discussed in Berger's work on a solid footing and to critically assess that approach. Its contribution to scholarship is, therefore, that I have gone beyond existing scholarship on Berger to demonstrate the key to his work, namely the sociological perspective comprised of valuefreeness and sociology of knowledge which forms the basis of his analysis of religion, politics, economics and so on. And, it is his sociological perspective which forms the basis for his proposal that religion be studied in the manner of dual-citizen -- scholarly, i.e., valuefree *and* involved in or connected with a community of religious, political or other concerns. It is impossible to assess the seemingly contradictory Berger of *The Sacred Canopy* and *A Rumor of Angels,* without understanding this idea of dual-

citizenship, an idea which Berger has consistently practiced from 1958 to the present. And it is impossible to accurately assess dual citizenship without grasping the two central theoretical components of valuefreeness and sociology of knowledge which blend together in such a way as to make Berger's work the compelling contribution to the field of religious studies which it is.

There are problems with the model of dual-citizenship. By pinpointing these problems and proposing an answer to them, I have offered to religious studies a fresh understanding of Berger's approach.

Of course the topic is not exhausted. Much more can be done to assess the model at hand. While "dual-citizenship" has been unpacked in detail, the other two approaches, technocratic and utopian have only received interest insofar as they are not the way to go according to Berger. But who exactly are today's utopians and technocrats in the field? And what kind of answer would they give Berger to the charge that the old fashioned marriage of theory and praxis, or divorce of theory and praxis, distorts the reality under investigation.

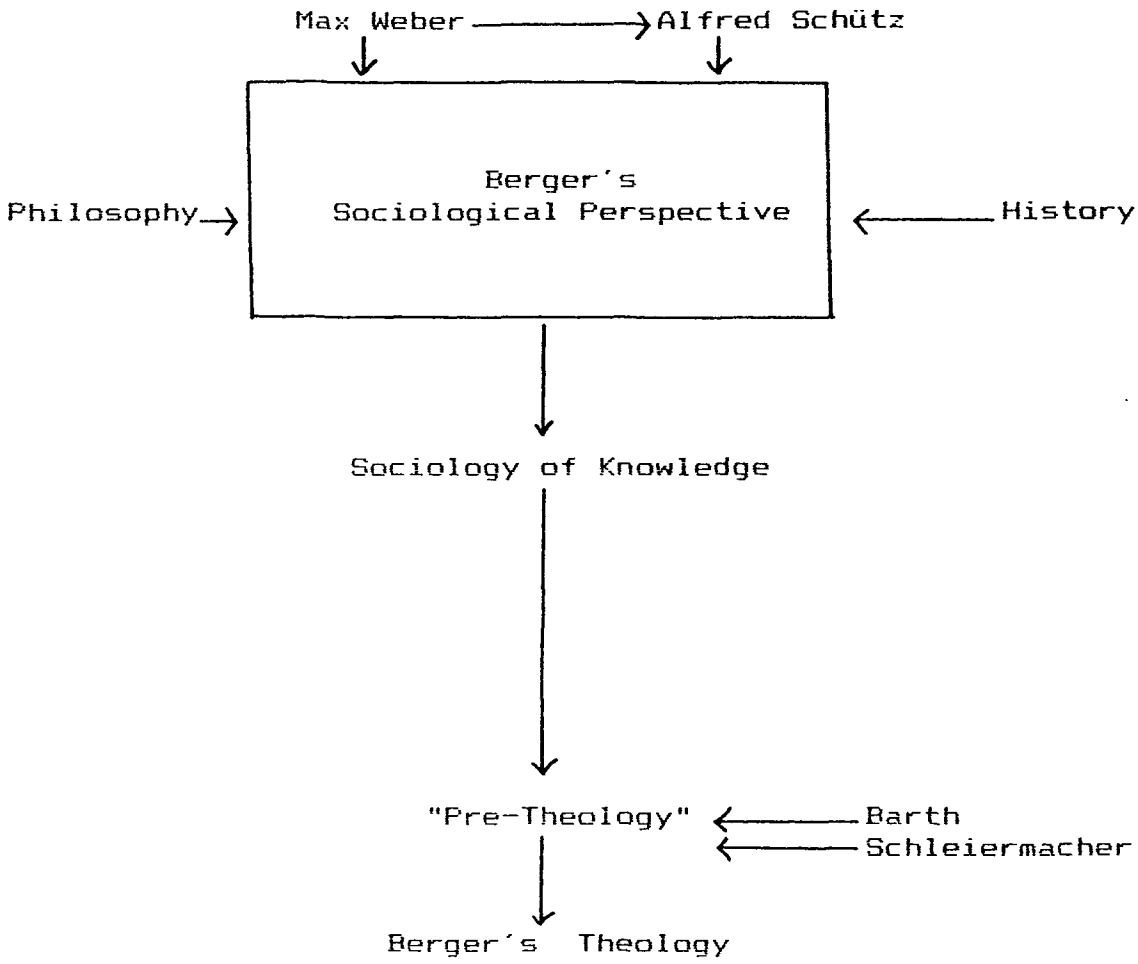
Another area that I would like to explore in greater detail concerns Berger's view that the study of religion must be primarily concerned with the "core experience" of religion -- that theology, Dogma, etc. must base their findings on the essence of religion. What needs to be done here is to set out a method for reaching this pre-reflective experience. Berger argues for its primary status for research but does not specify exactly how one is to get there. We gather that the language of phenomenology *à la* Husserl and Schütz is key here, but this needs more attention. We know that Berger recommends the inductive path, a path which takes personal experience as the basis for investigation, but we are not told how to rate and evaluate our experiences in the face of other's experiences.

