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A Sociological Prelude in Theological Notations: Minor and Major*

Abstract: This paper explores trivial or minor issues of body parts and relics and the major matter of evil. These incongruities offer a means of reflecting on the relationships between sociology and theology as re-set by the advent of postsecularity and the fears of Benedict XVI concerning the dictatorship of relativism. Efforts to resolve these incongruities draw attention to metaphors and the limits of sociological rhetoric in handling matters pertaining to theology. A means of overcoming these dilemmas is to be found in the musical explorations of Weber who offers a way of coming to terms with the irruptive spectres of postsecularity.

Keywords: sociology; theology; postsecularity; trivia; evil

Such is the Olympian status accorded to Weber that many of his metaphors and phrases have come down to sociology as if unalterable and carved in stone. One such phrase is his comment that he was 'unmusical' in religious matters. This reflected not so much a rejection of religious sensibilities, but a singular incapacity, in spite of his intentions otherwise to feel these. In such matters, Weber felt himself a 'cripple', but one whose sociology of religion assumed 'the ineradicable demand for a theodicy' (Radkau 2009: 532–3). His heirs in sociology have converted this plight into an injunction, to be deaf to religious feelings. Given his extensive knowledge of theology and Biblical studies, Weber might have been surprised at this odd misunderstanding. The outcome was to render unreadable musical scores whose notations serviced the reflexive demands for understanding religion as set in theology. It was as if sociologists could read the scores but not play them, lest what they heard had deceived them. All notes were deemed the same: minor or major. The incapacity to harmonise these into a sociological tune has been ordained as a disciplinary virtue; to do otherwise is to be profoundly 'unsociological'.

Forming the hinterland of a study, *Postsecularity and Sociology: the Issue of Divine Irruptions* (Flanagan forthcoming), this essay plays with the minor, matters of trivia such as body parts and their remains and a more major issue: evil. These two sit incongruously, striking discordant notes which petition for some reconciliation in

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some form, perhaps by reference to the music. It can stand as an option of discord or harmony in ways that percolate into sociological understandings. If Simmel was deeply influenced in his sociology by Rembrandt (2005) what is the score for a similar quickening of the spirit in sociology if the realm is of music? The interconnection posited points in the direction of matters to be pursued elsewhere, those pertaining to the divisions within sociology between the ambitions of Durkheim for a sociodicy and those of Weber, of capitulation to a gloomy theodicy. The minor and major can be conjoined around issues of salvation, a pressing anxiety for Weber, but in ways which re-cast the competitive relationships between sociology and theology, where one becomes a form of the other. Seeking a mutually between both is an ongoing project (Tester 2013).

To an important extent, with his concerns with the dictatorship of relativism and the rise of aggressive secularisation in Western Europe, Benedict XVI has opened new vistas for that intractable debate between sociology and theology. A further expansion of possibility has also arisen over the advent of postsecularity. It captures a well-disguised doubt over secularisation and its much publicised proclamations that religion has melted away in modernity. In the present state of affairs, postsecularity would pertain to Islam, the religion of return and not Christianity, for as Williams, the former (Anglican) Archbishop of Canterbury, indicated, English society 'is post-Christian in the sense that habitual practice for most of the population is not taken for granted' (*The Sunday Telegraph* 27th April 2014). His comment relates to a reluctance amongst the English to describe themselves as inhabiting a 'Christian nation'.

Even though the contributions of Christianity to the shaping of history, of law, culture and politics are recognised (reluctantly) the theological tenets of the religion are decidedly not, most especially when they clash with the sacred and absolute tenets of identity, particularly in matters pertaining to the sexual. Much political effort is made to suggest that in the context of equality, religion is decidedly not *primus inter pares*. It is against this background that another score is sought, perhaps one annunciating the unfinished business of religious belief whose notes are to be found in postsecularity. It marks the return of religion in some spectral form. What comes seems to irrupt on an unsuspecting landscape. The source is mysterious for what comes emerges from *outside* the social as against by contrast something that erupts internally in a volcanic manner.

Sociology towards Theology: the State of Affairs

Even though it claims to be the oldest discipline of the humanities, theology represents a frontier over which sociology is reluctant to pass. Travelling to that border seems a lonely business with few fellow travellers for such journeying (Flanagan 1986). One companion has been the English sociologist, David Martin, but he too voices unease about such travels. He wrote of the concerns 'of a sociologist working back and forth over the dangerous no man's land between sociology and theology…' (2002: 5). Seeking a mutuality of understanding between both disciplines seems a hopeless

exercise; each feels compromised by the other; and what emerges is atypical to both. Within each discipline, no safe passports for such journeying are to be found.

For most of its practitioners, sociology is the discipline of the theological outsiders, a haven for refugees escaping the tyrannical grip of organised religions, such as Catholicism, with its binding traditions and constraining authority. With its own traditions, canonical works and forms of authority, sociology stands content with its extra-mural position in relation to theology. After all in the French tradition, Comte and Durkheim cast sociology as a virtual religion and Weber suggested that those who sought solace in religious belief were casualties of modernity escaping its inconvenient properties. In fidelity to Comte, the fate of sociology is to perpetuate his endeavour to make its own gods.

Partly in response, Catholicism cast sociology as a dangerous rival, a hopeless imperialist devoid of faith seeking understanding. Besides, Catholic theology by Divine Providence seemed immune to the insecurities and unsettlements which afflict other belief systems, such as Judaism and Protestantism, who turned to sociology for compensatory relief in their dalliances with modernity. In a famous or infamous comment, Goffman proffered role distance as a means of combating the touching tendency to 'keep a part of the world safe from sociology'. The comment was directed to those who would divide the world into the sacred (the intimate and personal) and the profane ('the obligatory world of social roles') (1961: 134). That property of retreat seemed to mark aspects of pre-conciliar Catholicism, but with the strategy of modernisation of Vatican II that immunity from sociological deliberation became untenable.

Modernity was no longer spurned as demonic but instead was treated as benign. But in retrospect, that blessing of the world was singularly unfortunate, for Catholicism unravelled into the late 1960s in a period of unique cultural instability. As it tried to catch the spirit of the times, theology made some myopic appraisals. During Vatican II, much play was made of Newman's notion of reception as a means of evaluating conciliar reforms. Sociology was invoked to evaluate these in *Gaudium et Spes*, but that dialogue envisaged never occurred not least because the few sociologists who did respond to the effects of the conciliar were appalled at what had emerged.

On almost every statistic, of mass attendance, to baptisms, confirmations, and funerals, in countries where the conciliar reforms were most assiduously implemented, the economy of salvation had sunk into a cultural depression. What emerged was that many of the assumptions of Vatican II in so far as they pertained to sociological understandings were untenable. Thus, it came to pass, that faith in modernity was affirmed just when a decade later it fractured into postmodernity; stress on the transparency of liturgy and a noble simplicity became incredible as a decade later sociologists and anthropologists affirmed the opacity of rituals and symbols whose meanings were by no means self-evident and which needed to be read (Flanagan 1991; Baldovin 2008: 90–104); and the iconoclasm unleashed in the re-ordering of cathedral and churches in the name of modernisation after Vatican II seemed bizarre, for as reredos and other visible signs of the invisible were being torn down, two decades later, the importance of visual culture as a form of spiritual capital came into view (Flanagan 2004; 2007b).

In a strange way, both sociology and theology became caught up in a quandary which Bauman has well expressed, that 'postmodernity (modernity in its "liquid" phrase) is the era of disembedding without re-embedding' (Bauman and Tester 2001: 89). Somehow, the making of the social bond, of commitment and belief had become problematic for both disciplines. It is not to be suggested that, by comparison with theology, sociology occupies some sort of citadel of the smug where it gazes down from the battlements on contemporary culture with a superior surveillance. As modernity matures, sociology finds itself afflicted with its own uncertainties. Perversely, as theologians discovered the social and are uncertain as to how to read it, sociologists found religion and were perplexed over how to handle it. Somehow, religion had returned inconveniently for sociology and postsecularity became the term used to denote perplexities over its strange and unforeseen irruption. Not surprisingly, the term bore marks of the spectral, of something come to haunt to sociology which it thought had been exorcised by its analytical finesse (Flanagan forthcoming). Oddly, this 'rediscovery' of religion partly emerged as a result of sociology's self-confidence in exploring its disciplinary ancestors. Far from treating religion as of marginal importance, they seemed to be obsessed by it.

