

The Normative Deficit of Modernity:
The Secularization Debate and the Weberian Legacy in Critical Theory*

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“Apart from some earlier attempts, it has been reserved in the main for our epoch to vindicate, at least in theory, the human ownership of treasures formerly squandered on heaven; but what age will have the strength to validate this right in practice and make itself their possessor?”

—G.W.F. Hegel, “The Positivity of the Christian Religion”*

Introduction: Secularization in Dispute

For most of the twentieth century philosophers and social theorists alike held fast with a priori certitude to what we might call the “classical” theory of secularization. It was a basic premise of this theory that in traditional society all precincts of experience were enveloped by a unifying schema—or what the sociologist Peter Berger called a “sacred canopy”—that furnished not only the human world but the entire cosmos with normative purpose and meaning. But with the breakdown of traditional society this sacred canopy stood exposed to unprecedented stress and eventually lost its cohesion. The religiously-derived charisma of prophets and priests underwent a process of routinization that reached its grim denouement in the late modern era, when political authority grounded in charisma and custom gave way to the impersonal mechanism of the legal-bureaucratic state. The religious world that was once populated by magicians and saints was slowly

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evacuated of its contents and left behind the demystified and mathematized realm of nature that became the object technological exploitation and scientific inquiry. In the classical theory of secularization these two aspects went together—social and political rationalization on the one hand, cognitive disenchantment on the other.

I have painted all of this in the light pastels of impressionism and have omitted the various details that once made the classical theory so compelling. But I want to begin these remarks by noting what has become by now altogether obvious for those of us who work at the interstices of history, philosophy, and political thought: Today this old theory of secularization is nearly defunct. It has few partisans and a growing number critics who fault it for a manifold of sins. Some complain of its necessitarianism, the implicit expectation that its patterns are destined to unfold. Others complain of its indifference to gender, since men and women have been subject to the strains of secularization in different ways: Women (by most measures) were the custodians of religious traditionalism whereas their male counterparts were more swiftly pulled into the currents of modernization that dissolved religious faith. Others—and this is commonplace today—have accused secularization theory of an Occidentalist bias, that it advertises as a universal process what was never much more than a stylized history of the Protestant West.¹ This last group claims that secularization theory ignores the distinctive cultural patterns and religious dynamics of the non-Christian world, and that its demand for a strict separation between religion and state belongs to the ideological arsenal of Western Empires who sought to justify geopolitical dominance with the language of enlightenment. Finally, there are sociologists (such as Rodney Stark and Peter Berger) who suggest that the theory of secularization depends on an unwarranted contrast between an earlier Age of Faith and a wholly secularized modernity. The problem with this contrast, they argue, is that it does not stand up to the historical evidence: traditional religiosity, they claim, was never as deep or powerful as the classical theory implied.²

Such complaints have conspired to put secularization theory on the defensive and they have encouraged the ascendant trend among sociologists who claim that secularization was never anything but an ideology: it was a *theory* in the bad sense, unsupported by the evidence and imposed from above by disbelieving intellectuals who wished to remake the world in their own image: Theorists without gods, preaching their

own godlessness. Most of all, however, the new skepticism has contributed to a political climate in which the implicit ideal of a fully secularized modernity is no longer seen as deserving our support. According to this view, any society that follows the path of secularization to its bitter end will eventually display a host of pathologies and general loss of moral-political direction. It is now commonplace to worry that modernity suffers from a deficit of normative resources, a deficit that may prove fatal to modern social life and can only be redressed if we turn back to the forgotten lessons of religious tradition. Today the thesis of a normative deficit has brought those on the political left and the right into an unlikely alliance. Both can agree that the liberal faith in rational argumentation is misplaced and that secularism may be unable to furnish the normative foundations that modernity demands.

Excursus on Casanova: Public Religion and Renormativization

This argument has been set forth with admirable clarity by José Casanova, and for this reason his claims merit special attention here. In *Public Religion in the Modern World*, Casanova differentiates between three theses in the classical theory of secularization. The first and major thesis was that of *functional differentiation*.³ Societal modernization led to the differentiation of discrete spheres of cognitive-and-social experience: state, economy, and science were separated from one another and developed their own distinctive modes of rationality. Religion, too, underwent a process of social differentiation and found itself consigned to a distinctively “religious” domain of life in which the religious believer could subscribe to special cognitive and moral norms that no longer enjoyed any comprehensive authority. Casanova notes that this differentiation thesis was often combined with two further “subtheses,” namely, a *decline-of-religion thesis* and a *privatization thesis*. According to the decline-of-religion thesis, the major process of functional differentiation had exposed religious belief to an unprecedented levels of rational scrutiny, and it seemed altogether plausible to assume that religion would continue to lose adherents as measured both by institutional indices and self-reported statements of practice and belief. According to the privatization thesis (associated most of all with Niklas Luhmann and Thomas Luckmann) religion was gradually losing its previous place of prominence in public-institutional life and many of the crucial roles

once fulfilled by organized public religion were increasingly played by secular institutions instead. As a consequence religion was changing from a public-institutional phenomenon into a privatized and optional affair of “self-expression” and “self-realization,” which Luckmann called “Invisible Religion.”⁴ To this argument Niklas Luhmann added the (Durkheimian) claim that modernized societies that achieve a certain level of functional differentiation will no longer require religion as the coordinating force of all social solidarity.⁵

Casanova disputes both the decline-of-religion subthesis and the privatization thesis, but on different grounds. His objections are as follows:

1. He rejects the decline-of-religion thesis because he believes that there is little empirical evidence to support it. “From a global perspective,” he writes, “since World War II most religions traditions in most parts of the world have either experienced some growth or maintained their vitality.”⁶ It is true that there has been a marked decline of religious belief in Western Europe. But it would appear that what Peter Berger has called “Eurosecularity” is the exception rather than the rule. Among sociologists and scholars in neighboring disciplines in the philosophy and the human sciences the classical theory of secularization retained its validity as long as it did in part because these were scholars who were themselves trained in European traditions of social theory and therefore generalized from their own exceptional circumstances.
2. He objects to the privatization thesis not on evidentiary but normative grounds. He agrees with Luhmann that functional differentiation may encourage a tendency toward privatization, and he also agrees that we can identify many cases in the modern world where religion has ceded its public role as a functional force of social solidarity to anonymous systems. However, the theory of privatization becomes “problematic,” he claims, when it is “applied in such a way that the thesis of privatization, from being a testable and falsifiable empirical theory of dominant historiographical trends, is turned into a prescriptive normative theory of how religious institutions ought to behave in the modern world.”⁷