In short, we need a more detailed explication of how to conduct our investigation of the core experience of religion.

Berger's dual-citizenship approach to religion has been carefully considered in the preceding pages. Hopefully, serious consideration to the question of how we should approach the study of religion, will not undermine the real task for religious studies--that of understanding the religious dimension of existence.

Appendix I

Berger's Sociological Perspective



Appendix II. Periodization of Berger's Work

Other scholars have also divided Berger's work into periods or "clusters" as Michael Kerlin calls them. The essential difference between the scheme offered here and that of Kerlin, Van A. Harvey, Volker Drehsen, and Gordon Clanton, is that I have included a fourth period containing the latest literary output of Berger.

A/. Volker Drehsen, "Die Reprivatisierung des heiligen Kosmos: Peter L. Berger und Thomas Luckmann," in K.M. Dahm, V. Drehsen and G. Kehrer, *Das Jenseits der Gesellschaft. Religion im Prozess Sozialwissenschaftlicher Kritik* (München, 1975), 235-268. Drehsen divides Berger's work into three "Phasen in Anlehnung an G. Clanton." I. Theorie der Kulturreligion, 1961-1963; II. Theorie der Wissenssoziologie, 1963-1966; and III. Theorie der Säkularisierung, 1966-1970.

B/. Gordon Clanton, "Peter L. Berger und die Rekonstruktion der Religionssoziologie," übertragen von Wolfram Fischer, *Wissenschaft und Praxis in Kirche und Gesellschaft*, 62 (1973), 78-95. Clanton divides Berger's work into three "Perioden." I. "Frühe Arbeiten," 1959-1963: Clanton describes Berger's work in this period as "Kirchenzentrierte Forschungen, in denen Soziologie als eine konstruktive Kritik kirchlicher Religion gezeichnet ist," 78. II. 1963-1966: "Eine 'übergangsperiode,'" Clanton claims that in this period Berger attempts "sich selbst als säkularer Wissenschaftler zu etablieren," ibid. He regards Berger and Luckmann's "reconstructed sociology of knowledge" as the "founding conceptual instrumentarium for the investigation of religion" ("als grundlegendes Begriffsinstrumentarium zur Erforschung von Religion," ibid.) III. *1966--*: "Das Schlüssel-Konzept heißt hier--wie in *The Sacred Canopy*--Säkularisation." Also, Clanton correctly notes that during this period Berger clearly indicates that his definition of religion will be "substantive" rather than "functional," as defined by Thomas Luckmann. (p. 79)

C/. Michael J. Kerlin, "Crossing Berger's Fiery Brook: Religious Truth and the Sociology of Knowledge," *Thomist*, 40 (1976), 366-392. Kerlin divides the relevant work into "two main clusters." The first begins in 1961 with *The Noise of*

Solemn Assemblies (1961) and *The Precarious Vision* (1961). The second relevant "cluster" occurs between 1967 and 1970 with *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966), *The Sacred Canopy* (1967), and *A Rumor of Angels* (1969). (p. 367)

D/. Van A. Harvey, "Religious Faith and the Sociology of Knowledge: The Unburdening of Peter Berger," *Religious Studies Review*, V (Jan., 1979), 1-10. Harvey employs the notion of "Berger's burden" to interpret his work, reporting on the "structure of his unburdening" over the years. (p. 1) Berger's burden, according to Harvey, "is how he can relate his Christian belief to his sociological theory: or, more precisely, how he can reconcile his belief in the god of the biblical tradition with a sociological theory in which all beliefs, especially religious beliefs, are regarded as human products relative to social structures, and plausible only so long as those supporting structures are in place." (ibid) Accordingly, he divides Berger's work as follows: I. "The first Unburdening: the iconoclastic Berger," ***1959-1963***; ***II.*** "Retying the Burden," ***1967***; *The Sacred Canopy*; and III. "The Final Unburdening," 1970-1977 or "The Later Berger" or "The Return." Harvey describes Berger here as "unabashedly conservative." (p. 9)