Around its founding fathers, notably Durkheim, Weber and Simmel a remarkable set of cottage industries has developed generating copious inspection of their archives and specialist articles on many facets of their work. These concerns have taken on almost nationalist properties, whereby French students study the texts of Durkheim as sacred and treat those of Weber, the German as profane and vice versa. Two recently translated (into English) large scale biographies of Durkheim (Fournier 2012) and of Weber (Radkau 2009) exemplify this trend whose outcome is to re-set the gestation of their works in the context of their biographies. The results of these shifts in self-understanding of the founders of the discipline, at least in the case of Durkheim and Weber have yielded unexpected concerns with matters of religion and its place in their sociological thought. Thus, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1915) has come to the fore as *primus inter pares* in Durkheim's works, a recognition of which appears in Miller (2012).

Faced with the declining powers of Catholicism in France and unconvinced by positivists who sought to discount religion, Riley has suggested that concerns with the sacred reflected the efforts of Durkheim and the neo-Durkheimians to seek a middle way. To accomplish that end a need emerged to affirm the central importance of the sacred and intellectuals as secular priests whose task it was to consecrate what is of ultimate value in society (2010). But it was the biographical scrutiny of Weber which drew attention to his unexpected fixations on religion.

Radkau's biography revealed Weber as being afflicted with acute religious and theological disturbances which greatly shaped his attitudes to modernity and the mantle of gloom he bestowed on it (2009). Unexpectedly, Weber emerges as the most potent challenger to the illusions that sociology can proceed in handling modernity without theological reference. His abiding concern was with the quest for salvation, its routinisation and its place as a reference point for the unfolding of capitalism and modernity. For Weber, salvation anxiety (in relation to Calvinists) was not so much

a social phenomenon as an obsession which shaped his reading of modernity upon which he projected his fears (Radkau 2009). Further evidence of Weber's fascination with religion appears in Scaff's account of his trip to America between August and November 1904. This visit led to an unexpected amount of fieldwork on religion which formed the basis for the second essay of *The Protestant Ethic* (Scaff 2011).

Even though he lacks an equivalent major size biography in English to those on Durkheim and Weber, nevertheless it is clear that Simmel was highly alert to issues of faith, piety and spirituality. The translations of his essays on the sociology of religion reveal a deep sensitivity to theological matters (Simmel 1997). Jewish by background, Christian in upbringing and agnostic at the end of his life, what is notable about Simmel (as with Weber) is his repeated return to reflection on religious belief. Like Weber, Simmel was extraordinarily well read in theology. Few in the English speaking world associated this polymath of sociology and the seer of postmodernity, a century before its inception, with interests in religion. Furthermore, his interests were as unusual as they were unexpected. His essays in the sociology of religion revealed a continual concern with theological matters, with art, faith and salvation (Simmel 1997).

More than any other great sociologist, Simmel wrote his sociology of religion into theology. His concerns were with the soul, its state in modernity, with religiosity and the colour of religion and the yearning it generated. It is Simmel who blows apart the myth that sociology must confine its attention to unbelief, for his concerns were orientated decidedly to explorations of the *actuality* of religion and not its de-construction. To invoke Ricoeur, Simmel's hermeneutic approach to religion was directed less to suspicion and more to belief. Even if, like Weber, he stood alone, finding it impossible to endorse the Christianity he so knowledgeably explored, nevertheless the whole direction of his career in writing on religion involved a fascination with its living properties which suggests that his concerns pointed in the direction of postsecularity as well as postmodernity.

As sociology becomes more secure in its secularising tendencies, as exemplified in Bourdieu's grand refusal to see religion as anything other than an exercise in symbolic violence, the discipline becomes insecure as a result of its realisation that its founders did not exercise such capricious exclusions. There is another issue relating to soci-ology's (reluctant) 'rediscovery' of religion in its disciplinary closets. This emerged over the translations into English of the works of Adorno and Benjamin in the 1980s. Usually located with reference to Marxism, further inspection revealed unexpected concerns with images, with the dilution of culture and the plight of living without a God, hence the concerns with apophatic (or negative) theology. Their writings an-ticipated properties of postsecularity, of the discovery of the need to quest beyond that which secularity limits. In a sense, these Jewish philosophers were discerning the price of the loss of religion, the melancholy its absence generated and the emptiness that seemed to envelop modernity with the departure of belief and the vision this evacuation yielded. These dalliances marked openings to theological issues which reflected the unsettled business of modernity, realisations which never gained a co-herent response in subsequent sociology. Few theologians noted this shift of concern. The outcome was the abandonment of sociology to its own extra-mural theology.

These two re-calibrations have generated a decidedly perplexing issue: who discerns better the culture of modernity (in post or liquid forms): sociology or theology? The contested basis of understanding between sociologists and theologians as to who best reads cultural reflects differing stances of their disciplines. Of late matters have become deeply confused between both. Claiming a mandate to bridge the gap between Church and society, some schools or styles of theology have taken on the rhetoric of a virtual sociology in their efforts to articulate the needs of the dispossessed and the excluded. This theology of improved representation comes with tags attached, with inscriptions marked of Marxism, feminism, gender and sexuality. The perverse outcome is that theology seems to have become more sociological but not in a way that sociology itself seems to either recognise or reward. As is often strangely the case, where theological interests in culture end, those of sociology begin and vice versa. The result is that neither discipline inspects the other in the depths each deserves. Each charges the other with a superficial acquaintanceship with breadth and depth of scholarly concern.

Benedict XVI's Fear of a Dictatorship of Relativism

Benedict XVI, a notable theological and liturgist changed the compass points of the relationship between theology and sociology by his recognition of the dangers posed to Catholicism in Western Europe by two infelicitous forces peculiar to contemporary culture and postmodernity: aggressive secularisation; and the dictatorship of the relativism. These concerns signified recognition of an unfettered individualism, but also a state of nihilism which had come to mark life in a maturing modernity. Secularity in its aggressive forms hid behind the masquerade of inclusivism and posited a virtual religion of equality which progressively emptied itself of meaning. For Benedict XVI, the dictatorship of relativism was the other villain of this dilution of modernity where belief in God melted into contingency. His views have occasioned much debate (Girard and Mishra 2005; anon. 2007).

It cannot be said that secularity was content to let religious belief just ebb away in the face of the usurping powers of modernity. Something more was required to ensure that religion did not return, lest it undermine the hegemony granted to identity politics and the culture of rights, notably expressed in terms of homosexuality in the United Kingdom. This explains the hostility directed to Catholicism and its presumptuous claim to mark moral differences, let alone treat some as sinful. The outcome is that in the United Kingdom, Catholicism faces a deep hostility for its grand refusal to capitulate to the forces of inclusiveness and the treatment of equality as absolute.

The secularising properties of British sociology enable it to affirm Islamic rights to religious belief but in ways where Catholic claims to discrimination can be discounted. The affirmation of Islamic rights seems noble and proper to the calling of sociology; a similar process applied to Catholicism has emerged as ignoble and one which can be ignored. But that capacity to turn a blind eye was undermined by Habermas with his call for recognition of the return of religion, a plea that has become embodied in

the notion of postsecularity. A further complication for those who wished to award a disciplinary inattention to Catholicism was the dialogue between Benedict XVI and Habermas over secularisation and the place of religion in European culture (Habermas and Ratzinger 2006). In a sense, both gave permission to their constituencies, the Church and the secular academy, to appraise common dilemmas concerning belief and reason. While it was not an explicit concern of either, their diagnosis of the state of modernity generated wider issues which were also matters of inescapable sociological interest. The dialogue suggested that religion was weakened by hostile secular forces, but it also seemed to recognise that there was something in modernity that disabled faith and undermined the capacity of religions such as Catholicism to reproduce. These matters came to the fore in an address Benedict XVI made as part of his visit to England and Scotland in 2010.

