The Discipline of Religion

Structure, meaning, rhetoric

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Chapter 12

"Religion" and the governable self

> [Socrates's] mission is useful for the city – more useful than the Athenians' military victory at Olympia – because in teaching people to occupy themselves with themselves, he teaches them to occupy themselves with the city. ... I think that the main characteristic of our political rationality is the fact that this integration of the individuals in a community or in a totality results from a constant correlation between an increasing individualization and the reinforcement of this totality.
>
> (Foucault 1988b: 20, 161–162)

Although critique can be an end in itself, after calling for an end to the Eliadean era and suggesting that the sacred/profane rhetoric may provide, to some degree, a form of recoverable residue upon which we can rebuild a scholarly pursuit, some might find me remiss not to close by saying something about how we might proceed from where we happen to find ourselves, thus venturing a speculative guess about just what a thorough historicization of the rhetoric of "religion" might look like. With broad brush strokes this final chapter offers one possible answer to the question of what might arise from the residue that remains after a disenchanted, post-Cold War generation – raised on the deconstructive suspicion spawned by the student uprisings of the late 1960s and sobered by the alienating, post-1970s academic job market – has decided that the once obvious autonomy of religious experiences is not only a theoretically bankrupt concept but a politically suspect device. Having ceased to be persuaded by the notion of religion as something autonomous and extraordinary – whether it is considered good or bad, productive or destructive – what we have left to explain, then, is why so many individuals have found this very idea particularly contagious, appealing or, better put, useful.

In this move toward problematizing our ability to think and enact "religion," a number of scholars have started out by looking to the term's etymology.[1] As many have pointed out before, any modern language whose development has been affected by Latin-influenced cultures likely possesses something equivalent to the English term "religion." This means that, *for language families unaffected by Latin, there is no equivalent term to "religion"* – unless, of course, we pompously assert that our local word captures something essential to the entire human

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species, thereby distinguishing local *word* from universal *concept* (i.e., although they do not call "it" religion, they still have *It*; "a rose by any other name would smell as sweet"). This bold assertion is made all the easier by the long history of European influence on other cultures/languages by means of trade and conquest. For example, although "religion" is hardly a traditional concept in the subcontinent that we today know as India, the long history of contact with Europe has ensured that modern, English-speaking Indians have no difficulty conceiving of what we call Hinduism as being their "religion" – although, technically speaking, to a person we might call a Hindu, "Hinduism" is not a religion but is, rather, *sanatana dharma* (Sanskrit for the eternal system of duty/obligation and, thus, the cosmic order that results). As might be expected, despite its authoritative status in the history of textual studies, the Christian New Testament is not much help in settling these issues, for its language of composition, koine ("common") Greek, naturally lacked the historically later Latin root word/concept *religio*. Thus, English translations will routinely use "religion" to stand in for such terms as *eusebia* (e.g., 1 Timothy 3:16; 2 Timothy 3:5) and *threskeia* (e.g., James 1: 27), terms that are in fact closer to the Sanskrit *dharma* (duty, obligation), the Chinese *li* (rules of propriety determining social rank), or even the Latin *pietas* (the quality that comes of successfully maintaining one's proper social position, such as in the notion of filial piety) than our term "religion."

Etymological quests for the original meaning are thus not much help in sorting out this problem in taxonomy, for even in Latin our modern term "religion" has no equivalent – if, by "religion," you align yourself with contemporary popular wisdom and mean by it a coordinated and obviously set apart system of believing in such invisible beings as gods and demons, working toward an afterlife of some sort, telling tales of origins and endtimes, enacting rule-governed behaviors (i.e., rituals), or just being plain old good. As others have pointed out before me, the furthest back our etymological quest gets us is to the root of *religio*, "*-leig*," meaning simply "to bind" (Smith 1998: 269). From here we get to a series of etymologically related terms which, in their original contexts, simply meant such things as "the act of binding something tightly together" or "the act of paying close or careful attention to something." But this is hardly what we seem to mean by religion today.

So, where does this leave us? Well, it leaves us with a lot of questions in need of investigation: If a group of people do not have the concept, how can we study "their religion," let alone such other things as "their culture," "their economy," "their gender," or "their race"? This may sound silly, but for those no doubt well-meaning liberal scholars who endeavor not to "erase the indigenous perspective," someone must remind them that all of these concepts are our inevitably alien importations; they are the devices we in our culture use to map the world so as to make it knowable, and thereby establish specifically lived-worlds within it. (If such commentators took their own position seriously it would mean that they would simply remain silent when it comes to talking

about the Other since it is inevitably and necessarily a talking *in place of* the Other.) Other related questions in need of attention would be: Is cross-cultural, comparative analysis of all such localized human meaning even possible? Is "religion," like "literature," "life," or "culture," simply an arbitrary taxon some of us in the guild use to organize and talk about aspects of the observable world that strike us as curious? Why is it that a term which, long ago, referred to actions (like binding or taking monastic vows) came to be so tightly associated with the world of inner emotions, values, disembodied beliefs, and belief systems that refer to insubstantial, invisible beings and lives beyond death? Moreover, why did such discourses on "religion" arise in the European world when and where they did? Why was it such a contagious notion, spreading the world over, and why do we continue to imagine it to be part of "the Human Experience"? Taking these questions seriously means that, in this newly emergent field, where we are further "perfecting our data" – to borrow a phrase once again from Louis Menard – "our object of interest would then be 'religion' as the general name of a generic anthropological category, a nominal, intellectual construction, surely not to be taken as a 'reality'" (Smith 2001b: 142).