The chief purpose of Casanova’s book is to argue that “the privatization of religion is an historical option” rather than an historical necessity.⁸ He suggests that “the theory of secularization should also be complex enough to account for the historical “contingency”

that there may be legitimate forms of “public” religion in the modern world, which have a political role to play which is not necessarily that of “positive” societal integration; that there may be forms of “public” religion which do not necessarily endanger modern functional differentiation; and that there may be forms of “public” religion which allow for the privatization of religion and for the pluralism of subjective religious beliefs.”⁹

This is a remarkable argument not least because it conflicts with our commonplace understanding of privatization as merely one of the many processes that fall under the general sociological heading of “differentiation.” Casanova finds it necessary to violate this commonplace understanding: although he affirms the general trend of differentiation, he nonetheless expresses some doubt as to the necessity of religious privatization. He does this in part because he thinks that the thesis of privatization reflects a concatenation of inherited biases that were built in to the classical theory of secularization. These include the bias in favor of “Protestant subjective forms of religion,” the bias in favor of “liberal” conceptions of politics and...the public sphere”.¹⁰ It should not surprise us, then, that in the specific case studies that comprise the more empirical chapters of his book Casanova is mostly interested in Catholic countries (Spain, Poland, Brazil, and Catholicism in the United States), whereas he devotes only one chapter to the case of evangelical Christianity, and in this latter case the example of the United States serves as a contrast to the example of American Catholicism. More importantly, however, Casanova is keen to push back against the implicitly normative message in secularization theory according to which the privatization thesis tells us not just how religious institutions *happen* to behave but also how they *ought to behave*.¹¹

Casanova calls attention to the phenomenon that he calls the “deprivatization” of modern religion for two reasons, sociological and normative: First, from a sociological perspective he wishes to contribute to the refinement or revision of secularization theory, salvaging those elements of the theory that remain valid while rejecting the privatization subthesis as biased or historically unwarranted. Second, from a normative perspective, he offers his own counter-thesis regarding how we *ought to behave*, insofar as he wishes to alert us to the constructive role that “public religion” might play in the modern world

when it challenges the functionalist and instrumentalist values that have come to dominate ostensibly secular domains of life (namely, in the economy and the state):

By deprivatization I mean the fact that religious traditions throughout the world are refusing to accept the marginal role which theories of modernity as well as theories of secularization had reserved for them. Social movements have appeared which either are religious in nature or are challenging in the name of religion the legitimacy and autonomy of the primary secular spheres, the state and the market economy.¹²

Casanova clearly believes that deprivatization in this sense may be a welcome development, because “religious institutions and organizations refuse to restrict themselves to the pastoral care of individual souls and continue to raise questions about the interconnections of private and public morality and the challenge the claims of the subsystems, particularly states and markets, to be exempt from extraneous normative considerations.”¹³ The deprivatization of religion can thereby contribute to what Casanova calls the “*renormativization* of the public economic and political spheres.”¹⁴

The Normative Deficit of Modernity

I have devoted some attention to Casanova’s argument not least because it offers one of the more thoughtful reflections on the controversial status of secularization theory today. It is especially welcome for the way in which it attempts to disentangle some of the various subthemes that often remain knotted together in contemporary debates over secularization. In what follows, however, I want to examine more closely the normative purposes that guide this argument, not because Casanova’s book is unique but rather because it is exemplary. It articulates what I take to be a new and widespread theme in modern social theory. The argument that religion might have the capacity for *renormativization* is plausible, I suggest, only if one has already accepted the view that modern society is afflicted with a certain deficit of moral and political resources.

To introduce my remarks, I should like to begin with some general observations on the contemporary political situation. We live in an era that has succumbed to a mood of pervasive skepticism regarding the legitimacy of secular life. Across the globe we see signs that the world is growing not less but *more* religious, and the forms of political

religion have grown increasingly robust. In the last third of the twentieth century the United States of America underwent a gradual shift in ideological orientation, as the newly revived phenomenon of evangelical Christianity began mobilize itself as a political movement and began to chip away at the Jeffersonian “wall of separation” between Church and state. Formerly secularist regimes such as modern-day Turkey, in which the Kemalist program of zealous secularization once commanded public allegiance, are now turning their backs on the secular ideal and seem poised to embrace something that increasingly resembles a theocracy. In the Middle East and in territories of Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Salafist movement known as the Islamic State (ISIS, or Dayesh) nourished the dream of establishing a new Caliphate that would impose an authoritarian and absolutist interpretation of Islam on diverse populations. In State of Israel, the old socialist ideal that inspired so many of its founders has given way to a spirit of bellicose nationalism and religious chauvinism that re-describes disputes over territory in the atavistic terms of divine election and messianic promise. In sub-Saharan Africa, Islamist extremists have terrorized local populations and have even captured their children, pressing them into armies for a self-declared holy war that has created a refugee crisis especially on the borders of Nigeria. In Myanmar, the Rohingya (an ethno-religious Muslim minority) have been the victims of a state-sponsored program of persecution that critics have termed a crime against humanity.

The dismaying fact is that this list is incomplete. It is also one-sided. Here I will offer a digression: We should not neglect to note that ostensibly *secularist* regimes can *also* adopt policies that are extremely hostile to religious minorities. In China, to take only one example, the Muslim Uighur minority has been the object of a massive, coercive, and state-sponsored campaign that involves Orwellian “reeducation” centers.¹⁵ In this essay, although I do not focus on the persecution of religious minorities by so-called “secular” states, this should not be taken to imply less concern. One difference, however, is noteworthy: Secular states that adopt selective and differential policies toward religious groups betray the secularist ideal of non-discrimination. Theocratic states, real or aspirational, do not profess such an ideal. When they persecute religious minorities, they honor their own discriminatory intentions.