The address was delivered in Westminster Hall, London, a place of immense significance in English and Parliamentary History. Among the many events held in the Hall was the trial of St. Thomas More, who was charged with treason and was executed. The audience for this address was composed of 'representatives of British society, including the diplomatic corps, politicians, academics and business leaders'. Given the aggressive secularisation Catholicism finds itself confronting in Scotland and England, the title of the address was apt: the 'Role of religious belief in the political process'. A crucial aspect of this address dealt with a call for dialogue, one that would recognise that 'the world of reason and the world of faith—the world of secular rationality and the world of religious belief—need one another and should not be afraid to enter into a profound and ongoing dialogue, for the good of our civilisation' (Benedict XVI 2010: 46). Unfortunately, at least in the United Kingdom, this call for a dialogue has fallen on deaf sociological ears (Flanagan 2011).

This failure to respond is a pity, as Benedict XVI conceives of a form of theology where sociology can find a place to contribute to that dialogue without corrupting either its identity or its disciplinary ethos. Reflecting on the Frankfurt School, Ratzinger spoke of truth emerging from praxis. This led him to formulate a notion of practical theology, 'the real starting and end point of the whole framework of theological sciences', so that the entire edifice of these disciplines 'could be understood in corresponding fashion as a part of the struggle for a more human future on the basis of memories preserved in the history of faith' (Ratzinger 1995: 79).

Yet, even this broad vision of theology might generate paranoia in sociology that its distinctive identity might be compromised were it to loosen its suspicions and join in a common quest with an unfamiliar rival. From its inception, and notably in France, sociology has fought to preserve its autonomy in the face of the academically more 'respectable' claims of philosophy to provide the master readings of modernity. In his essay 'Fieldwork in philosophy', Bourdieu deeply resisted such imperialising claims (1988). But his formulation of resistance suggests a model for sociology's relationship to theology.

This would be to conceive the sociologist, imbued with reflexive piety, as operating not so much as a practitioner of practical theology but as a diviner alert to uncanny irruptions of Divine issuance and sensitive to resonances felt on the field of culture

which betoken matters of significance beneath the dignity of theologians to notice. In this sense and in regard to this adjusted relationship to theology, postsecularity arrives at a propitious moment. The return it signifies pertains to spectres of past forms of belief, those which theologians reject as redundant for the times but which sociologists diagnose as worthy of re-invention. Perversely and as always, to the ire of modernising theologians, sociologists have a knack of ending up in the very traditions which theology marks as archaic. Theologians seek solutions for grounding faith in culture; sociologists see problems, for their fixation is on finding in modernity the basis of the reproduction of belief.

The reasons for the impasse between the two disciplines arise from their contrasting expectations of reading the culture of modernity. Put simply, for theologians, modernisation offers an escape from the archaic and the tradition bound; relevance and connections of mission are proffered. But for sociology, the weariness of analytical struggle and the insecurities so generated lend to the inductive orientations of the discipline a stress on stability and escape from contingency into security, perhaps one of invented tradition which links the comforts of the past (however illusory) with the needs of the present. In ways difficult to comprehend, often sociology sees that which theologians cannot seem to notice. But sociological discernments arise without the comforts and definiteness of the Divine mandate under which theologians exercise their calling. Without appeal to grace, sociological insights pertaining to theology often emerge with a strange authenticity.

Each imputes to the other misrecognitions of how faith is to be planted in culture and what are the signs of its flourishing. Marking distinctions between the analytical eyes of sociology and those of faith obviously generates risks of a plethora of misrecognitions. Whereas theologians leave matters open to faith, sociologists cannot assume such comforts, such insurance of grace in the insights generated. Things do not 'just happen' in culture. Some arrangement underpins shifts where religion ebbs and flows. Whatever the case, the state of play might be that theologians see visions while sociologists are doomed to discern spectres. One can assume Divine relief; the other cannot. Postsecularity, in one version, has brought these matters to the fore.

Postsecularity: Spectral Returns

Beckford reflects well on the way that postsecularity has emerged as an alluring theme for many conferences, the tag that draws the crowds coming to find out what it is. He indicates that the term only recently came to the fore in the late 1990s. It is of such recent origin as to be inchoate and at present, eluding an agreed characterisation. If nothing else the term postsecular is ecumenical, permitting a vast range of disciplines to speak to each other under the umbrella of a term whose multiple definitions enable many to find a place in the shade, but without being forced to think of what they have in common—if anything (Beckford 2012: 1–2).

It is difficult to think of a more vexatious term to contend with than postsecularity, a term whose sociological implications are just beginning to be understood

(Johansen 2013). The nebulous basis of postsecularity suggests a crisis of authority with no control over the agenda of what the term signifies. Beckford has set down six variations of the term, one of which suggests a concern with enchantment, which denotes 'making imaginative leaps from the secular to the postsecular' (2012: 6). This might suggest an unfortunate feeling that some sociologists are postsecular without realising it (Flanagan 1991; 1996). Postsecularity indicates something incomplete, some unfinished business which those in modernity now come to realise. In that regard, postsecularity can be treated as a hostile instrument for drawing attention to the deceptions of secularity, the false consciousness it promulgates that the need for religious belief is extinct.

To that degree, postsecularity can be treated as an opening, where the doubts of secularity can be turned to evangelical advantage in ways few in Catholicism realise. Nebulous appeals to the mandate of the poor are hardly of much use if the core of Catholicism, as in Western Europe is melting in the climate change of modernity. Benedict XVI spotted a defect of culture, one which bears on the circumstances giving rise to postsecularity yet in ways which suggest that many of the assumptions of Vatican II, themselves contingent, are now redundant. A new map is required, but one whose inspection by theologians would be inconceivable without the aid of sociological spectacles. The postsecular suggests new beginnings. If so why is the term so riddled with difficulties?

Put simply, postsecularity is about the return of religion. This formulation relates to the interventions of Habermas on the need for secular universities to realise that religion has not disappeared—as hoped—and that some sort of dialogue, some recognition ought to be given to the persistence of religious belief in contemporary culture (2008). His call for re-adjustments in relation to religion echoes a comment of Keenan that 'the sociological wars of religion in late modern society are likely to be just hotting up' (2002: 269). This need to re-cast responses to religion and matters pertaining to the sacred has flowed into the humanities in ways that suggest the need for re-calibrations (Fessenden 2014). These necessities point to an odd facet of secularity, that it never quite defined the religion which was supposed to have become extinct. Traditional religions might have withered on the cultural vine, but as they lost their grip, other more individualised quests have emerged with their own properties of religion. Between secularity and postsecularity there is great confusion as to which form of religion has become extinct and which has returned (Köhrsen 2012).

Thus, returns of religion betray a mixture of issues, ranging from the definite, the rise of Islam in Western Europe to the indefiniteness of Christianity there which accommodated too much to modernity, thus generating the growth of concerns with self-made forms of spirituality. These denote efforts to find a basis for self-belief outside the main institutional churches, a process which Simmel in his assessment of piety long ago predicted would occur (1997: 23). These returns beg another issue, one of acute sociological and theological significance. Which form of religion is the beneficiary of postsecularity? The obvious candidate is Islam, but it was never secularised to begin with. But if it is the case that Islam is favoured by postsecularity, why is Catholicism not the beneficiary of the doubts it signifies. In a sense, Stoecki

is right, that postsecularity does not mark the end of secularisation nor the return of religion as such, but rather the irruption of endemic tensions within modernity and its confusing dimensions of the collective and the individual which its maturation has generated. She goes on to make a valuable point that 'there is a certain risk, I think, that the liberal tradition of postsecular thinking considers religious experience too narrowly in terms of individual choice, leaving aside the importance of community and tradition' (Stoecki 2011: 4).

But that need to attend to community and tradition was recognised earlier in sociology. This is to suggest that sociology always has been postsecular. Comte and Durkheim were deeply concerned with finding a form of religion fit for life *after* secularity, a task whose furtherance they left as a dubious legacy to their sociological heirs. This would be to suggest that secularisation did not so much cause religion to disappear but rather to emerge in another form. Unfortunately, in some cases what has come to pass is a virtual religion set in imitation of the Catholicism which Comte and Durkheim sought to reject as 'unsociological'. That need to find replacements persists not least in the efforts of the state to manufacture a virtual religion in law tailored to the expectations of multi-culturalism and identity politics. This might suggest that postsecularity is a qualification to secularity, one that recognises that some forms of religion are necessary even if in modes detached from theological accountability.