E/. My division of Berger's work into four chronological periods. ***I.*** Period A, ***"1958-1963"***: *Noise of Solemn Assemblies*, *The Precarious Vision*, and *The Invitation to Sociology*, (1963). Here, Berger can be described as radical, iconoclastic, and demonstrating a quasi-neo-orthodoxy in his critique of cultural religion. Berger's sociological perspective in *The Invitation to Sociology* is equally supported by the sociology of Max Weber and the phenomenology of Alfred Schütz. (see p. 178 of *Invitation*) II. Period B, "1964-1969": *The Social Construction of Reality*, (1966); *The Sacred Canopy*, (1967); and *A Rumor of Angels*, (1969). During this fruitful period, Berger's utilization of sociology of knowledge is more pronounced than in the other periods. Also, he seems to especially focus on religion in this timespan. ***III.*** Period C, ***"1970-1978"***: *The Homeless Mind*, (1973); *Pyramids of Sacrifice*, (1974); and *Facing up to Modernity*, (1977). Political concerns dominate here particularly in terms of how secularization and modernization have impacted "Third world countries" and society in general. ***IV.*** Period D, ***"1979-1986"***: *The Heretical Imperative*, (1979); *Sociology Reinterpreted*, (1981); *The Other Side of God*, (1981); and *The Capitalist Revolution*, (1986). Political and economic concerns are tightly woven together with Berger's sustained study of the impact of secularization on societal structures. His theological preference in both Periods C and D "is the spirit of" classical liberal Protestantism, colorfully illustrated in *The Heretical Imperative*.

Appendix III

Gaede's Schematization of Berger's Terminology in The *Heretical Imperative*[1]

Methodological Approach	Substantive Conclusions: Orthodox	Substantive Conclusions: Heterodox
Inductive	(A) empirical evidence demonstrates traditional religious truth	(B) empirical evidence points to new religious understanding ("induction"--Berger)
Deductive	(C) traditional religious truth asserted a priori ("deduction"--Berger)	(D) nontraditional assumptions used to reinterpret religious meaning ("reduction"--Berger)

Gaede asks why Berger does not include into his typology an Inductive-Orthodox Approach. He answers his questions as follows: Since we live "in the age of the 'heretical imperative,'" Berger believes that "inductive-

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[1]Stan Gaede, "Review Symposium: Peter L. Berger's *The Heretical Imperative*," Chart taken from p. 182.

orthodoxy is a practical, if not logical, impossibility." (Gaede, Stan D.; Harrod, Harold L.; Miller, Donald; and Roof, Wade., contributors to "Review Symposium: Peter L. Berger's *The Heretical Imperative*" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 20 (June 1981), p. 183) In other words, modernity does not provide the individual with a sufficient plausibility structure to support an "orthodox interpretation of reality." Gaede finds this assumption problematic for two reasons: first, it does not allow for the "possibility of a sectarian response." Second, Gaede notes that the "comtemporary evangelical movement" qualifies for the inductive-orthodox method on the basis of two qualities: a) it holds to "orthodox Christian dogma" and b) "it asserts that its faith is empirically and experientially verifiable." (ibid) The sheer numbers associated with the evangelical movement are grounds enough for Gaede's surprise that Berger appears to ignore this methodological possibility of combining Induction with Orthodoxy.

Berger evidently appreciates Gaede's suggestion: "Gaede is quite right: Evangelicals claim both to have an inductive method (there is hardly a group in Christendom with as much emphasis on experience as characterizes Evangelicals) and this method leads them to make orthodox affirmations. Upon reflection I also had to concede that Gaede is right in his speculation as to why I 'missed' this category: It is not in accord with my own theological predilections. In sum: I plead guilty. This does not mean, needless to say, that I must revise my theological position. I do indeed doubt whether true induction leads to orthodoxy, Evangelical or other; theologically and philosophically, I find it pretty much inconceivable that human experience of the divine will, in the end, fit snugly into any historical orthodoxy. But qua phenomenological analyst of religion, I concur, I must take cognizance conceptually of the people who do so conceive." (Ibid., pp. 194-195)

Indeed, Berger could have pushed his doubt that "true induction" leads to orthodoxy, further. Gaede contends that the experience of being "born again" qualifies the evangelical for the methodological approach of induction. Upon closer inspection, however, this contention is dubious. The deductive approach (particularly with neo-orthodoxy) is also founded on an experience, the experience of renewed faith in the tradition which then becomes absolutized by the individual. Although the neo-orthodox spokesperson would deny any act of the will on their part to "believe once again," "against all odds," this necessity is clearly evident to the observer. While present Evangelical theological thought is divided between latter-day Calvinist and Arminian versions of the problem of "free will," an absolute status of validity is attached to the "born-again"

experience in both camps (with varying degrees). I contend, therefore, that evangelicals operate deductively rather than inductively *vis-à-vis* their religious experience.

Gaede is correct to note the primacy of experience in the evangelical mindset. What he fails to note is the qualitative difference between "hanging one's hat" on a once and for all experience of being born again typical of Evangelicals; and choosing to "hang one's hat" on the ongoing experience of everyday life interrupted from time to time with breaches or ruptures, whose function it is to transport the individual to a place where mundane categories of understanding are overturned and the "starry starry night" of Vincent Van Gogh dominates the horizon of one's consciousness.

I argue, therefore, that the proposed Induction-Orthodox approach is too close to that of the Deductive neo-orthodox to merit a separate category.

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