The diminished prestige of secularist political forms is also reflected in contemporary social theory, which over the past three decades seems to have lost its confidence in enlightenment-derived norms of rational argumentation that were expected to furnish a common framework for secular democracy. This loss of confidence appears in different modalities in both liberal and in radical-left theoretical discourse. The Rawlsian ideal of political liberalism was supposed to secure an overlapping consensus for our life in common despite all differences in comprehensive doctrines, including religious doctrines. The Marxian ideal of human emancipation first emerged as a critique of religiously-inflected alienation: it was assumed that genuine freedom would not be possible if humanity did not overcome alienation in all of its forms, both religious and economic. Especially since 1989, however, a great many of these secularist theories have lost their prestige. A noteworthy sign of the times is the diminished interest in left-Marxist social theory and the rising enthusiasm for a “political theology” that often advertises itself as a leftist or emancipatory despite the irony that it takes its inspiration from the conservative revolutionary writings of Carl Schmitt. The turn to political theology strikes at the heart of progressive philosophies of history: it claims that it no political regime can emancipate itself from religiously-derived forms of authority since the very idea of sovereign decision is analogous to a *Rechtswunder* or “legal miracle.”¹⁶

Even within the modernist discourse of Frankfurt-School critical theory, it would be hard miss the emergence of a newly skeptical theoretical orientation that no longer places its confidence in the possibility of secularization. In her 2016 book, *The End of Progress*, Amy Allen seeks to “decolonize” the normative foundations of critical theory. She wishes to retain the notion of progress as a “moral-political imperative” even while she rejects any reconstructive narratives of history that would affirm the Enlightenment-derived idea of progress as a “fact.” Her arguments are directed chiefly against Jürgen Habermas, Axel Honneth, and Rainer Forst, in whose works she identifies what she takes to be an unwarranted commitment to a Eurocentric standard of historical progress. Taking on all three of these formidable theorists, she invokes the spirits of both Adorno and Foucault, from whom she borrows the critical instrument of a “problematizing genealogy.”¹⁷ For my purposes here I do not wish to dwell on the question of whether her critical efforts are successful, except to note briefly that if we disavow *any* concept of

factual historical progress it is not clear how would could celebrate the emancipatory achievements of the past (such as the abolition of child labor, Jewish emancipation, women's suffrage, the civil rights movement, and the decriminalization of homosexuality). The distinction—between progress as “imperative” and progress as “fact”—seems to leave us in a paradoxical position: It belongs to the logic of social action that we intervene in history to accomplish certain beneficial effects, but on pain of violating the stricture against historical progress we are immediately forbidden from recognizing those effects as beneficial once they are achieved. More relevant to my purposes here, however, it is worth noting that Allen makes virtually no mention of contemporary debates over religion.¹⁸ Her silence on this issue may strike us as surprising, since the imperative of secularization has obviously played a central and even paradigmatic role in the liberal-emancipatory understanding of history as a quasi-universal “learning process” at least since the eighteenth-century, when European *philosophes* directed much of their polemical ire against the social power of the Church. But it not hard to see that Allen's argument would no longer permit us to invoke secularization as a transcultural standard. The requirement that all peoples must tread the same path of enlightenment by freeing themselves from religion would seem to be a paradigmatic case of Eurocentric arrogance that critical theorists would surely want to abandon. Allen's critique of progress can therefore be seen as yet another sign of the growing disenchantment with the classical model of secularization.

No doubt the new climate of skepticism about secularization is due in part to the fact that social scientists failed to predict the astonishing rebirth of religious militancy at the turn of the millennium. The phenomena are various. In the United States, evangelical Christianity continues to grow, while the attacks of September 11th confronted Christian fundamentalists with their own radical mirror image. Meanwhile, the growth of Islamic militancy in the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa took even many specialists by surprise, suggesting that the inherited model of secularization needed to be revised if not wholly abandoned. It would be naïve to think that these political changes did not play at least some role in prompting social scientists and social theories to reconsider the validity of the secularization model. But it would be also misleading to imagine that the new wave of skepticism about secularization in social theory is a mere

reflection of changes in social reality. After all, one might have thought that the growth of religious militancy in all its forms would have only *encouraged* social theorists to adopt an even more muscular stand against the resurgence of religion and its intrusion into global politics. Surprisingly, however, this is not the case. Casanova's appeal to public religion as a resource of "renormativization" is only one instance a growing trend in social theory. Today a great many theorists seem to share the view that secular society is afflicted with a deficit of normativity for which religion may offer the only remedy.¹⁹

For the sake of convenience, we can characterize this view as a "political theology." This phrase, I should note, does not imply *any* allegiance to Carl Schmitt, whose distinctively unappealing style of irrationalist-authoritarian political thought represents only one possible (and extreme) variation on a broadly shared theme. There are political theologies of all political colors and persuasions, including the enlightened and emancipatory version of political theology associated with Johann Baptist Metz, the theologian who has contributed perhaps more than any other living representative of Christianity to combatting the legacy of political authoritarianism in Germany and has helped to keep alive the spirit of "anamnestic reason" and the memory of past suffering.²⁰ *By political theology I mean the general view that sees theological concepts as somehow necessary for the continued normative viability of our modern political life.* Elsewhere I have tried to distinguish between the two conjoined theses that inform this idea of political theology:

1. The thesis of a normative deficit: Modernity suffers from a fatal deficit in normative substance and thus cannot be expected to establish moral and political grounding of its own.
2. The thesis of religious plenitude: To compensate for its normative deficit, secular modernity must appeal to religion as the singular and privileged resource of moral-political instruction without which society cannot cohere.

Over the last decade I have spent some portion of my time trying to make sense of why these two theses have come to be so widely shared in contemporary social theory and philosophy.²¹ My general view is that they express (1) an unwarranted skepticism regarding the sources of normativity in non-religious society and (2) an exaggerated confidence in religion as a normative resource that is somehow uniquely equipped to

compensate for this normative deficit. Those who follow Casanova's example find themselves in a curious posture: they must apologetically re-describe public religion in the most idealized terms, even while the empirical evidence from the past and the present would seem to suggest that religion has imposed its normative insights upon the public world with truly baleful consequences whenever it has gained the power to do so, especially because its normativity comes entangled with absolutistic claims to metaphysical authority that are not easily harmonized with modern ideals of pluralism. Although I am by no means unsympathetic to religion, it seems to me altogether obvious that the secularization of the public sphere must be seen as a beneficial historical achievement that has been crucial for the protection of all citizens, especially for religious minorities and those who do not profess any religious faith. (Here I follow much of the argumentation laid out with exquisite precision by Cécile Laborde in her recent book, *Liberalism's Religion*.²²)

Within the confines of this paper, I will not pursue this line of legal-political argumentation any further. Instead I would only like to offer some genealogical reflections as to how the conjoined theses of political theology became so dominant a force in modern social theory and how they came to challenge the classical theory of secularization. My specific claim here is that we might best understand the continued force of this theme in social theory today if we cast a backward glance at Max Weber's contributions to the sociology of religion. For the rest of this paper I would like to a) reconstruct some of the salient themes in Weber's work that have contributed to the idea of a normative deficit of modernity; and b) offer a brief comment on an alternative understanding of religion that derives from the left-Hegelians (Feuerbach and Marx). By exploring the contrast between the Weberian and left-Hegelian understanding of secularization, I hope to offer just a few thoughts that may help us to move beyond the current theoretical impasse.