But if our object of study is "religion," those who use it, and its socio-political effects, then we must be on our guard when proceeding with our studies of cross-cultural, cross-historical human behaviors and institutions, for this local or domestic classification, "religion," is so basic to our own way of knowing and reproducing our own social world that the temptation to deploy it in a matter-of-fact, descriptive manner when talking about others may sneak up on us in surprising ways, with unanticipated implications. This point is made very nicely by Susan Reynolds with regard to historical studies that employ the concept "nation." In her study of social organization in medieval Western Europe she notes:

> Most medieval historians would deny that they are nationalists, but that is because, like many historians of the phenomenon of nationalism, they see it as something aggressive, xenophobic, and deplorable, but do not look hard at the ideas which underlie it. Nationalist ideas, however, are more widespread than the unpleasant manifestation of nationalist emotions. … The fundamental premise of nationalist ideas is that nations are objective realities, existing through history. Some such premise, however unarticulated, seems to be implied in much writing about the history of Europe, including medieval Europe, with its teleological emphasis on the development of modern states – the predestined "nation-states." It seems normally to be taken for granted that the nation-states of today are the true nations of history and that only they can ever have inspired loyalties which deserve to be called nationalist. … [A]ny past unit of government which no one claims to be a nation now is *ipso facto* seen as having been less naturally cohesive in the past. It evidently did not enjoy the manifest destiny to solidarity and survival which is the essential attribute of the true nation. …

> [B]elief in the objective reality of nations inevitably diverts attention from itself: since the nation exists, belief in it is seen not as a political theory but as a mere recognition of fact. The history of nationalism becomes less a part of the history of political thought than of historical geography.
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> (1984: 251–253)

A practical example of this that has direct bearing on our field is found in Keith Whitelam's study of, as he phrases it, the invention of ancient Israel (2001; see also Silberman 1990 and Thompson 1999). He argues that "the dominant model for the presentation of Israelite history has been, and continues to be, that of a unified national entity in search of national territory struggling to maintain its national identity and land through the crises of history. It is a concept of the past which mirrors the presentation of the present" (21). By means of this hindsight gaze, Whitelam demonstrates how the contemporary nationalist imagination "has been projected back into the past to provide the legitimation and justification of the present" (22). Or, as he phrases it a little later in his book,

> The foundation of the modern state has dominated scholarship to such an extent that the retrojection of the nation state into antiquity has provided the vital continuity which helps to justify and legitimize both.
>
> (58)

Or, as the Canadian essayist and political commentator, Michael Ignatieff, puts it, one of the essential components of nationalism is the presumption "that the people of the world [past and present, we might add] naturally divide into nations" (2000: 87).

Just as the concepts nation or nation-state – let alone individual or citizen – are today so utterly basic, even vital, to many of our self-understandings and ability to self-organize that we routinely cast them backward in chronological time and outward in geographic space, so too, it is difficult *not* to understand, say, ancient Romans or Egyptians as having a "religion." After all, common sense tells us that religion is a human universal. But, as Reynolds points out quite nicely, there is something at stake in so easily projecting, in this case, backward in history or outward in culture our local classification, for along with its ability to organize certain sorts of human behaviors comes attendant socio-political implications. By means of such projection we may be doing something more than neutrally or passively classifying the world around us; instead, by means of such classifications we may very well be actively presenting back to ourselves the taxonomies that help to establish our own contingent and inevitably provincial social world as if their components were self-evident, natural, universal, and necessary. Scholarship on religion, then, "is not about some disinterested construction," as Whitelam argues in the case of modern histories of ancient Israel, "but an important question of contemporary identity and power" (73).

Before proceeding, an important point stressed in parts of this book must be repeated. Unlike some other writers who have recently tackled the problem of "religion," this book has not assumed that, once we have swept away what we take to be some outdated or troublesome definition for "religion" then some more accurate concept of religion or faith or spirituality will, like a phoenix, arise from the ashes of our current historical situation. This was the late Cantwell Smith's hope when he replaced "religion" with "personal faith in transcendence," something he took to be a universal aspect of Human Nature. However, as Foucault persuaded some of us, discourse is an inevitable violence that we do to things, suggesting that no one discourse will ever be any closer to "the way things are." Although he was writing of the discourse on sexuality/sex, I think Foucault's comments are just as applicable to religion: "One must not suppose," he cautioned,

> that there exists a certain sphere of sexuality that would be the legitimate concern of a free and disinterested scientific inquiry were it not the object of mechanisms of prohibition brought to bear by the economic or ideological requirements of power.
>
> (1990: 98)

Or, as he phrased it in the opening pages to the second volume, *The Use of Pleasure*, his series of studies

> was intended to be neither a history of sexual behaviors nor a history of representations, but a history of "sexuality" – the quotation marks have a certain importance. ... I wanted first to dwell on that quite recent and banal notion of "sexuality": to stand detached from it, bracketing its familiarity, in order to analyze the theoretical and practical context with which it has been associated. ... To speak of sexuality in this way, I had to break with a conception that was rather common.
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> (1985: 3, 4)

Foucault strikes me as not attempting to discover some pristine or prepolitical sense of sex, freed from our sadly oppressive or petty morality, but, instead, as trying to determine "the modes according to which individuals are given to recognize themselves as sexual subjects" (1985: 5). Applying Foucault's attempt to historicize various techniques and experiences of subjectivity – or the means by which "the everyday individuality of everybody," as he phrased it in *Discipline and Punish* (1977a: 191), was brought to consciousness, making it an item of discourse – means that we too must break with a conception that is rather common. We can make a break with it by entertaining that the thing we routinely call religious experience or faith is the result of a complex discourse on religion (which is merely my rephrasing of J. Z. Smith's well-known point). In making this break we must remind ourselves

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that behind or before this discourse there lurks no purer, more real cross-cultural thing (i.e., faith, the sublime, spirituality, the holy, etc.). Taking the social and historical scale of analysis as our only available reference point, we come to see that there exists only assorted human behaviors, none any more or less significant, meaningful, or valuable than any other.[2]

If, then, discourses are by definition a "violence we do to things" – and if the generic, indistinguishable stuff of the world gets to count as isolatable "things" (i.e., items of discourse) only in light of competing, institutionalized systems of value, classification, and rank – then what criteria do we have to adjudicate these many violences we do? Which meanings will rise to the top and liberate us from what we portray to be our oppressive structures? However, if – as the old saying goes – there's no accounting for taste, then perhaps we can dispel with the myth of the given that fuels this quest for indigeneity and, instead, *try to account for why certain local and transient tastes and meanings become, for a time, fashionable or persuasive*. In this vein, I have adapted for the title of this final chapter a phrase of Foucault's, "the government of individualization" (1982: 781), to help make explicit the socio-political role our field's primary classification plays in human affairs.