Some of these issues have emerged in the enigmatic efforts of some atheists to organise themselves into a form of religion, but one with no God/god. Thus, De Botton, reflecting on the premise of his study, felt that 'it must be possible to remain a committed atheist and nevertheless find religions sporadically useful, interesting and consoling—and be curious as to the possibilities of importing certain of their ideas and practices into the secular realm' (2012: 11–12). Unable to settle even for a cultural form of Anglicanism, De Botton follows a sociological route, one marked by his efforts to found a virtual religion for unbelievers, one with agape meals, temples and hopes of loving belonging. This notion of borrowing the best bits of religion finds a parallel in the secularising activities of art galleries and concert halls which seek to re-set the spiritual and cultural capital of Catholicism in a purely aesthetic context, one in which they control the designations of the sacred. De Botton's concluding reflection to his study, that 'religions are intermittently too useful, effective and intelligent to be abandoned to the religious alone' (2011: 312) underlines the complexities surrounding postsecularity. But postsecularity not only gives rise to envy of what believers have domesticated to manifest their beliefs; it has generated an uncomfortable issue for secularists. If they have eradicated religious belief 'successfully', what do they believe in?

This issue much vexed McLennan (2010). His efforts to find a basis of belief in unbelief represent the interested questing of a Marxist sociologist, reluctantly recognising that religion has come back, but in ways which undermine faith in secularity. Some of the issues which concerned him emerged as a response to Taylor's influential *A Secular Age* (2007). Its most obvious concern is with the immanent frame and the 'victory' of secularity, driven on by a cultural dope, Protestantism. But the study has another property of being an elegiac reflection on the demise of Catholicism and the circumstances of modernity that have given rise to the diminishment of its capacity

to flourish (Flanagan 2010a). The study captures a Catholic concern with the unacknowledged wounds of the Reformation and the brokenness of its legacy where the genius of late medieval forms of belief lies in ruins. But other conundrums arise.

The thrust of Taylor's *A Secular Age* points to the unfinished business of secularity even in its victorious state. As it 'succeeds', secularity encounters a property of melancholy, a guilt arising from its accomplishment. Allied to this gloomy sensibility is a realisation of the emptiness of what it has secured. This is expressed as a sense of de-spiritualisation, one which requires remedies, hence the questing for solace which holistic spirituality is deemed to supply to the individual. But that obscures a wider difficulty, one that draws sociology and theology together in a common interest, one that responds to a realisation of a crisis in the construction of the social, of a loss of ritual, community and forms of commitment.

What emerges from the embers of religion which secularity rejoices over is a spectator gazing back to forms of the past when belief was stable and when hope of the after-life reigned. The outcome is a form of nostalgia, which when linked with melancholy, signifies the unfulfilled business secularity passes over to postsecularity to resolve. In an age of austerity, economic turmoil and disbelief in politics and at a time when the European community is adrift in terms of leadership, the imperative to believe and to find seeds of hope is hardly unexpected. But that shift in modernity which brings belief more into focus might miss an obvious point. The rise of postsecularity was not a response to the need to believe but was rather a baffled response to the irruption of Islam in Western Europe. It knew what it believed in and that was the problem it posed which generated the emergence of postsecularity.

Zealous in deference to Revelation, the product of immigrants from pre-modern cultures and rigorous in its forms of practice, where symbolic boundaries are policed vigorously, hence giving rise to controversies over the wearing of the *burka*, Islam seems immune to the acids of secularity which have so damaged Christianity, notably in its Protestant forms and most especially in Northern Europe. The manifestation of Islam in the public square and its non-negotiable responses to modernity suggests a new order of things, where a place for this theologically driven religion has to be found, hence the need for postsecularity. Reflecting the residues of secularity in regard to rights of representation, considerable efforts have been made to treat Islam in the context of multi-culturalism (the concern of Habermas). Such efforts reflect civic efforts to reduce the theology of Islam to fit the category of religion and so domesticate it to the regulative ends of equality which the state desires for all. These accommodating responses to Islam, which give rise to postsecularity, might indicate that it is not concerned with Catholicism. After all, it can hardly be said to be flourishing in Western Europe.

Again, one returns to an issue difficult to articulate. Bar spasmodic re-inventions of tradition, Catholicism is in a serious situation of drift. Perhaps it sees the possibilities opened out by postsecularity, but a combination of the self-denying ordinances of Vatican II and a loss of self-confidence in resisting modernity have led to a thwarted vision of possibility. In dealing with modernity, it might seem that Catholicism has extracted its teeth so that what it affirms no longer bites sufficiently to galvanise

commitment in ways that mark Islamic responses to what it conceives as a decadent culture. For some, Catholicism has become captive to a secular agenda of inclusiveness and equality in ways that confirm the evaporation of the unseen. Too often Catholicism resolves it insecurities in modernity by overly affirming nebulous readings of it. Of course, the poor and the marginalised are important, but they too need something definite to believe in, otherwise, as in the case of South America, they flee to Protestant sects and cults who offer clear directions for seeking salvation and avoiding sin. Lurking in these issues is the question of the rhetoric deployed for reading modernity but also for seeing its implications, most especially in Western Europe.

Metaphors and dilemmas of seeing

Bauman expresses the quandaries of the times well when he noted that 'postmodernity (modernity in its "liquid" phase) is the era of disembedding without re-embedding' (Bauman and Tester 2001: 89). The result has been confusion in regard to the present plight of the Church, where the symptoms of secularity are given an undeserved privileged status, one which masks the wider crisis emerging over embedding which has come to denote the ills of modernity, in its post or liquid forms. To remedy its imperfections of analytical utterance, sociology often has to deploy the language of other disciplines to express that which it finds inexpressible. To an unexpected degree many of the metaphors so used are drawn from the ambit of theology.

Few in sociology have been as indebted to Catholic metaphors as greatly as Bourdieu (Flanagan 2008). His metaphors have generated enormous sociological advances in understandings of what he regards as the mysterious operations of the field of culture. But his appropriation of metaphors, whose templates lie in Catholicism, indicates something more than an act of theft. The secularisation which ensues reflects a symbolic violence peculiarly exercised on Catholicism itself. It defers to modernity by ejecting baggage, spiritual and cultural capital whose forms are deemed antique impediments to mission. But in so doing, there is a failure to realise that these supposedly discredited resources can be re-deployed as metaphors to constitute the world to which it defers.

Hervieu-Léger has explored this notion of metaphorical religion which Séguy had constructed from his interpretations of Weber. She suggests that Séguy used metaphorical religion as a 'transitional phase between a cultural world where to invoke supernatural forces is self-evident or plausible, and a world—the disenchanted world of modern rationalism—where such an appeal has become improbable, if not impossible'. Rightly, she suggests that what is not to be sought is an invidious comparison between the lesser religion of modernity and its pre-modern predecessors. Rather what is to be affirmed in Séguy's notion of a metaphorical religion is the uncovering of ways of believing proper to the times of modernity (Hervieu-Léger 2000: 66–71). Such a view seems to anticipate the aspirations of Taylor in *A Secular Age* (2007).

Another unexpected source for the deployment of metaphors is to be found in the work of Bauman (Flanagan 2013). His singular Odyssey through sociology has

given him enormous importance, not least for a journeying from scientific Marxism, through postmodernity and into ethics in ways that display, however much he might disavow it, an implicit theology (Flanagan 2010b). In his effort to characterise the state of postmodernity, Bauman deploys the metaphor of the wilderness as a place where the individual has no compass points to journey. Yet, the wilderness is a site of irruptions where prophetic reconstitutions of life in the Divine can break through the emptiness. Although not his term, the Indian summer of his sociology inclines much in the direction of postsecularity. If sociology has been so successful in dealing with modernity, why is it so insecure in its characterisations of it?