Weber's Sociology of Religion

First it will be helpful to recall the basic contours of Weber's own concept of secularization as it can be gleaned from the two vocation-lectures and the major studies in the sociology of politics and religion. According to Weber, religion once served as the

single-most powerful source of social solidarity. Traditional societies were bound together in their deference to a leader who was uniquely endowed with a charismatic power given to him by divine grace or *pneuma*. This power was transcendent to reason: the authority of the prophet was as unquestionable and inexplicable as the phenomenon of revelation itself. But over the course of history the same qualities of uniqueness and suprarational power that made charismatic leadership so authoritative also left it vulnerable to periodic crises. The death of a demigod or prophet exposes the community to the possibility of dissolution that can only be redressed by developing principles of succession for the transfer of charisma: the institution of hereditary monarchy represents a routinization (*Veralltäglicung*) of charisma and may even diminish its intensity though it also helps to secure its longevity. But monarchy itself eventually revealed a certain instability insofar as it still relied too much on the leader's personal preferences or psychological constitution. Even as traditionalistic leadership became the norm it became necessary to call upon an educated and professional stratum of official advisors and civil servants who could mediate between the leader and his subjects while it rationalized his dictates into a formal systems of law. This process of rationalization and formalization eventually outgrew the frameworks of traditional authority and developed into the autonomous structure of the modern bureaucracy in which nearly all elements of personal rule were reduced to a minimum. The modern state is not a phenomenon of charisma but a "machine."

A similar and closely related process of rationalization appears in Weber's major works on the sociology of religion. The normative resources of religion that once commanded absolute allegiance in the form of revelation and personal charisma gradually succumbed to a formalizing process and began to shed all qualities of the miraculous. According to Weber this process was far less pronounced in the East than in the West. Confucianism, for instance, resisted the trend of rationalization insofar as it sought to preserve the entire world as an "enchanted garden" (*Zaubergarten*).²³ But even in his comparative sociology of the major world religions it was clear that Weber was chiefly interested in understanding the distinctive features of "Occidental rationalization." Already in ancient Judaism this process became visible when the phenomenon of charismatic prophecy was sublimated into rabbinic law. Here Weber detected the

beginnings of a process of formalization and rationalization in religious morality that would reach its apogee in the early-modern era. The intensified Protestant emphasis on interior faith and the new thesis of doctrinal justification through scripture alone challenged both the institutional authority of the Church and its sacerdotal agents. Especially in northwestern Europe the priesthood lost its quasi-magical role as the privileged intermediary between the laity and the divine.

It is only at this historical juncture that adherents of Christianity suffered the consequences of a second fall: they were expelled from their own enchanted garden and were condemned to realities of a “disenchanted world.” According to Weber Calvinism embodies the disenchantment of religion in its final and most extreme form: in its teaching the divine spirit has become inaccessible to the believer, and all facts of individual grace or divine election remain completely unknown. It is at this point that Weber discerns an elective affinity between economic conduct and spiritual need: a subtle modification that was belatedly introduced by Calvinist preachers allowed for the idea that one’s wealth might serve as a sign of divine favor, provided one pursued this wealth as one’s divinely-sanctioned “vocation” and with the spirit of “this-worldly asceticism” that was suitable for a Christian believer. This modification had far-reaching consequences both for European Christendom and for the development of early-modern capitalism: The medieval Church had seen the pursuit of profit as *cupiditas*, and even Martin Luther despite his many reforms could not overcome the traditionalistic verdict against wealth. But in Calvinism and related movements the methodical and rationalist conduct that was most beneficial for capitalist success is now infused with spiritual meaning. With this new principle the centuries-old animosity between Christianity and economic success comes to a close. Although it was still impossible for the camel to pass through the eye of the needle, the rich man could now hope to enter heaven.

Weber’s narrative does not conclude on this note of reconciliation. As the capitalist economy slowly but inexorably transformed European society it began to outgrow the ethos of early-modern Christianity. It developed its own machine-like patterns of cognitive and institutional rationalism that could function independently of any spiritual supports, and once religious principles lost their economic relevance the old Calvinist idea of labor as a spiritual calling could survive only as a ghost. In the context

of a fully rationalized modern society that now ran on its own system-immanent economic and bureaucratic imperatives, religion as such was now condemned to the sphere of the private and the “irrational.” Without the consolation of any transcendent meaning the modern individual could experience the demands of society as a kind of “steel-hard casing” from which there was no respite or promise of escape. The very notion of “meaning” was likely to die out at its roots.

These are the general themes of Weber’s narrative of social rationalization and world-disenchantment. It should be noted that Weber saw the very same pattern both in politics (the routinization of charisma) and in religion (the loss of spiritual meaning). These two major dimensions of his narrative worked in tandem with other studies — namely concerning the rationalization of law and the economy, but also extending into aesthetic phenomena such as architecture and music—all of which create the impression that secularization is somehow an irresistible and unidirectional historical process that leaves no sphere of life unchanged. But it goes without saying that Weber was not a teleological thinker: his concept of secularization was little more than a stylized heuristic device that could assist him in the task of historical understanding.