A step toward just such a project appears to have been made by Peter Harrison in his impressive book, *"Religion" and the Religions in the English Enlightenment* (1990; see also Wiebe 1994). On the opening page he writes:

> The concepts "religion" and "the religions," as we presently understand them, emerged quite late in Western thought, during the Enlightenment. Between them, these two notions provided a new framework for classifying particular aspects of human life.
>
> (1)

Harrison's book is thus an exercise in studying the practical impact of these socio-cognitive categories during a specific period of European history. Despite his misgivings concerning Cantwell Smith's preference for "faith" over "religion" (misgivings clearly spelled out in Harrison's epilogue [174–175]), he nonetheless employs this traditional distinction, thus undermining what strikes me as the most promising and provocative part of his study. For example, soon after we find the above-quoted thesis statement, Harrison elaborates by employing the very interior/exterior, private/public scheme he appears to historicize: "In the present work I shall be examining in more detail this process of *the objectification of religious faith*" (2; emphasis added). Rather than seeing the concept and institution of "religion" or "faith" as one technique whereby an interior, seemingly apolitical zone is fabricated and named, Harrison – like Carrette, King, and Taves – seems to presume the existence of an inner, purely subjective disposition or attitude that somehow predates (both chronologically and logically) its setting, thus being objectified, externalized, expressed, manifested, controlled, or reified by means of the word "religion." Like many other

critics of "religion," then, a traditional realism creeps back in, despite the appearance of a social constructionist critique. What such critics take away with one hand, they swiftly give back with the other.

A similar technique is found in an even more recent essay on the "strengths and weaknesses" of Durkheim's contributions to the study of religion. After acknowledging that "the word religion is our word," Thomas Idinopulos elaborates:

> The word, religion, is our modern word for the very good reason that the sheer differentiation of functions and roles in modern life forces us to distinguish between politics, labor, commerce, leisure, art, religion, etc. The word, religion, acquired its own distinct meaning when the forces of secularization became so dominant in western culture that religious belief and practice became distinctly human acts. For once secularity became fully evident in society it was possible to speak by contrast of the religious way of life.
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> (2002: 9–10)

Instead of seeing the practical use of "religion" in opposition to "secularity" to have been one of the techniques that enabled the so-called process of modernist differentiation, Idinopulos argues that the brute fact of socio-political differentiation "forces us to distinguish" within what previously seems to have been a homogeneously sacred realm. Or, as Idinopulos phrases it, due to the unholy "forces of secularization … religious belief and practice *became* distinctly human acts" (emphasis added). Prior to secularization, and prior to religious beliefs and practices *becoming* human acts, I presume they were simply religious acts. Drawing on the proverbial example of the ancient person as one who lives in a thoroughly romantic world of uniform meaning, he goes on to say, "this interweaving of religion with everything else in life was true of archaic people" (10). But if "religion" is indeed *our* word, then how can it be used so easily to discuss just what archaic people did or did not weave together? Taking his own position seriously means it is impossible to talk about religion prior to so-called secularization, and thus ancient people – who no doubt used classification systems of their own in an elaborate manner – must therefore have inhabited a world which was neither religious nor secular, neither sacred nor profane. Apart from pitching what he admits to be a local word backward in time as if it refers to some necessary feature of human experience (as identified above, this is a technique commonly found in nationalist studies of nationalism), the trouble with his evidently Cantwell Smithian analysis is that in attempting to historicize the word "religion," Idinopulos romanticizes ancient life by presupposing that sacred and secular refer to historically distinct things (or, better put, "forces"), with one arising after the other.[3] As stated above, whereas the word "religion" has a history, the concept (i.e., religious practices) seems to be eternal and universal. Presuming these two discursive

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moments to be substantively different, and that one (i.e., religion as concept, or religion-as-matter-of-fact) historically precedes the other (i.e., the forces of secularization that invented the word "religion") – rather than seeing word/concept and religious/secular as part of the same socio-rhetorical moment, as devices for concocting meaningful worlds by means of the varying degree of tension in which they can be held – signifies that Idinopulos's work reproduces the strategy that this chapter is seeking to historicize. In his essay we read the old, old story of a homogenous, meaningful past fractured and thus desacralized by the impersonal forces of modernity. It is a story that has not changed much and still holds much allure for scholars.

Although my own conclusion to the preceding eleven chapters could profitably cite the words from Harrison's own concluding chapter – "I hope that this study has highlighted the need to revise some cherished assumptions about the constructs 'religion' and 'the religions'" (175) – the future of the study of "religion" (and, as Foucault said above, "the quotation marks have a certain importance") does not lie in the direction of searching for a more adequate or accurate definition of religion that accords with, protects, or recovers the interior and prior zone called faith. Neither does he share the presumption that a homogeneously sacred sphere or zone of faith lies in the historical background of the sadly limited, modernist, and disillusioned sacred/secular dichotomy. Instead, *it lies in the direction of thoroughly historicizing the private/public, belief/practice, Church/State, and sacred/secular binaries*, scrutinizing their historical development, their rhetorical deployment, questioning the narrative widely accepted by historians that the engine of secularization drives European history, and asking what is entailed in presuming that *any* moment of human praxis – including the praxis of discourses on privacy, intuition, feeling, piety, and faith – somehow escapes the uncharted ebb and flow of contingent and thus contestable social history. It lies in the direction of taking seriously Jonathan Smith's position that "[r]eligion is not a native category. It is not a first person term of self-categorization. It is a category imposed from the outside on some aspect of native culture" (1998: 269). The historical fact of these widely circulating classifications – and not their supposed one-to-one fit to social reality – thus comprises the residue that we inherit from a previous generation of scholars, the raw material with which we have to work. So, unlike some recent scholars who, in the midst of their critique of, say, Eliade's dehistoricization of religious symbols, nonetheless recommend that we "return to the realm of social, political, and material context in the study of *religious* symbols and experiences" (as this position is described by Urban [2001b: 438; emphasis added]; Urban is here citing Wasserstrom [1999: 243–244] on the origins of this call for historicizing religious symbols), my question regards the presumed necessity of the qualifier "religious." What is accomplished by segregating some obviously historical, political, etc., symbol systems and actions by classifying them as religious? Why not simply call them political?[4]

Take, for example, the following claim which, at first glance, seems to accord with the project of this present book: "the rhetorical power of the doctrinal,

ritual, and symbolic forms that constitute religion is such that those who study these forms tend to succumb to their charms" (Benavides 2001a: 455). It is crucial that the project being recommended here be distinguished from this, insomuch as Benavides is interested in the rhetorical power of what we usually see to be a religion's sub-components (i.e., its ritual or symbolic forms, much like Ninian Smart's "dimensions") rather than the rhetorical power of the very presumption that just these human practices ought to have a special designation (e.g., ritual rather than habit) and, further, are naturally to be collected together and called religion's dimensions, i.e., that there is such a distinguishable thing as religion, let alone its assorted sub-components. Anticipating the conclusion of this chapter, I would venture to say that scholars such as Benavides have understandably succumbed to the charms of a socio-cognitive device that makes their social worlds possible – "religion."