The difficulty is that the world has become enormously sociological in its self-constitution. The self-awareness facilitated by the digital age enables the secrets of sociological knowledge to become accessible to anybody with a lap-top computer. In the digital age, almost any image or nugget of information can be conjured up in an unprecedented plethora, where prospects of engulfment are all too evident, but without the wisdom to contain, respond and evaluate these. In a curious way, the expansion of possibility mirrors the dilemmas sociology faces in dealing with fields of culture and the social universes it is supposed to characterise. As a discipline, it too can conjure up masses of ethnographic detail and information on ways of life gathered for comparative deployment. While these limitless details can be set in many interpretative mosaics, sociology faces a quandary over how to see these. That issue of seeing has become entangled in sociology's own version of reflexivity (disciplinary self-awareness). An odd issue has emerged over what sociology is mandated to see in the social. Quite clearly, it can describe the world in minute detail, but that capacity generates in turn the issue of what it sees that the laity do not, hence why there is an odd prophetic property to sociological discourse. This generates for sociology a particular difficulty of reconciling its disciplinary ways of seeing with the ideals that endorse the higher ambitions of its calling.

In a recent defence of the significance of sociological theory, Turner marks the need to attend to forms of utopia, bizarrely, those to be found in Musil's *The Man without Qualities*. The ending of Turner's book is oddly hesitant and inchoate, pointing as it does to the duty of teachers of sociological theory to treat the possibility of a utopian exactitude, one married to 'the perpetual unfinishedness and provisionality of social inquiry'. The end lines of his peroration are decidedly modest, where all that is called for is a requirement 'to hint that such directions exist'. This leaves teachers of sociological theory with a duty is to point to these, possibly in the hope, or rather act of faith that:

Only then, when the student has eyes to see them, different eyes from the ones he or she had before, can these possibilities be glimpsed at all (Turner 2010: 192).

This sociological version of dropping the scales from the eyes by instruction begs the question as to what the student is induced to see, perhaps risking recollection of Weber's indecisiveness at the end of his great essay 'Science as a Vocation' when he makes Delphic reference to the teasing Edomite watchman who appears in Isaiah's oracles (1958: 156). In the Old Testament, the watchmen often referred to God

Himself. Anyhow, Turner's 'possibilities' beg questions as to what is to be seen by sociologists with eyes to see?

A conversion of the eyes is suggested which bears an implication that sociology sees matters differently to others. Such ocular revolutions might liberate the blind, but what if the gift of sight which sociology so offers inclines in a theological direction? What if the eyes of the sociologist are set in theological frames for sight to be directed to the other world, to the unimaginable, to what is of the unseen yet to be seen? (Flanagan 2004; 2007a). Given the increased significance of visual culture, where images rather than words become domain forms of expression, a peculiar plight of secularity emerges. A dilemma is exasperated of how to attach names to what is seen, a condition known as blindsight and one that arises peculiarly in relation to religious images (Flanagan 2007a). What emerges are the myopic properties of secularity and with the rise of visual culture, these become intolerable, suggesting another dilemma, of seeing and believing being passed over to postsecularity for resolution. How are matters of detail to be placed in some mosaic which sociology is gifted to construct? This peculiar task results in sociology presenting an odd image to outsiders, where high claims to prophecy in its diagnosis of the social are accompanied by low fixations on accumulating trivia.

Trivia: Sociological Operations in a Minor Key

In his essay, 'Cold Sweat', on the Canadian sociologist, Erving Goffman, the English playwright, Alan Bennett suggested that 'sociology begins in the dustbin, and sociologists have always been the rag-and-bone men trundling their carts round the backyards of the posher academic establishments'. He went on to characterise Goffman as a scavenger par excellence picking up the jumble of other disciplines such as anthropology, psychology and social administration (Bennett 1994: 303–4). Despite his image as a gatherer of trivia, for some, Goffman 'was arguably the most influential American sociologist of the twentieth century' (Fine, Manning and Smith 2000: ix).

A similar property of concern with the trivia and their elevation to great sociology can be found in relation to Simmel, who is often paired with Goffman (Davis 1997). Indeed, with a certain pride, a sociologist observed of Goffman that 'he is our Simmel in American clothing' (cited in Grimshaw 2000: 7). Writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Simmel had plenty of credentials for being charged with dealing with the trivia in his writings, which displayed concerns with exhibitions, fashion, and his obsession with chronicling the detail of urban life. This was expressed in seemingly odd concerns, such as frets over the introduction of automatic chocolate bar machines at Berlin railways stations (he feared these would mark the demise of the corner shop). Such a concern anticipated the growth of on-line shopping which has changed the basis of retail trading in the United Kingdom.

Like Goffman, Simmel had an apparently unique capacity, almost an alchemist's gift, of being able to transform the dross of trivia into sociological gold, a Midas touch which has been passed on in imperfect forms to his successors. Thus, issues pursued

in his writings, such as the secret, the glance, love and other matters of slightness were transformed into nuggets of analytical excellence. Such diversity and almost arbitrary descent on trivia baffles those few theologians who scrutinise sociological ways of seeing. For them, it is not so much that sociologists see visions as illusions, where in some fantasy matters of theological trivia are elevated into spectres of dangerous unsettlement. Worries over female altar servers mix with angst over the Friday fast and the place of altars in Gothic cathedrals, suggest not so much analytical excellence as paranoia where trivia invades great issues in ways that denote scrupulosity rather than the breadth of insight to be expected from sociological ways of seeing. Yet, it is this capacity of sociology to magnify a point of detail, one that seems inconsequential, into a matter of deep consequence that marks a property of the relationship of the discipline to theology, one which theologians often find baffling.

Admittedly *any* detail is ripe for elevation, but if it is to be lifted with significance, it must be credibly re-set into some body of sociological theory, one requiring systematic reflection and elaboration into a galaxy of related concepts. The trouble is that almost any item of detail in regard to the social has been subject to sociological appraisal. This generates perplexities for non-sociologists. Obsessions with detail might just be with trivia, the rubbish of zealously conducted ethnography, but they can also be fixations on items that bear analytical expansion. But if sociology has a justification, it lies in spotting issues of apparent insignificance and re-setting them into the domain of disciplinary scrutiny where they are to be beheld in a different light. Sociologists might start with matters of trivia; but if their discipline has a justification it lies in the capacities to elevate these into something more significant and more telling.

The sense that reference to the afterlife has shrivelled up can be found in shifts in forms of memorialisation of the dead. In England, Victorian graveyards were cluttered with angels presiding over the dead. But these guardians have now been dispersed as tombstones have shrunk into minimal form illustrating a secularising contraction of reference to the afterlife. What was before a site of fear and trembling has become a realm fit for idle conjecture. The funeral director increasingly replaces the priest as the impresario of proceedings marking the final passing of the dead. Even more oddly, commemoration has moved into cyberspace, so that eternal remembrance can found in virtual rather than in spiritual realms. The Facebooks of the dead permit limitless and timeless insertions. Cyberspace facilitates an ease of remembrance where the dead can be memorialised without the inconvenience of having to visit their resting places in the social and in real time. But this convenience of remembrance bears a price and opens out an odd set of contradictions.

As concern with the afterlife vaporises, integrity shifts from the soul to the body. If lost, the body must be found; and if incomplete, it needs to be completed, so that the complete body is to be disposed of in a final manner. That concern with body parts reflects shifts in medical ethics and advances. Parts lost can be replaced in life in increasing numbers of circumstances. Likewise, the body parts of the dead are not be experimented with. Like the body as a whole the parts are to be treated as sacred.

As the Internet has emerged as the repository for all solutions to the imperfections of the human condition, it has become an extra-terrestrial universe, but one that

bears an odd price. It seems to infer that embodiment is illusory. This state reflects an extension of Taylor's concern with 'excarnation'. The term refers to 'the steady disembodying of spiritual life, so that it is less and less carried in deeply meaningful bodily forms, and lies more and more "in the head"' (Taylor 2007: 771–2; see also 554; 613–5). For him this process can be traced back to the Reformation and by implication to secularisation. This progressive disembodiment stands in contradiction to the increased value placed on the body, as a site of corporeal improvement, a place of aesthetic decoration and a self-consciousness of the cultural value of body parts. Thus the modernity that gives to secularity the gift of disembodiment seems to cancel this offering with increased interest in the status of body parts. These come to have odd postsecular values, when attention is drawn to the significance of matters that seem insignificant: relics and fingers.