Since Weber abjured all necessitarian teleology, he did not deny the possibility that, even in the disenchanted world, it still might be possible for individuals to dedicate themselves to transcendent purposes that had no relevant function in the system-imperatives of modern society. He granted that a given individual who was not able to bear the fate of the times “like a man” might still seek comfort in religion and that such a commitment if not disingenuous merited some measure of praise. He also spoke of scholarship as a “calling” that required both patience and unwavering devotion. Most important of all, Weber also allowed for a similar possibility in politics: an effective leader was one who combined in his temperament an attitude of sober realism with a passionate commitment to an ideal. The man who has a genuine calling for politics must of course understand that it is not the place for spiritual enthusiasm: it demands “the strong and slow boring of hard boards.” But a true statesman must also at some point decide to remain faithful to the “god or demon” of his self-chosen cause. It is the predicament of a disenchanted age, however, values no longer enjoy the appearance of objectivity: the former unity of fact and norm has fractured into a condition of “modern

polytheism.” The politician no less than the scholar must simply *decide* upon the ideals that will guide him in his work. Although this ideal of a calling is distinctively modern insofar as it lacks any objective foundation and burdens the actor alone with this decision Weber nonetheless described it in quasi-religious terms that recalled Martin Luther’s statement at the Diet of Worms: “Here I stand, I can do no other.”

Some readers might quarrel with my claim that Weber subscribed to any formal concept of secularization. Peter Ghosh, for example, in his recent study of *Max Weber and the Protestant Ethic*, writes that secularization was a term about which Weber had “reservations” and which he “abandoned in his religious writings after 1912.”²⁴ The sociologist Peter Berger goes even further than this and declares that Weber “did not use the concept of secularization.”²⁵ But Berger is simply mistaken, and even Ghosh in his superb book may overstate the point. The fact is that Weber continues to use the term “secularization” even after 1912, and given the pervasive importance of religious sociology to Weber’s project it makes little sense to isolate the religious writings from the rest of his work. The term appears multiple times in (the posthumously published) *Economy and Society* when Weber is addressing general problems in the history of law and economics. Quite often he uses “secularization” in its original and technical-legal sense to designate the state’s appropriation of property that originally belonged to the church. In one exemplary passage from the section on the sociology of law, Weber notes that in ancient law the temple’s belongings were considered the property of the state. He writes of “secularization of the cult by the polis [*der Säkularisation des Kults durch die Polis*].”²⁶ Sometimes, however, Weber draws back from the details to characterize the political expropriation of church property as only one component of a more compressive historical process that touched upon all domains of a given culture. He writes for instance of “the substantive secularization of Roman life [*Die materiale Säkularisierung des römischen Lebens*]” that in tandem with the political weakness of the priesthood “turned the latter into an instrument for the purely formalistic and legalistic treatment of religious matters.”²⁷ Elsewhere he notes that military conflict ranks among “the most important factors which effected the secularization of thinking [*die Säkularisierung des Denkens*] as to what should be valid as a norm [*über das Geltensollende*]” and war has

thus helped to further “the emancipation of social thought from magically guaranteed traditions [*speziell seine Emanzipation von der magisch garantierten Tradition*].”²⁸

Finally, in the 1906 essay on Protestant sects in North America, Weber notes that the rise of “secular [*weltlichen*] clubs and societies” that recruit members by ballot should be seen as “the product of a process of secularization [*Säkularisationsprozess*],” since they derive their importance in American society from earlier religious-sectarian prototypes.²⁹ He finds these clubs of special importance since membership serves as a sign of social virtue and economic reliability. Their historical transformation—from sect to clubs—reveals what Weber describes as *‘the steady progress of the characteristic process of “secularization,” to which in modern times all phenomena that originated in religious conceptions succumb.’*³⁰

Though many more such examples could be marshaled as evidence, it will suffice to say that Weber did subscribe to a concept of secularization. If he sometimes placed quotation marks around the term it was not to signal his dissent but only his scrupulous wish to distinguish between secularization the narrow meaning of legal expropriation, and secularization in the capacious and more stylized sense as an historical process that can be charted across millennia. When Weber uses secularization in this second sense, it denotes a empirically verifiable pattern whereby holistic value schemes have lost their comprehensive authority such that modern social actors are confronted with a loss of normativity and meaning.

A Left-Hegelian Alternative

The foregoing excursus on the concept of secularization in Weber’s sociology of religion suggests that, for Weber, secularization can be broadly understood as an historical process that results in various social pathologies. Chief among these are: a) a specific loss of normativity and b) a general loss of “meaning” (*Sinn*). Weber is led to this grim conclusion only because he begins his social-historical inquiries in world religion with the assumption that both “normativity” and “meaning” first appear within the social horizons of religious life. Although Weber does allow for the *possibility* of alternative modes of both normativity and meaning that do not depend on religion, he sees these alternatives as comparatively weak or surrogate forms that do not wholly succeed in

furnishing the comprehensive frameworks of morality and meaning that traditional societies once derived from religion. It follows that with the gradual attenuation of the originally religious forms of morality and meaning, modern societies are confronted with unprecedented questions as to how to conduct life in a moral and meaningful fashion. Weber's general answer is that the more "modern" a society becomes, the more it will find itself locked into rationalized systems of economic and legal-bureaucratic procedure that operate with a machine-like indifference to all questions of morality and meaning. The system-imperatives of predictability and functionality tend to displace all such concerns and they survive, if they survive at all, only at the "irrational" margins of social experience (in, for example, privatized religiosity, eroticism, and aestheticism).

In reflecting on the significance of Weber's legacy for modern social theory, the question we must ask ourselves is whether we might avoid his verdict regarding the normative deficit of modernity if we refuse to accept his starting premise, namely, that both normativity and meaning (in the strong sense) originate with religion and more specifically with the so-called "salvation religions" to which he assigns the primary role as sources of normativity. Here I would like to suggest that we should consider the rather different perspective on the pathogenesis of modernity that we find in the left-Hegelian tradition of social theory (viz. David Strauss, Feuerbach, Marx). The notable difference in this tradition is that the salvation religions are not understood as the primary sources of normativity whose historical withdrawal must leave inhabitants of modern society with a sense of moral-political loss. Rather, the salvation religions are understood as *derivative* and *alienated* expressions of a human normativity that have historically presented themselves in the illusory guise of a non-human transcendence. These alienated expressions of normativity must be reclaimed from their appearance as extramundane powers and must be restored to the mundane sphere from which they were born. Only if they are recognized and subjected to rational validation as thoroughly human can these sources have the possibility of contributing to the creation of a fully human life without social pathologies and illusions.