To repeat Foucault's words, in this final chapter my aim is for readers simply "to stand detached from it [in our case, 'religion'], bracketing its familiarity, in order to analyze the theoretical and practical context with which it has been associated." For our object of study is the normally operating assumptions about how we classify, rank, and value our worlds, and which worlds are made possible by which classifications. As already stated in the book's opening, then, this chapter presses readers "to learn to what extent the effort to think one's own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently" (Foucault 1985: 9). A thorough historicization of "self" and "religion," and thus of "State" and "secular," would therefore take as its data these very classifications and inquire what goes into, and what comes of, presuming the world is somehow naturally divided between sacred and secular, private and public, self and group. In Tomoko Masuzawa's words, this involves scholars being "dispatched to inspect the exact date of [their] manufacture, to investigate the history, the process, the mechanism, the circumstances of manufacture" (2000: 129). Most recently, the Dutch scholar of nationalism, Peter van der Veer, has returned from the archives with valuable information concerning the circumstances surrounding the manufacture of the related category "spirituality." In his study of the simultaneous impact of colonialism in both the British center as well as the colonized Indian periphery, he demonstrates persuasively that "a master concept like 'spirituality' is not epiphenomenal to 'real history' but rather productive of historical change" (2001: 69). When it comes to the master rhetorical trope "religion," this is precisely the position argued in this chapter.

With the dusty archives in mind, the example of the eighteenth-century German writer, Friedrich Schleiermacher, is often used when talking about the rise of the modern concept of "religion" as a deeply personal feeling characteristic of the self in its purest, most noble, or basic form. Despite having often drawn on the example of Schleiermacher myself when critiquing the rhetorical uses of "religious experience" and "piety" (McCutcheon 2001b: 4), I now see that, because his is an example that generally functions to lodge the issue of the

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category "religion" within what is seen as a distinctly unique human pursuit, theology, drawing on his work as an example can serve to reinforce the modern concept rather than redescribing and historicizing it. In other words, one cannot employ the theologian/non-theologian classification (e.g., "According to the theologian Schleiermacher ..."; "As an atheist, Marx argued ...") while attempting to historicize the very concept by means of which such distinctions are held to be meaningful – that is, the concept religion. Instead, I would like to close this book with a meditation on the manner in which the presumption that an inner, spiritual life exists functions to discipline potentially unruly human material characterized by differing interests, creating of them a collective Whole, a nation of "civil" citizens comprised of governable selves. The following is therefore not meant as a definitive study but a sketch of one direction for a future research program.

In doing so I assume that the future of the study of religion lies in the direction of exploring just what Foucault may have meant by his term governmentality (1979), a term he used for the "contact between technologies of domination of others and those of the self" (Foucault 1988b: 19). To venture a rather speculative claim, the groundwork for which was laid in an earlier essay (McCutcheon 2001b: ch. 10), *large-scale socio-political organizations such as the liberal nation-state may not have been possible without the modern disciplining concept religion and the so-called civil, social institutions made possible by the infectious presupposition of a set apart private zone of belief, meaning, and value.* My contention, then, is that future scholarship in our field will investigate *how it is that this particular socio-rhetoric makes selves (a.k.a., citizens) appropriate to the needs of those whose material interests dominate the modern, liberal-democratic nation-state.* I therefore believe that Marx and Engels were indeed correct when they speculated that all critique was premised on a critique of religion – not, as they surely meant, those obviously distinct institutions such as Christianity and what they took to be their seemingly oppressive hold on the working class, but rather the very fact that we continue to exist as members of groups by presuming to exist an interior, private life of the mind/spirit/faith. Although not wanting to overstate my case, I would hazard to say that all critique may well turn out to be premised on a critique of "religion." If so, then – and this is the truly ironic part – any use of this category, whether as part of one's criticism or praise for this or that religion, may equally well help to reproduce the larger social group.

Due to the recent history of immigration that has made much of North America a supposed cultural mosaic, we can easily see the practical utility of this discourse on religion, along with the reason for the contemporary concern among some intellectuals with using the study of religion *qua* deeply personal, private beliefs as a tool for resolving the apparent problem of observable cultural difference (the many) by essentializing and dehistoricizing it within the heart of unseen yet universal religious identity (the esoteric One). As previously noted, Diana Eck's most recent work on the topic of religious pluralism in the U.S.

comprises but the most obvious example (2001). It may therefore not be a coincidence (though demonstrating a causal link must await another day) that the triumphant rebirth of this personalized discourse on religion in the U.S. roughly coincided with the Immigration Act of 1965, which, in the words of the literary critic Stanley Fish, "shifted [U.S.] immigration priorities from those Nordic European peoples who had furnished America with its original stock to Asian and African peoples from Third World countries" (1994: 83). Thus, the presence of a new and alien "them" required innovative socio-rhetorical tools to re-make what had previously seemed to be a seamless "us," helping to explain why the U.S. denominational system in the early twentieth century (long prior to these changing immigration trends) was so successful in exerting its control over higher education and thus fighting off the early advances of the young humanistic discipline of Comparative Religion – but not so a few short decades later. That the U.S. Supreme Court was so preoccupied with issues of religion and the public sphere throughout the late 1950s and 1960s (including, but not limited to, the much cited 1963 Abingdon v. Schempp public school prayer decision) is also evidence of this; the Court's invocation of the notion of religion as a zone of unverifiable yet important private opinion juxtaposable to some stable and self-evident zone of public practice (signified by the often used trope, "rule of law") has served the nation-state well when it came time to adjudicate between familiar, normal, and civil behavior, on the one hand, and alien, abnormal, and illegal activities, on the other – all the while making and remaking a specific idea of the nation in the process.