A recent exhibition in London of relics of the dead (Bagnoli, Klein, Mann and Robinson 2011) drew a fascinated response. The medieval reliquaries which contained the relics were objects of beauty and ornamentation well fitted for display in a museum. But that admiration was qualified by incredulity at the place of relics in contemporary Catholicism. If confined to the medieval, the superstitions surrounding responses to relics in petition and pilgrimage seemed tolerable. Matters of discomfort arose for many non-Catholics at the realisation that Catholics still venerated the body parts of the saints. For those so embedded in the secular world, it was hard to believe that life's fortunes could be changed by merely touching the reliquaries with the finger.

But that act of fingering an icon, to open out a world of possibilities finds a parallel in the use of the *iPod*. By pressing one on the screen, the finger can open out a whole new reality, a cornucopia of ocular plenty which suggests that regard for the heavenly is now matched by an eternal present of possibility that casts the medieval world to the shadows. But that virtual world of cyberspace has a peculiar limitation.

The finger can make it possible for any reality to come into visual form, but what emerges in image cannot be touched. A fundamental sense is denied: the tactile (Fulkerson 2014). The haptic dimension of the visual becomes lost. For Pattison, 'the haptic denotes the sense of vision that touches, caresses and interacts more mutually with objects, rather than just surveying them from afar' (2007: 15). To touch is to connect, to feel a sense of relationship with the touched, one that satisfies a need to possess, to take hold of, to finger and to collect. An urge to attend to the authentic, to the original and tangible takes hold in ways where the haptic generates new forms of justification, new urges to touch so as to ameliorate disembodiment and to find connections back to originals: relics. They are the remains of the pious dead who lived lives before the Internet. In the minute detail of the finger can be found a language of gestures (Trumble 2010), one which generates a choice to be made between invocations of the artificial domains of the unseen conjured up in cyberspace, or of touch of relics which remain, of those who felt touched by images of heaven and hell sufficiently to lead lives of heroic virtue.

These concerns with fingers, minor matters of culture, relate to more major considerations, that the Internet can open out realms of evil on an unparalleled scale. Whereas the medieval pilgrim could find his need for fear of evil satiated by the gar-

goyles on the roofs of the Gothic cathedral, the voyeur of the present faces deeper, wider and more pervasive images on the Internet, all the more dangerous for the scale of misrecognition they generate. If anything is postsecular, spectral in return and irruptive in arrival and departure it is evil. Secularity claimed it exorcised evil; it did not.

Evil: a Major Theological Notation

The genius of evil lies in its capacity to seem alluring, a power concealed in a mask of triviality well fitted to disguise its dangerous and destructive powers. If nothing else, evil is a crafty form of irruption on life. Malign, negative, disruptive, insinuating and embodying supernatural forces put to corrupt use, evil has not vanished from view in modernity; quite the reverse. Supposedly, belonging to the domain of theology, evil abounds in modernity. Secularisation has facilitated its transference from the Church, where prayers for the deliverance from evil justified its functions, into the recreational industry, where horror films, blood sucking vampires, voodoos and exorcisms stalk the screens irrupting with abandon and thrilling the bored out of their skins. Whereas these spectres might give occasional nightmares, they hardly induce fear and trembling amongst the faithless for whom the licence of the modernity renders damnation a figment of the imagination. Somehow, the belief prevails that evil is something pre-modern, belonging to realms of curses, incantations and witchcraft which the ascent of reason has wished away. The contraction of a sense of evil as relating to the demonic seems to validate the powers of secularisation, a point illustrated in the 2001 Census for England and Wales where only 1525 Satanists were listed.

Evil represents an irruptive force some wish to explore, either out of curiosity, or from the need to feed sadistic appetites. Cyberspace has given modernity endless avenues for such explorations in ways peculiar to the times. Whereas in the medieval world a malign king could have a slot built into a side wall of his torture chamber, so that with a singular pleasure granted to him alone he could observe unseen the suffering of his victims, nowadays, that creature of modernity, the voyeur too can view with impunity the most exquisite of tortures on the Internet, all just available with a couple of clicks. Somehow, modernity has played a perverse trick, permitting secularity to act as the impresario on the contraction of religion whilst at the same time, almost magically expanding the prevalence of evil, or rather irruptions that signify its unexpected presence, as it breaks through the veneers of civil society. The notations of evil cannot be treated as minor; they are major in implication.

It might seem perverse for a discipline, sociology, whose founder, Comte had his writings placed on the Index of the Catholic Church in 1864, to use an index to criticise a Council of the Church, Vatican II, for failing to treat an important theological topic: evil. An index is not a thesaurus but a reflection of the structure of a work and the proportions of its content. Even allowing that these documents were largely written in the 1960s, nevertheless they represent a base line, a reference point of teaching and formulation of the place of the Church in the modern world. In the index to

the English translation (from the Latin) of the documents of Vatican II, evil has no separate entry but is tagged to good and appears three times, simply as a phrase in *Gaudium et Spes*, a core document of the Council (Flannery 1975). Peculiarly in the *Decree on the Means of Social Communication*, 1963, good and evil receive more passing references, but with no specific effort to define each or both. Assuming that the index is *not* defective, the issue of evil exhibits all too well the problem of authority facing sociology in dealing with theological matters.

It cannot be that sociology should have the authority, let alone the legitimacy to seek redress for this supposed neglect of evil. Nor can sociology 'explain' the mystery of evil or the outcomes of seeking to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. Even if it uncovers the issue of evil, sociology is hardly competent to resolve the malice this mysterious phenomenon generates—that is something for theology to handle by reference to matters of Redemption, the Last Judgement and salvation. After all, these are of the essence of Christianity and it is theology's main duty to exercise stewardship over these mysteries of faith. This is where an unbridgeable divide starts to emerge in the liaisons which sociology might like to pursue with theology. Yet, in regard to evil the chasm between both disciplines become unexpectedly narrow. It is as if a dangerous issue forces both into liaisons the necessity of which neither chooses to recognise.

The only means by which sociology can proceed in relation to evil is to query the presuppositions of theologians which lead them to conclude that the topic is 'unmodern' and that by drawing attention to its existence the mission of the Church might be brought into disrepute. Querying these ecclesial accommodations to the spirit of the age might lead to conclusions that theologians are engaging in 'bad' sociology. The ironical outcome is that sociology, spotting defective analyses, might charge theologians with 'bad' theology, with not defending assiduously enough the core of belief, the fallen nature of man and his redemption. In the interests of accommodating to the world, sociology emerges with a demand for a hard line theology, one riddled with the inconvenient facts of existence which Weber would affirm. In that regard, secularity is symptom of an unravelling of belief in the afterlife which, in the context of postsecularity, theology has a chance to re-knit. All this might seem improbable, where sociology, usually the poacher, ends up as an assiduous gamekeeper charging theologians with failures of conservation on the present field of culture. It is in this regard, and perhaps not in a form that he would recognise, that sociology seeks refuge in Benedict XVI's notion of practical theology.

In assembling a practical theology sociology has no warrant to resolve issues such as evil which it uncovers and which pertain to the essence of theological deliberations. This might explain why, in the context of postsecularity, sociology displays a sensitivity to irruptions by treating these as intractable issues associated with the advent of the spectres secularity thought it had vanquished. If postsecularity denotes the return of religion, other issues emerge, and one of these is evil. Leaving aside the possibilities for exploring the nefarious with the expansion of the Internet and other media outlets, a distressing number of examples of evil make their witnesses, even for those with no wish to seek them. Evil irrupts inconveniently and unpredictably in a bewildering variety of settings.