In *The Essence of Christianity* (1841) Ludwig Feuerbach fastens his critical attention on the concept of God, which he interprets as the alienated expression of purely human capacities: "God," he writes, "is the most subjective, the ownmost essence of the

human being, but set apart from and beyond the human being [Gott ist das *ab-* und *ausgesonderte* subjektivste, eigenste Wesen des Menschen].” Because this human essence appears only as something separate, it follows that the human being sees all that is good as deriving originally from God. Thus the human being “cannot conduct himself *from himself* [kann er nicht *aus sich* handeln].” When humanity locates the sources of its own normativity in a metaphysically independent agent this is seen by Feuerbach as a cognitive error: it involves the *externalization* and illusory separation of the human subject’s own essence. Here Feuerbach clearly builds on a Kantian premise: The human being can experience itself as a moral agent only if it understands itself to be acting on the basis of norms that it prescribes *to itself*. It follows that human freedom must require the cognitive overcoming of the illusory externalization that first led us to imagine that our norms were somehow derived from an extramundane and non-human source:

The more subjective, the more human God is the more man exteriorizes his subjectivity, his humanity, because God is in reality the exteriorized self of man which he, however, reappropriates.³¹

The most relevant feature of this argument for my purposes here is that Feuerbach does not share the Weberian view that normativity in its “strong” form has its sources in religious transcendence, or, more specifically in the salvation religions that imagine God as an entity that is separate from and in some metaphysical sense “beyond” the human sphere. Instead, Feuerbach considers this notion of transcendent religious normativity as a cognitive error that has inhibited us from understanding ourselves as moral agents. He seems to recognize that the story of transcendent normativity has played a powerful role in the history of religion. But he seems to regard it as a *detour* and misunderstanding that we must overcome if we are ever to experience ourselves as fully human. Notice the most crucial point here, which is that Feuerbach (unlike Hegel), does not seem to regard the history of religion as necessary for the development of normativity. On this crucial point it should be admitted that Feuerbach remains vague and occasionally inconsistent. He writes, for example, that “every advance in religion is therefore a deeper self-knowledge.”³² But he contradicts this developmentalist premise when he announces that in Christianity the doctrine of divine love is really nothing more than an “orientalism”

that must be philosophically dissolved. The teaching of divine love, he writes, “in plain speech means [simply that] the highest is the love of man.” This theory suggests that the history of religion has only inhibited humanity from recognizing the truth of its condition. For Van Harvey this is a major difference between Feuerbach and Hegel: “The Hegelian developmental paradigm tends to view theology as necessary for the full development of self-consciousness, whereas Feuerbach’s position would seem to be that it would have been better for humanity had theology never emerged at all.”³³

The left-Hegelian critique of religion as the alienation of humanity’s species-being remains a central theme for the young Marx. But where Feuerbach saw the externalization of human agency into God as primarily a cognitive error, Marx sees the externalization of human agency as primarily a practical problem that manifests itself in the material scenario of the laboring process itself. In both cases, cognitive and practical, the act of externalization results in a separation from the human being’s experience of itself as an agent. This result is an experience of alienation (*Entfremdung*) that reaches a greater degree of intensity as the practical process unfolds. In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* Marx makes the comparison with religion explicit:

The more the worker spends himself, the more powerful becomes the alien world of objects which he creates over and against himself, the poorer he himself – his inner world – becomes, the less belongs to him as his own. It is the same in religion. The more man puts into God, the less he retains in himself.³⁴

For Marx as for Feuerbach, the process of externalization is mistaken insofar as the human being loses sight of itself as the author of its actions. When God is imagined to be Providence, i.e., when God is understood as the ultimate source of human history, then humanity cannot experience itself as the agent of its own history and it can no longer experience itself as free. In a similar fashion, when the objects of labor are imagined to have value, then human laborers cannot experience themselves as the sources of value and their sense of themselves as having the potential for freedom is accordingly diminished. In a religious world the human being is prevented from recognizing his “ownmost being” (Feuerbach); in a capitalist world based on private property the laborer is prevented from realizing his species being as a material and sensuous creature. Marx

goes much further than Feuerbach insofar as he does not regard alienation as merely a cognitive error. In both cases alienation means that the human being “cannot conduct himself *from himself* [kann er nicht *aus sich* handeln].” But for Marx the overcoming of the error would also entail an overcoming of social and structural factors that contribute to alienation. Such an overcoming would entail far more than a mere emancipation in consciousness; it would mean nothing less than “the emancipation of the senses.”³⁵

Tentative Conclusions

The left-Hegelian alternative as I have sketched it above refuses to see religion as the historically unique or indispensable source of normativity and meaning. Unlike the Weberian narrative, it continues to place its confidence in secular modernity as an *independent* domain from which we can draw the norms and existential significance we require for our life in common. But the left-Hegelians make a further claim that deserves attention here: they do not merely suggest that secular modernity *can* suffice as a source of normativity. They also suggest that modernity *has to suffice* as this source and that *no other source could be seen as valid*. For Feuerbach as for Marx, it belongs to the very phenomenology of religion that it must contradict our experience of freedom, since it inhibits us from understanding ourselves as the authors of our own actions. As I noted above, Feuerbach’s critique of religion as alienation expresses what is essentially a Kantian principle: The only norms that we can affirm are those for which we can understand ourselves as authors.³⁶ But any continued dependency on religion as the privileged source of normativity would violate this self-understanding. It would introduce into our moral and political deliberations an appeal to an authorship that is in a very important sense *not our own*.

It could be that this Kantian principle remains an unrealized ideal even for social theorists who proudly identify with the emancipatory project of the Enlightenment. In his 1988 essay, “Themes in Postmetaphysical Thinking,” Jürgen Habermas wrote of the “curious dependence” [*Abhängigkeit*] of secular philosophy on religious sources of normativity. He entertained the possibility that “Philosophy, even in its postmetaphysical form, will be able neither to replace nor to repress religion as long as religious language is the bearer of a semantic content that is inspiring and even *indispensable*

[*unaufgebbare*], for this content eludes (for the time being [*vorerst*]?) the explanatory force of philosophical language and continues to resist translation into reasoning discourses.”³⁷ Habermas has explained that it is possible to redeem the normative contents of religion by means of a rationalizing practice of translation, and he claims that this practice permits us to defend the rational validity of our norms even while we accept their religious genesis. Genesis and validity would seem to remain distinct. One might still ask, however, if the notion of ongoing “dependency” is wholly compatible with a social theory that wishes to sustain its allegiance to the Kantian principle of autonomy. Rainer Forst, for example, has raised precisely this concern in what he calls a certain “ambivalence” in Habermas’s recent arguments on religion in post-secular society. According to Habermas, religion is supposed to help us to keep awake “an awareness of the violations of solidarity throughout the world.” But according to Forst, the notion of a continued dependency on religious sources of motivation may come into conflict with the conception of *morality as autonomy*:

even if this awareness may have religious sources, as a moral awareness it must distance itself from distortions and exclusions that could stem from religious interpretations and appropriations. An autonomous morality is indispensable for such a process of secularization and, *if this morality lacked motivating power of its own, it would not be capable of such autonomy*. [my emphasis]³⁸

The problem here can be posed in Kantian terms: Once we have allowed for the possibility that our dependency on religious sources of normativity could remain a permanent feature of modern society, and if we entertain the thought these resources are truly *indispensable*, can we nonetheless commit ourselves to the ideal of our “emergence from our self-incurred immaturity [*Unmündigkeit*]?”³⁹ What remains to the distinction between genesis and validity if the social practice of validation remains forever dependent on religious sources of instruction?