But the prominent rhetoric of private experience we find in modern nation-states is hardly new; after all, conflicts in the midst of the so-called social mosaic have been around for a very long time. In some historic periods, in some contemporary regions of the world, and at specifically stressed moments in our own world, physical coercion (e.g., torture, warfare, incarceration, etc.) ensures the smooth operation of a social world. However, it is the shift from organizing social life by controlling the behavior of bodies to controlling the thinking of minds and the perception of selves that most attracts my interest. Examples that bear a direct relevance for private/public and Church/State rhetorics as they have developed in the contemporary U.S., for example, can be found far earlier than Schleiermacher, in the political writings of such influential early European nation-builders and political theorists as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean Jacques Rousseau. Despite some obvious and significant disagreements between the writings of these three, they all employ a highly individualist sociology – "MAN is born free; and everywhere he is in chains," as Rousseau famously phrased it – which makes it possible for them to imagine a pure, individual zone of preference and opinion which is free from the realm of fact and public intervention and thus no threat to public order. Whether this rhetorical space is used by such writers to ensure the safety of their own dissenting group, under siege from a dominant group, or used by them to limit the scope of influence exercised by dissenters, the outcome is the same: a status quo is effectively

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reproduced by individualizing and marginalizing opposition. It is precisely this technique of governing that is accomplished by means of "religion" insomuch as it connotes a supposedly asocial zone, long thought to be the residence of the Human Spirit – what Robert Solomon has characterized as a "transcendental pretense" (1988: 3). Because of the impact this pretense has had in political philosophy, I wish to spend some time on a few historic examples that predate our current rhetoric of private experience. However, a future cross-cultural project might involve studying the manner in which what I am calling the rhetoric of privacy, or what Hugh Urban names as the syndrome of the secret (2001b, see also 1998), contributes to all acts of social formation.

Before proceeding, it should be noted that such a historical, cross-cultural study was indeed begun with the impressive, multi-volume *A History of Private Life*. However, as provocative as these volumes are, at times they cannot help but pitch backward in time our contemporary classification system, thereby reproducing its (and our social world's) legitimacy rather than historicizing it (as observed by Reynolds in her study of modern nationalism and medieval Europe). For instance, although his work has influenced my own thinking significantly, in his chapter on private life in the Roman Empire entitled, "Tranquilizers," Paul Veyne (1987: 207–233) discusses private and public religion in the Roman empire, apparently without considering the implications of assuming that a portion of human practice – that part having to do with beliefs in gods and after life – is obviously set apart *as* religious (whether practiced privately or publicly). Describing private vs. public religion fails to theorize how the artifice of privacy, belief, and experience are created in the first place by means of this and other such powerful classifications and discourses. Much like taking hallways for granted in the study of private domestic space, his default distinction of religious vs. non-religious assumes, rather than problematizes, the existence of a distinct zone of belief and faith. Instead, I am hypothesizing that a technique for constructing large-scale social identities may well be a socio-rhetoric of privacy (along with the politico-legal fictions it helps to establish) contained in the discourse on religion, whereby zones of possible public discontent are individualized and spiritualized, and thus contained within safe zones of non-substantial and ethereal "experience," "faith," and "belief."

To support this hypothesis, I turn to the work of several of the better-known early-modern political theorists of the nation-state. I do so knowing full well that the following, brief survey of their work, along with the various contemporary examples upon which I will draw, serves only as a broad outline of what must no doubt be a larger, more detailed, and likely collaborative future project. So, to borrow the opening words from Whitelam's study of the politics of writing the history of ancient Israel, anyone portraying the following as anything but the general framework for such a future project "runs the risk of being misunderstood as arrogant because it appears to imply the ability to control a vast range of material which is beyond the competence of most individuals and certainly beyond my abilities" (2001: 1).

With this important qualification in mind, take the example of Thomas Hobbes's study of (in fact, prescription for) the workings of a "civil" society, *Leviathan* (1651). We read:

> Fear of power invisible, feigned by the mind, or imagined from tales *publicly allowed*, religion; *not allowed*, superstition. And when the power imagined is truly such as we imagine, true religion.
>
> (Part 1, ch. 6 [1962: 51]; emphasis added)[5]

Although these words were written well over 300 years ago, we see in them an elaborate taxonomy which accomplishes practical, political work. For Hobbes, religion is to be distinguished from mere superstition (what many today would rename as "cult"), not so much because one is true (though Hobbes predictably goes on to distinguish religion from true religion, which, of course, he associates with Christianity), but because one is "publicly allowed" – that is to say, allowed to exist by the sovereign. Hobbes rightly understood that classification is a political act; in this case, the right to name something as religion was possessed only by those in power (as it still is). More than this, the thing so identified as a religion was understood purely to be matter of personal preference:

> by reason of different fancies, judgments, and passions of several men, hath grown up into ceremonies so different, that those which are used by one man, are for the most part ridiculous to another.
>
> (Part 1, ch. 12 [90])

So religion – which, for Hobbes, had its origins in the belief in ghosts, our ignorance of the actual causes of things, our devotion toward that which we do not understand and thus fear, and our desire to know the future – is a matter of private emotion, tastes, and personal judgments concerning an invisible world. Moreover, a particular subset of these dispositions were sanctioned by the sovereign and could, therefore, be expressed or manifested in public.

Only if we presume that religion and secularity are substantively distinct – one holy and the other unholy, one the zone of the Church and one the sphere of the State, one the realm of belief and faith and the other the province of action and politics – will we see writers such as Hobbes to be an early representative of the inexorable "forces of secularization." If we make a shift in our thinking then we no longer will see two conflicting impersonal systems, historical epochs, or modes of thought. Instead, we will see politically engaged actors artfully using tools to negotiate power and place within ever-changing and uncontrollable structural settings. For example, we will see Hobbes's writings on civility and "religion" in light of his own context. We will learn of his longtime relationship with the pro-royalist Devonshires (in 1608 he began working as a tutor for the young William Cavendish, the son of William Cavendish Sr., the

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first earl of Devonshire; eventually Hobbes took on the role of being an advisor to the family) and his role in the political turmoil that predated the English Civil War. Not just his political writings but his use of the classification "religion" will be placed within the context of his defenses of Charles I which forced Hobbes to flee to France due to the English Parliament's public conflicts with the King (Hobbes was in France from 1640 until 1651).