It is bound up in current events, as in Syria where the government slaughters its own citizens with the full application of military power; it arises in genocide as in Sudan and notoriously in Rwanda; it emerges in inexplicable murder cases such as the killing of little Jamie Bolger in Liverpool by two other boys, an event that shocked a nation; it irrupts sickeningly in child abuse cases in families, where the vast majority of instances occur; and it rears its ugly head in unexpected acts of terrorism. It could be suggested that given the flaws of the human condition, the irruption of evil is to be expected. Yet, modernity in hand with secularity conspires to render evil unremarkable, to treat it like God, as something that disappears in the ether of progress, or which vanishes in the light of the advance of technology. Even if evil appears to vanish, it has a genius for returning unrecognised. It has an odd liminal property, of being well concealed but also so prevalent as to generate cultural circumstances that de-sensitise the sophisticated (especially) as to its existence.

The appeal to reason and Enlightenment which form understandings of the genesis of modernity overlooks the way evil hovered as a concern of its propagators: Baudelaire and Huysmans. Besides supplying the model actor of modernity, the *flâneur*, Baudelaire is famous for his volume of poetry *Les Fleurs du mal* ('The Flowers of Evil'). Published in 1857, these poems have had an enormous influence on contemporary music. About decadence and eroticism, one of the poems is entitled 'Les Litanies de Satan', which contains an inversion of a Catholic mass. J-K. Huysmans, who also made his mark on the invention of modernity, sought remedies for the emptiness and boredom of decadence (explored to the full in *Against Nature*, which was Oscar Wilde's bible) in Satanic masses which were popular in late nineteenth century Paris. As a chronicle of the irruptive basis of evil, Huysmans' *Lower Depths* is unequalled (1986).

When evil arises spectacularly in Faustian acts of wickedness, there is little difficulty in marking its irruptive properties: unexpected, cold, destructive and turning into an unwanted visitation that violates the good and the innocent. The trouble is that evil has a genius for irrupting *unrecognised*, operating as if *not* something that breaks through convention. Concerns with this oddity underwrote the perplexity felt by Bauman in relation to evil in *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1991). Its significance lay in calling sociology to the witness stand to indicate what it could say about the 'civilised' and well ordered mass slaughter of the Holocaust. The response this work generated is indicated on the reverse side of its inner title page which has four lines of reprints for the English version.

Sociology was deeply unsettled by the questions which the work posed, which lie adjacent to postsecularity but which flow in the direction of its concerns. Further disciplinary anxieties arose over the way Bauman's analysis led to a topic of self-evident and inescapable importance to sociology's stewardship: the social bond. Somehow, in the issues of mutuality, disinterested sacrifice and love between strangers, Bauman suggested that antidotes to evil were to be found. Evil would thrive if these were ignored. Thus Bauman wrote:

Evil can do its dirty work, hoping that most people most of the time will refrain from doing rash, reckless things—and resisting evil is rash and reckless. Evil needs neither enthusiastic followers nor an applauding

audience—the instinct of self-preservation will do, encouraged by the comforting thought that it is not my turn yet, thank God: by lying low, I can still escape (1991: 206).

Bureaucratic calculation, technology and appeal to reason, that of ethnic classification could be said to exemplify the highest values of civilisation, properties also to be found in the concentration camps, as Bauman suggests, all fitting neatly into sociological expectations of the justification for dispassionate explanations of organisations, all fine, if attention was not given to their purpose: the callous, evil manufacture of death on an industrial scale where humans were objects of destruction and productivity was estimated by reference to the rates of slaughter.

Bauman's innovative sociological response to the Holocaust has generated much controversy, not least over issues of culpability and agency. These relate to an antinomy which goes as a fault-line through sociology where no means are to be found to resolve the link between action and structure. But as sociology is forced to focus on the Holocaust and calibrate a moral response to its occurrence, the outrage so generated goes off the scale of the discipline's capacity to condemn it, hence the need to fall back on the term evil. Bauman has suggested that in the end sociology has nothing to say on good and evil, but that assertion is ambiguous. It might suggest that sociology cannot comment on such matters or, that it should not. Notably, as with other sociologists such as Bourdieu and of course Weber (though in a less clear cut way) an amplification of this antinomy risks propelling sociology over disciplinary borders and into issues of theology and theodicy. Given his adherence to a stoical position of endurance, where living with ambiguities of life is an end in itself, Bauman refuses to go in that direction.

Perhaps it is not surprising that the issue of evil should be propelled forward for consideration by Jewish philosophers and sociologists, given the horror of the Holocaust. If sociology has any moral ambitions, it must consider this aberration in modernity, one that gives unfortunate testimony to the incompleteness of the discipline when it enters terrains where reference to theology is inescapable. It is important to emphasise that evil always has been an important theological and philosophical issue and there is little point in name dropping to indicate who before has reflected on this mysterious phenomenon. Nor it is to be suggested that sociology has 'invented' the issue of evil; what concerns the forthcoming study (Flanagan) are the implications of this sociological 'discovery' which forms a tributary which flows unrecognised into the concerns generated by postsecularity. These considerations emerge as part of a wider realisation of an unsettling paradox which sociology peculiarly encounters, where the light of reason brought to illuminate social affairs reveals their dark side, Foucault's excursion into the panopticon being an exemplary case in point. No training scheme in sociology for its oblates offers the prospect of success in seeing in the dark. If sociology is not to be fated to blindness in its encounters with evil, it has to look for other sources of illumination to exercise its disciplinary gaze to see better, hence why it may emerge unexpectedly as a supplicant seeking outdoor relief from theology.

Eagleton seeks to characterise evil as a facet of life which cannot just be wished away by atheistic fiat (2010). His theological ancestry is Catholic. As an ex-Maoist, Badiou offers another reflection on evil, treating it in detachment from the other

and seeking to force out the contribution notions of evil make to the perpetuation of false consciousness (2001). A rather different effort is to be found in the case of Wieviorka (in 2012, President of the International Sociological Association). He calls for sociology to recognise evil and to explore the social and political bases of its constitution, but in ways detached from theology (2012). Again a question is posed, one difficult to answer. How is sociology to deal with evil without reference to a theological ambit?

As the extensive interests of philosophy in evil over the past four decades percolate into sociological deliberations, the axis of its relationships to theology cannot but shift, startlingly and in ways that require sociology to attend to some unfinished business. Its concerns are with the human condition, its contingency but also its fragility. The enormous expansion of interest in death and in the body in sociology and related disciplines begs questions that point in the direction of theodicy. But they do so in ways that open out a fault-line in sociology itself, one that marks a division of understanding between Durkheim and Weber over issues of suffering and death.

An unexpected aspect of Durkheim's legacy was to leave to his heirs the need to explore a sociodicy (a secular form of theodicy). As Pickering observes this would entail applying the voice of reason to suffering with a view to explaining it. A link was envisaged between suffering and religion, whose implications were not pursued by Durkheim. Whether his god of the social would supply relief for the suffering or not was a problem which he deposited on a sociology reluctant to consider such possibilities (Pickering 2008).

By contrast, Weber, both in biographical and sociological terms was deeply concerned with issues of theodicy. His proneness to melancholy and his fixation on seeking to reconcile religious belief with asceticism propelled his sociological interests more in the direction of theodicy than a secularised discipline might wish to be recognised. In his meticulous biography of Weber, Radkau draws out many of these issues in ways that reflect how Weber's vision of and for sociology was constructed (2009). In the end, Weber was fascinated with death and his end suggests a weary capitulation to its allures. But if theodicy is the unfinished business of sociology, a notion of Divine caprice enters, one that points in the direction of postsecularity but in ways where the spectres that return to haunt have irruptive properties.

The most obvious location for understanding the place of irruptions in sociology is to be found in Weber's notion of charisma. The charismatic is revolutionary in transformation and is one whose recognition 'derives from the surrender of the faithful to the extraordinary and unheard-of, to what is alien to all regulation and tradition and therefore is viewed as divine—surrender which arises from distress or enthusiasm' (Weber 1968: 1115). Charismatic power is as magnetic as it is mysterious in source, an obvious case in point being John the Baptist. In their origins and outcomes, irruptions are strange in the breakages they realise. They can be subtle realisations of frames fractured where in the cracks mysterious sensibilities emerge of what lies beyond form. At the other end, they can be massively disruptive as in the case of riots occurring,

or for the individual, the grief of the unexpected death of a loved one. In whatever form, irruptions necessitate a re-casting of assumptions in regard to the realm of the social the individual inhabits, the need for re-appraisals to respond to new and changed circumstances and the loss of faith in what is old, hallowed, ordered and predictable.