I will not presume to answer these questions. But I would like to close this paper by noting that the thesis of a normative deficit in secular society has very old roots that reach deep into our most ancient religious teachings. In the *Psalms* (39: 4-7) we are told

that humanity itself is “as nothing” and that any hope for meaning or consolation must come from a precinct beyond the bounds of finite life.

Show me, O Lord, my life’s end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my life. You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man’s life is but a breath. Selah. Man is a mere phantom as he goes to and fro: He bustles about, but only in vain; he heaps up wealth, not knowing who will get it. But now, Lord, what do I look for? My hope is in you.

Max Weber famously described himself as “religiously unmusical.” But it is not hard to see that in ascribing all normativity and meaning to the salvation-religions he helped to reconfirm religion’s own self-image as the privileged source of hope in a world that will otherwise be condemned to meaninglessness. The pessimistic worldview of the modern sociologist who cannot find any intrinsic sources of hope in secular society recapitulates, in a tragic mode, the old topos of the religious believer who placed all trust in God alone.

The left-Hegelian tradition offers an alternative to this pessimistic verdict on modern society. It tries to locate sources of normativity and meaning *within* modern society itself. We should of course recognize certain points of agreement between the left-Hegelian and Weberian understanding of modern society. For Marx just as for Weber, the present structures of late-modern capitalism do not allow for an experience of genuine self-authorship and collective freedom. When Marx describes the laborer’s predicament under capitalism he portrays an experience that is no less impoverished and unfree than that which Weber portrays at the end of his famous study of the *Protestant Ethic*. Like Weber, Marx also recognizes that bourgeois society has produced grave distortions in personal and collective experience. Even our understanding of ourselves as sensuous and embodied beings has been compromised by the disposition that Weber characterized as “this-worldly asceticism.” Finally, like Weber, Marx was convinced that bourgeois society had swept aside all traces of the miraculous when it destroyed the last vestiges of the *ancien régime*. “All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of

life, and his relations with his kind.” These memorable lines anticipate what Weber later called “the disenchantment of the world.”

But Marx differed from Weber on at least one crucial point. He still believed in the possibility that we might realize our humanity and freedom in the future, while Weber contemplated the meaninglessness of the present with the calmness and fatalism of a modern stoic. Marx did not capitulate to the thesis of the normative deficit of modernity, because he held fast to the thought there is still some latent normative content to modern social reality itself that can be mobilized to transform it *from within*. Habermas captures this very same thought in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* when he alerts us to the significance of the notion of the “modern age” or *Neuzeit*, which, over the course of the eighteenth century, had acquired “a new meaning that remains valid down to our own day.” According to Habermas, Hegel’s philosophy contained this crucial lesson. “Modernity,” Habermas writes, “can and will no longer borrow the criteria by which it takes its orientation from the models supplied by another epoch; *it has to create its normativity out of itself*.”⁴⁰

ENDNOTES

* As quoted by Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. (MIT Press), 7-8. Quoted from *On Christianity. Early Theological Writings by Hegel*. (New York, 1948), 159.

¹ See, e.g., Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); Saba Mahmood, *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015); Joan Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton, 2010); and, more recently, Scott, *Sex and Secularism* (Princeton, 2017).

² In a 1997 interview, for example, Peter Berger observed that, “Uncticial nostalgia for past ages of faith being out of place in religious studies, let us note at once that there is no good evidence that a high level of spirituality had generally been reached by the mass of mankind in past times.... Nor does [anthropology] teach that modern times show a decline from ancient standards of piety.” Peter Berger, “Epistemological Modesty: An Interview with Peter Berger.” *Christian Century*, 114 (1997): 972-975; quote from 978; as quoted in Rodney Stark, “Secularization, R.I.P.” *Sociology of Religion* Vol. 60, No. 3 (Autumn, 1999), pp. 249-273

³ José Casanova, *Public Religion in the Modern World* (Chicago, 1994), hereafter Casanova, PR

⁴ Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1967); the English text was based on (but not translated from) an earlier, German study, Luckmann, *Das Problem der Religion in der modernen Gesellschaft* (Freiburg: Rombach, 1963). For a recent comment and modification of Luckmann’s thesis, see Hubert Knoblauch, “Europe and Invisible Religion,” *Social Compass* 50, 3 (2003): 267-274.

⁵ These three major components of secularization theory are summarized in Casanova, PR, 19-39.

⁶ Casanova, PR, 26.

⁷ Casanova, PR, 38.

⁸ Casanova, PR, 39.

⁹ Casanova, PR, 39.

¹⁰ Casanova, PR, 39.

¹¹ Casanova, PR, 38; my emphasis.

¹² Casanova, PR, 5.

¹³ Casanova, PR, 5.

¹⁴ Casanova, PR, 6; my emphasis.

¹⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/04/us-accuses-china-of-using-concentration-camps-ughur-muslim-minority>

¹⁶ For the idea of a *Rechtswunder*, see Carl Schmitt, *Politische Theologie. Vier Kapitel zur Lehre von der Souveränität* (Berlin [1922] Duncker & Humblot, 1996). For a critique, see Hans Kelsen, “Gott und Staat,” *Logos* 11, 261-284.