An especially useful model for how to make such a shift in our thinking can be found in the opening chapters to Bruce Lincoln's *Theorizing Myth* (1999), where he examines the role of *mythos* and *logos* in ancient Greek literature. Swimming against the stream of yet another old, old story – the one that pits irresistible, cool-headed rationality against impassioned storytelling – Lincoln understands these two types of speech not as substantively different and not as representing two different modes of thought, but as rhetorical techniques useful for authorizing and contesting specific social arrangements. It is precisely this shift, from content to form, that is necessary if we are to see writers such as Hobbes (let alone Plato) as thoroughly historical actors working within larger political settings to concoct meaningfully inhabitable worlds by means of negotiation, classification, and rhetoric. This is the shift that allows us to rewrite a history of, for example, such events as the Reformation; instead of the old story of warring religious beliefs and creeds, all of which are somehow separate from (and sadly appropriated by) the politics of feuding lords, we can understand the manner in which concrete, practical contests and political realignments were waged all across European society by means of various rhetorics.[6] "Church" and "State" thus function like "*mythos*" and "*logos*," as two poles of the same contest. Instead of presuming an inner world of faith already to exist – and thus something that political writers either attempt to recover or malign – this shift allows us to see how the rhetorical fabrication of such a zone makes certain social worlds possible, more attractive, or less legitimate.

With this shift from content to form in mind, consider the case of John Locke who, by the winter of 1685–6, had drafted the Latin text for his first "*Epistle de tolerantia*"[7] while hiding for two years in Holland from the Stuart royalists. In such a circumstance the distinction between private sentiment and public order was understandably quite useful. Having spent three and a half years in France, he returned to England in May of 1679; the previous August there was the fabricated revelation of the "Popish Plot" in which a conspiracy to assassinate Charles II aimed at replacing him with his Catholic brother James. As a result, the Parliament had been dissolved by Charles (on the details of Locke's context see Milton 1994). Locke's letter thus communicates his concern over the effects of dissent, effects that occurred at the intersection of what he understood as private, personal conscience and the collective interests represented by the sovereign, public authority. Because the thing called religion was identified by its claims concerning an unseen world and the origins and destiny of history – "the establishment of opinions, which for the most part are about nice and intricate matters that exceed the capacity of ordinary understandings" (Locke 1955: 7).

Locke advised that, while freedom of conscience ought to prevail, the government's authority would have to be exercised to ensure the smooth public interactions of its citizens. (As he phrased it in *The Second Treatise of Government*, individuals unite in a society "for the mutual preservation of their lives, liberties, and estates, which I call by the general name 'property.'") Although one is free to hold and propose beliefs of all sorts, one is *not* free to impose them or put them into practice, insomuch as such beliefs – what he terms "the diversity of opinions" – are all too fallible and unverifiable.

"All the life and power of true religion," he was then able to conclude, "consists in the inward and full persuasion of the mind; and faith is not faith without believing. ... [T]rue and saving religion consists in the inward persuasion of the mind" (18). Once established, this private zone of belief makes civil society possible:

> I esteem it above all things necessary to distinguish exactly the business of civil government from that of religion, and to settle the just bounds that lie between the one and the other. If this be not done, there can be no end put to the controversies that will be always arising between those that have, or at least pretend to have, on the one side, a concernment for the interests of men's souls, and, on the other side, a care of the commonwealth.
>
> (17)

That Locke's sense of "civility" and "commonwealth" are hardly common – after all, he has no trouble *not* tolerating those who undermine the State by means of their intolerance, their atheism, or their treasonous service to foreign powers (15) – should be more than obvious to us at this historic juncture. Come to think of it, he's not all that different from contemporary writers on this score. Commenting on his experiences at the 2000 International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) Congress in South Africa, where the highly praised values of civility and religious tolerance were much praised, my former colleague, Jack Llewellyn, has observed: "Now, I believe in tolerance as much as the next person, that is to say, only up to a point." Although lacking the obvious irony of Llewellyn's Voltaire-like comment, Rousseau made much the same point: "It is impossible to live in peace with people one believes to be damned," he wrote; for "to love them would be to hate the God who punishes them; *it is an absolute duty either to redeem or to torture them*" (Book IV, ch. 8; 1982: 186–187; emphasis added). As is apparent from the blunt manner in which Rousseau phrases the point, toleration

> is often [always, I would add] actually not a transcendent value, but one that operates within a framework that defines its boundaries. In all the cases that I have mentioned so far, in the U.K., Israel, Nigeria, Scandinavia, and South Africa, I think that the overarching project might

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> be identified as *nation building* or *nation managing*. Classes about religion [or so the standard argument goes] should promote tolerance because that will serve to reduce civil strife (which is in the interests of the state even as it serves to further marginalize those who aren't part of the elite). ... It would be good for business if there was less civil strife and religious education should engender tolerance towards that end.
>
> (Llewellyn 2001: 62; emphasis added)

Llewellyn is certainly onto something here. But before proceeding, it should be pointed out that, given a social theory that starts with the premise that all social formations are the products of techniques that portray one particular set of local interests and values as if they were self-evidently corporate and thus transcendent – to the exclusion of a host of historically prior and currently competing local interests and institutions – it is hardly an indictment to recover the specific interests served by rhetorics of tolerance, civility, and the commonwealth. To phrase it another way, Locke's "Mahometans" are quite easily and naturally excluded from his State, for it would be "ridiculous for anyone to profess himself" to be one while also being "faithful to a Christian magistrate" (15). What should attract our attention, then, is not that such discourses on toleration are hypocritical (for such a judgment is propelled by the assumption that it could somehow be otherwise) or that all discourses on tolerance contain an inevitable element of intolerance, but, instead how easily boundary policing and maintenance are glossed over when like-minded – or, better phrased, like-interested and like-organized – people converse on the so-called common good and supposedly civil society.