If evil comes on to the sociological radar screen, it does so with lots of theological attachments whose expansion seems irresistible. Evil generates issues of judgement, of the punishment of the truly wicked in this life, or in hell. One way or another it is unsettling to think that evildoers get away unpunished. Divine retribution still has a place in the ordering of justice. But it cannot be that sociological appraisals of the afterlife are to be confined to Hell, for that would incline the discipline too much in the direction of one of the heresies imputed to it: Manichaeism. Anyhow, it would not resolve the problem of those who suffer and die for reasons of the proclamation of truth, or for fidelity to virtue, such the martyrs. Surely they deserve Divine reward? Before the reward of good and evil in this life and the afterlife, sociology faces a peculiar dilemma seldom confronted. In a sense, it easy to draw up a list of those who should be consigned to hell, but what of heaven?

If Weber were alive in the U.S.A. at present he might find his salvation anxieties in vain, for as Putnam and Campbell uncovered in their study *American Grace*, 'large majorities of even the stricter religious traditions believe in an equal opportunity heaven' (2010: 535). But then on the other hand, others might suggest that Weber's salvation anxieties were well founded. For instance, a young Carthusian of the late medieval world, who steeled himself for an awesome career of asceticism, could worry, that even with the most rigorous pursuit of a disciplined way of life, heaven's gate might not be thrown open for him on his death. Sociological conjecture suggests that such matters cannot be shaped contingently. Unfortunately, nobody comes back with an ethnographic account of the upstairs and downstairs of the afterlife—that was the parable of Lazarus. The afterlife is still as much a matter of conjecture now as in the medieval world. No empirical evidence has come to declare it shut down.

All these reflections suggest being at the beginning of a question and not at the end of one, hence the enduring nature of postsecularity. All this deposits sociology on a question it can generate, but cannot possibly answer and which afflicted Weber with much anxiety. This query refers to the matter of salvation, of 'who goes where'? In terms of postsecularity, to the scandal of theologians, sociologists might wish to refurbish limbo, to publish tourist guides to purgatory and to re-light the fires of hell. Why might sociology come to such unsociological conclusions from its reading of postsecularity and its efforts to fuse minor and major notations? The conclusion might seem perverse in the extreme. It might be to assert that in conceding too much to the realm of the secular, Catholicism has become overly apologetic about the after-life, preferring to treat it as a realm of the indeterminate, rather than a place of definite assignation with the Last Judgement. Sociology cannot write theological scores; it can only deal with the resonances as played out in contemporary culture.

Minuets and Operas: Settling Sociological Scores

The ransacking of the biographies of Durkheim and Weber has yielded greater issues than those concerned with their musical tastes. Concern with these might inflict a fixation of trivia on to sociology itself, a just reward for its analytical concerns with these matters in the milieu of the social. Whether Durkheim had musical interests or not is a matter of conjecture. In the case of Weber, they generate some perplexing and seemingly contradictory issues.

Given that he claimed to be unmusical in religious terms, and in the light of his efforts in *The Protestant Ethic* to construct the world in ways without the solace of the aesthetic, it might seem odd to stress the matter of musical tastes in relation to Weber. Again, Radkau provides some odd points for reflection. He notes the influence of Wagner on Weber. In the operas of Wagner, Weber found what Radkau terms 'salvation from the demons'. The operas enabled him to focus on love-hate and to find in these a sense of humanity, one that would flow into his scholarly work (Radkau 2009: 360–364). But the sociological heirs to Weber might find his ambiguous thrall to Wagner's operas as a means of reconciling the aesthetic with love (Radkau 2009: 373) a bit too much.

Perhaps only a Protestant who discounts aesthetics within theology, an expulsion Weber wrestled with, could end up in adulation of Wagner. Given his political baggage and his views of the Jews, the scores of Wagner's opera could hardly be treated as prescriptive donations Weber makes to later sociologists. This would be a deposit decidedly to be returned to sender. There is, however, a double meaning to the notion of a score. In one sense it is a sheet with musical notations, but in another meaning it generates a query as to what is going on. The term has pleasing sociological overtones. But if Weber was besotted with Wagner, this might just be a biographical quirk, one devoid of sociological significance. Yet, scores arise in another context, where biography is more definitely to be linked to sociological insight. This emerges in relation to another musical interest of Weber: the piano. It can be used to play more modest forms of musical expression: the minuet.

Radkau chronicles Weber's affair with the pianist Mina Tobler. This gave rise to interest in the piano itself in ways that had curious implications for the sociology of religion. Radkau expresses matters well when he observes that 'the rationalization of modern Western music under the influence of the piano—a new variation on the close link between technology and culture—became a central theme in Weber's sociology of music' (2009: 367). This interest led Weber to write a history of the piano (1978: 378–382). In that brief essay, where Weber knew the score in every sense of the word, concerns with notations, harmony and music emerged. That concern with harmony related to the rationalisation of the score, for playing the piano (Radkau 2009: 370–373). But another issue emerges, that the use of the piano in orchestral settings in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries generated the notion of the virtuoso, the one who controlled the symphony and who was in some cases was the conductor of proceedings (Weber 1978: 379). Radkau suggests that Weber transposed the notion of the virtuoso to the sociology of religion as a means of finding whether religiosity

was exceptional or common to all the laity. Radkau goes on to add that concerns with the rationalisation of notation in music were extended into Weber's understanding of this process in modernity (2009: 369–70).

The minuet is the most intimate of forms of music. Initially, it served dances, but that background task disappeared as minuets were listened to for their intrinsic worth. The composer associated with composing many minuets is Mozart. Brilliant at inscribing notations on the score, Mozart had an uncanny gift of producing harmony in ways that surmounted the rationalisation of composition. If Wagner presents an outlet for dramatic release which few sociologists would follow, given that even fewer are secularised Protestants seeking the aesthetic relief their religion denies them, Mozart presents a different image, of a Catholic genius who fuses harmony into a sense of Divine ordering (Johnson 2013). He had a profound influence on the Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar. His appreciation relates to his effort to speak of a symphonic aspect to pluralism, a harmony that is both redemptive and dramatic. To express this point, he invokes Mozart in ways that relate to notions of notation. Mozart, he suggests

Imparts something winged, buoyant, internally vibrant to his simplest melody—how often he works with simple scales!—so that the power that enables us to recognize him after only a few bars seems to flow from an inexhaustible reservoir of blessed tension, filling and tautening every member (von Balthasar 1987: 15).

There are no good reasons to confine Mozart to the composition of minuets, even if many were played on the piano where a body part, the finger was required to bring the score to life. His operas were magnificent in the great themes they sketched. In writing *The Enchantment of Sociology* (Flanagan 1996) Mozart's marriage of Figaro was played obsessively. It seemed to haunt the work.

Attending to the mystery of harmony and beauty can invite sociology to slide into theological domains and to realise a point that notations are not just inscriptions cast in stone but are there to be brought to life by play. As the piano has black and white keys, so too do ambiences of musical play mark peculiar contrasts. Between the Satanic overtones of Black metal music with its heavy discordant portentous thumps that betoken dark things and the ethereal sounds of a male choir in a Gothic cathedral whose habitus is to incline towards the light, to reach and stroke the transcendent are distinctions which even the deafest of sociologists cannot but notice.

Again it might seem that sociology has wandered off past its proper boundaries into realms which belong to theology. Somehow, in passing over these, it might seem that sociology has vaporised itself into discreditable piety where the notes of edification are deeply unpious to the analytical sociologist scrupulous in stewardship of its secular ambience. But this would be to forget a point of Lemert in his appraisal of Goffman, perhaps the purest of recent sociologists. Lemert suggested that 'the heart of any sociology worth a good spit is an enigma'. One of the traits he lists for this enigmatic property is that '*the very structures for which a sociology exists are irrevocably invisible*' (2003: xv). This concern with what is beyond the empirical signifies the end of sociological language but also perhaps the beginning of the need to deploy a theological argot to read those notations which mark a prelude, one perhaps played

to another tune where the minor and the major merge into something that transcends their incongruities and redeems their basis.

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