¹⁷ Amy Allen, *The End of Progress* (Columbia University Press, 2016): 190. On the idea of a “problematizing genealogy” see Colin Koopman, *Genealogy as Critique: Foucault and the Problems of Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

¹⁸ Even when discussing the history of colonial expansion, Allen characterizes the European view of the colonial subaltern as “racialized.” This characterization may too strongly underplay the role of religious domination and the theocratic-imperialist ambitions in the history of early modern European colonization. Allen fails to mention that in nearly every case of early-modern expansion Europeans looked upon colonial subjects only partly in “racial” terms (though one must use this modern term advisedly) and rather more often in explicitly *religious* terms, seeing subjects in the ‘New World’ as non-Christians or pagans who had to be redeemed from religious falsehood. See Allen, *The End of Progress*, 18-21 and *passim*. On the syndrome of racial and religious categories that helped to underwrite early-modern European expansion, see Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

¹⁹ Criticism of secularization is also the prominent theme in Brad Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge, MA, 2012); Alister Chapman, John Coffey, and Brad Gregory, eds., *Seeing Things Their Way: Intellectual History and the Return of Religion* (Notre Dame, 2009).

²⁰ See, e.g., Johann Baptist Metz, “Amamnestic Reason: A Theologian’s Remarks on the Crisis of the *Geisteswissenschaften*” in Axel Honneth, Thomas McCarthy, Claus Offe, and Albrecht Wellmer (eds.)

Cultural-Political Interventions in the Unfinished Project of Modernity. Barbara Fultner, trans. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992): 189-196.

²¹ See, e.g., Gordon, "The Place of the Sacred in the Absence of God: Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*" *The Journal of the History of Ideas*. Vol. 69, No. 4 (October, 2008), 647-673. Gordon, "Critical Theory between the Sacred and the Profane," *Constellations*. Vol 23, No. 4 (May, 2016): 466-481, also in German as Gordon, "Kritische Theorie zwischen Sakralen und Profane" *WestEnd. Neue Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*. 1 (2016): 3-34. Also see Gordon, "Secularization, Genealogy, and the Legitimacy of the Modern Age: Remarks on the Löwith-Blumenberg Debate" in *The Journal of the History of Ideas*. Volume 80, N. 1 (January, 2019): 147-170. For a simplified statement, see my essay, "Religion and Critical Theory" in *The Routledge Companion to the Frankfurt School*. Espen Hammer, Axel Honneth, and Peter E. Gordon, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2018): 514-527.

²² Cécile Laborde, *Liberalism's Religion*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017).

²³ Weber, *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*. Hans H. Gerth, trans. (New York: The Free Press, 1951), 227.

²⁴ Peter Ghosh, *Max Weber and the Protestant Ethic: Twin Histories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 214), 270.

²⁵ Peter Berger, *Sehnsucht nach Sinn. Glauben in einer Zeit der Leichtgläubigkeit*. (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 1994): 34. For a corrective see Wolfgang Schluchter, *Die Entzauberung der Welt. Sechs Studien zu Max Weber*. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), esp. 14n.44.

²⁶ Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* [WuG], 443; English, *Economy and Society*, 714.

²⁷ Max Weber, WuG, 462; *Economy and Society*, 796.

²⁸ ES, 771; translation modified. WuG, 409: *Von den Mächten, welche die Säkularisierung des Denkens über das Geltensollende, speziell seine Emanzipation von der magisch garantierten Tradition, befördern, ist eine der stärksten die kriegerische Umwälzung* [Section §2: "Die Formcharakter des objektiven Rechts"].

²⁹ From Max Weber, "The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism," 302-322; quote from 311. German from Max Weber: *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*. Band 1, Tübingen, 1986. Erstdruck der ersten Fassung unter dem Titel »Kirchen und Sekten« in: *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 50. Jg., Nr. 102 vom 13.4.1906, und Nr. 104 vom 15.4.1906. Erstdruck der zweiten Fassung unter dem Titel: »Kirchen und Sekten in Nordamerika. Eine kirchen- und sozialpolitische Skizze« in: *Die Christliche Welt, Evangelisches Gemeindeblatt für Gebildete aller Stände*. 20. Jg., Marburg (Verlag der Christlichen Welt), Nr. 24 vom 14.6.; Nr. 25 vom 21.6.1906. Erstdruck der vorliegenden, dritten Fassung in: *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, Bd. I, Tübingen (Mohr Siebeck), S. 207-236.

³⁰ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the „Spirit“ of Capitalism*. Peter Baehr and Gordon C. Wells, trans. (Penguin Books, 2002), 307. It should be noted that this Penguin version is based on the 1905 edition. In the German original, Weber wrote of „...das stetige Fortschreiten jenes charakteristischen »Säkularisations«-Prozesses, dem solche aus religiösen Konzeptionen geborene Erscheinungen in moderner Zeit überall verfallen.“ Quoted from Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, Bd. I, Tübingen (Mohr Siebeck), S. 207-236.

³¹ „Je subjektiver, je menschlicher Gott ist, desto mehr entäußert der Mensch sich seiner Subjektivität, seiner Menschheit, weil Gott an und für sich sein entäußertes Selbst ist, welches er aber doch zugleich sich wieder aneignet.“ Quoted from Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums*, ch. 2.

³² Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 13; *Christentum*, 47. As quoted in Van A. Harvey, *Feuerbach and the Interpretation of Religion* (Cambridge, 1995), 121.

³³ Van A. Harvey, *Feuerbach and the Interpretation of Religion*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

³⁴ Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, "Estranged Labour. XXII."

³⁵ Marx on the emancipation of the senses: "Die Aufhebung des Privateigentums ist daher die vollständige Emanzipation aller menschlichen Sinne und Eigenschaften; aber sie ist diese Emanzipation grade dadurch, daß diese Sinne und Eigenschaften menschlich, sowohl subjektiv als objektiv, geworden sind."

³⁶ Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity*. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

³⁷ Habermas, "Themes in Postmetaphysical Thinking," in *Postmetaphysical Thinking. Philosophical Essays*. William Mark Hohengarten, trans. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992); 51; from the German, (Suhrkamp, 1988); 60. My emphasis on "indispensable."

³⁸ Rainer Forst, “Religion and Toleration from the Enlightenment to the Post-Secular Era: Bayle, Kant, and Habermas,” Ch. 5 in *Normativity and Power: Analyzing Social Orders of Justification*. Ciaran Cronin, trans. (Oxford University Press, 2017), 77-103; quote from 103, my emphasis.

³⁹ Immanuel Kant, “Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?” in Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, translated and edited by Mary J. Gregor. (Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁴⁰ Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. (MIT Press), 7; emphasis in original.