With the complexity of tolerance discourses in Locke's era in mind, Christopher Hill's recent essay (2000) on toleration in seventeenth-century England should be mentioned. Although several of the essays in this book, *The Politics of Toleration in Modern Life*, endeavor to promote a specific brand of contemporary tolerance (and hence a specific idea of the group – in this case the U.K.), Hill nicely historicizes tolerance discourses from that period, revealing the politics of inclusion.[8] Recovering the practical setting of these rhetorical techniques – "English men and women were being burnt alive for their religious beliefs as late as 1612," Hill writes, "and the Archbishop Neile of York ... said in 1639 that he thought it would be a good thing to revive the practice. Burning heretics had done the church a great deal of good, he said nostalgically" (2000: 27) – Hill convincingly demonstrates that "the evolution of toleration was not a smooth intellectual process, proceeding from argument to argument until all were convinced" (27). In other words, by historicizing discourses on toleration Hill dispels the generally held presumptions that (i) toleration is a universal, politically neutral, and thus self-evident transcendent value that, (ii) once proposed, proceeds by its own inner momentum, catching on like wildfire since everyone involved cannot help but see how sensible it is to "live and let live" on what is sometimes called a level playing field. Instead of

seeing tolerance as a disengaged, universal theory, Hill persuades his readers that such discourses are political techniques whereby social agents work, in the midst of conflicts between a variety of oppositional and dominant discourses, to make a specific sort of political space, as in the already mentioned case of Hobbes who, in Hill's opinion, "was right in thinking that some bishops [who returned with Charles II] would have liked to burn him" (28). That was 1660; as late as the 1690s, Hill observes, Englishmen were still being hanged for blasphemy.

Although Hill seems at first to employ the categories of "religious" and "political" in the traditional manner – assuming the latter to refer to such things as party politics or active forms of participation in the political process, Hill suggests that, for example, John Bunyan (1628–1688) was motivated by religious beliefs to preach in 1659 against the wealthy (32) – it soon becomes clear that we can read this as a form of descriptive analysis whereby we take seriously the participant perspective of historic actors such as Bunyan. For instance, Hill notes that, "when, Bunyan faced the Bedfordshire justices in 1661, *he thought* he was refusing to give up his God-given vocation of preaching" (31; emphasis added); however, since the gentry's perception was that "he was a dangerous agitator who was stirring up class hostility in the very delicate situation of post-restoration England" (31), our goal as scholars is not to adjudicate between these two sets of participant perceptions but, rather, to study the conflict between the two, as they meet in a specific, historical and material setting. It is the conflict between these two sets of interests, each of which is encoded within a different rhetorical style, that comprises the setting of discourses on tolerance and intolerance. Taking materialist analysis seriously, then, Hill accurately understands just why the gentry of Bunyan's day refused simply to see him as "a godly non-conformist preacher" (30) and, instead, found his pro-"hedge-creeper and highwayman" rhetoric to be dangerous to their practical interests. They jailed him for twelve years (Bunyan would not silence himself by agreeing not to preach) because his public talk (a form of political praxis) had crossed a line.

If we collapse the supposed distinction between those aspects of the public spheres we label "religion" and "politics," we will press beyond Hill's already insightful analysis, disagreeing when he seems to conclude that, "though Bunyan was certainly not a political figure, he had politics forced upon him by the policies of post-restoration governments" (31). Speaking out in public against the gentry, regardless of the rhetorical/institutional setting of such speech or the manner in which it is authorized (i.e., appeals to Scripture, the Will of God, self-evident Truths, universal features of Human Nature, etc.), is fundamentally a political act; it is not that it becomes political only once external structures are "forced upon" us (as if our subjectivity were a content that miraculously predates its various contexts), but that it is political from the outset, since it is speech that originates from within a specific structural (i.e., economic, social, etc.) context. Being careful not to project backward in history our own modern technique for managing dissent, we will therefore agree with

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Hill when he concludes that "in the seventeenth century, when state and church were one – perhaps in other societies where party and state are one – toleration is a *political* issue, inseparable from politico-social questions which historians of toleration sometimes overlook" (36). Such historians of toleration, much like Reynolds's depiction of scholars of nationalism and, I would add, like many scholars of religion, overlook this precisely because of their own contemporary and terribly successful device for constraining opposition: their use of the politically expedient categories of religion, faith, inspiration, motivation, intention, agency, experience, etc.

One example of a failure to avoid projecting our modern techniques backward in history will have to suffice: in his, at times, provocative recent work, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, Mark Juergensmeyer (2000) endeavors to recover the participant viewpoint in understanding why religious people engage in violent action. Taking these people seriously, however, means elevating to the level of analysis their own participant disclosures concerning such things as their "religious motivation." In other words, instead of reading their claims concerning, say, "the Word of God" or "the Will of Allah" as potent rhetorical devices or cues of relevance to members of their specific group and thus effective for organizing and authorizing their group's strategic, oppositional behaviors, Juergensmeyer reads their claims at face value and is left with the problem of how such deeply religious people could commit such abhorrent acts.[9] Such liberal writers thus attempt "to have their cake and eat it too": (i) they wish to respect the participant's (perhaps even their own) self-understanding, thus representing religion as something deeply important and transcendent, no matter which or whose religion; yet, as members of obviously dominant social groups which are, at least in part, dependent on the scholar's work to re-create the conditions of the group's dominance (ii) such writers have little choice but to try to distinguish "their" violent actions from "our" peaceful, civil, normal, and purpose-giving religion – religion "at its best," as Juergensmeyer prescribes it (240).

To accomplish this disengagement, Juergensmeyer develops a two-fold typology of violence: "exaggerated violence" (120), or "performative violence" (122 ff.), which is symbolic, dramatic, and theatrical, is distinguished from practical or "strategic violence," which is real and effective. Whereas the former is merely an expression of faith that, once manifested in public, "forces those who witness it directly or indirectly into that 'consciousness'" (125), the latter is "focused … on an immediate political acquisition" (124). Or, to rephrase the point: "Such explosive scenarios are not *tactics* directed toward an immediate, earthly, or strategic goal, but *dramatic* events intended to impress for their symbolic significance. As such, they can be analyzed as one would any other symbol, ritual, or sacred drama" (123). Readers must be clear on one point: it is not that all historic acts can be studied both in terms of their symbolic and practical consequences (more on the troublesome nature of this distinction below), but that these two spheres are rather sharply distinguished from each

other. For example, the harsh manner in which he distinguishes the symbolic from the real is evident in the following: "The very act, however, *is sometimes more than symbolic*: by demonstrating the vulnerability of governmental power, to some degree it weakens that power. Because power is largely a matter of perception, symbolic statements *can lead to* [which means that they sometimes do not lead to] real results" (132; emphasis added). A little earlier Juergensmeyer had commented, "I can imagine a line with 'strategic' on the one side and 'symbolic' on the other, with various acts of terrorism located in between" (123). Although some might dispute my critique by reading him to be saying that all violent acts have both components, with one or the other emphasized, I would counter by noting that, regardless the participants' intentions, *all human acts are thoroughly practical, strategic, earthly, and thus political* (meaning something other than "party politics" or the sort of action that leads to a change in a specific government policy, which I assume Juergensmeyer to have in mind when he uses the term "political"). Moreover, it is highly problematic to distinguish symbolic from real in the first place, for I cannot conceive of any real historical human action which is not symbolic, from wearing clothes, to setting a breakfast table and writing a book – even using the symbolic/real typology itself is both symbolic *and* political! They are both, and can never be more one than the other – not, unless, as participants, observers, and analysts we seek to lessen this or that real impact by deploying a symbol system that serves to segregate the action to the realm of mere theatrical expression, as if an inner, creative impulse can or cannot be manifested in social life. It is as if such things as "art" could be either political or aesthetic, or more one than the other, instead of seeing discourses on aesthetics (or discourses on symbols, i.e., semiotics) as being historical and thus political through and through.

This is why I find Juergensmeyer's typology, and the sort of study of violence it makes possible, to be but an instance of conflict management and status quo maintenance. Studying certain sorts of violence – for instance, the Aum Shinrikyo nerve gas attack in the Tokyo subway in 1995 (Juergensmeyer's ch. 6; see also 123–124) – as more symbolic and religious than practical, as ritual rather than politics, segregates a particular zone of human action within the realm of inner meaning, thereby reserving the public realm of action for those actions some "we" find less troublesome and less perplexing. Deploying these conflict management techniques (i.e., the thoroughly modernist binaries of private/public, faith/action, symbolic/real, in which the former is consistently privileged over the latter), Juergensmeyer is able to look back in history and, just as Reynolds, Whitelam, Ignatieff, and Hill observed, remake the past in a manner conducive to the contemporary need for a specific type of public civility. For instance, unlike the historian Hill who commented, "in the seventeenth century, when state and church were one," Juergensmeyer writes:

> From the time that modern secular nationalism emerged in the eighteenth century as a product of the European Enlightenment's political values, it

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> has assumed a distinctly anti-religious, or at least anticlerical, posture. ... [The work of Locke and Rousseau] had the effect of taking religion – at least Church religion – out of public life. ... Modernity signaled not only the demise of the Church's institutional authority and clerical control, but also the loosening of religion's ideological and intellectual grip on society.
>
> (224–225)

The important point is that Hill understands that religion/politics, sacred/secular, and Church/State are co-existing binaries that co-developed and are necessarily used in concert with one another (a point to which I return below), not two substantively and historically separate zones, one of which happens to predate the other (as suggested previously by Harrison and Idinopulos). If the position being argued throughout the preceding chapters is understood as supporting the latter reading – such that the European Enlightenment is thought to have oppressively privatized faith – then a subtle but significant difference between my position and those of writers such as Juergensmeyer has been lost or overlooked. Whether, for example, pre-seventeenth-century Europeans, or people from contemporary cultures other than our own, believe(d) in gods or a life after death, or whatever we today happen to define religion to be, I would argue that they were not religious. Instead, taking seriously the historic or cultural specificity of these people means entertaining that they were simply going about their particular social life, appealing to and employing local classification schemes that were useful in reproducing their specific worlds that satisfied specific biological and social needs they happened to have. Failing to take seriously that, in a previous European era, people organizing themselves and mapping their worlds by means of effective rhetorical techniques somewhat different but directly related to our own, many commentators have little choice but to envision a homogenous zone of the sacred that historically preceded, and was oppressively constrained by, the Enlightenment. (At this point I can hear the echo of Joseph Campbell's analysis of the supposedly pure authenticity of Native American spirituality or ancient tribal life, for example.) For in the midst of this sacred/secular antagonism (which is significantly different from understanding it, as I do, as a binary working in concert to make a specifically meaningful social space legitimate and another illegitimate), we recover once again the notion of a private faith distinguishable from its embodiment in ritual and institution (i.e., references to "Church religion" and the "anti-clerical" critique of the Enlightenment). This very distinction, the one that fuels studies such as Juergensmeyer's, is the modernist technique that ought to comprise the data of analysis.

With Juergensmeyer's above quotation in mind, then, we return to the eighteenth century, moving forward from the work of Hobbes and Locke to that of Rousseau, the third theorist whose writings form the backdrop of our own preoccupation with private variance and public civility, with inner faith and outer expression. Rousseau deserves our attention because he is the European political

theorist best known for the manner in which he "reveals and celebrates the atomistic, autonomous self" (Gutman 1988: 100), an approach that is evident in his view that the "essential worship is that of the heart" (Rousseau 1979: 308). That his own life – like that of Hobbes and Locke – was characterized by overt political controversy (e.g., *Emile* [1762] was ordered burned by the French government and his own arrest was ordered; he escaped to Prussia; the government of Berne eventually ordered him out of its territory, etc.) likely has much to do with the manner in which the privacy of "religion" is used in his writings to create room within dominant groups for dissent. As might be expected, then, in writing *The Social Contract* (1762) he drew quite naturally on the same rhetorical techniques already found in other early-modern political theorists. For instance, Jesus, he observes,

> came to establish a spiritual kingdom on earth; this kingdom, by separating the theological system from the political, meant that the state ceased to be a unity, and it caused those intestine divisions which have never ceased to disturb Christian peoples. Now as the new idea of a kingdom of another world could never have entered the minds of pagans, they always regarded Christians as true rebels who, under the cloak of hypocritical submission, only awaited the moment to make themselves independent and supreme, and cunningly to usurp that authority which they made a show of respecting while they were weak. Such was the cause of their persecutions.
>
> What the pagans feared did indeed happen; then everything altered its countenance; the humble Christians changed their tune and soon the so-called kingdom of the other world was seen to become, under a visible ruler, the most violent despotism of this world.
>
> However, since princes and civil laws have always existed, the consequence of this dual power has been an endless conflict of jurisdiction, which has made any kind of good polity impossible in Christian states, where men have never known whether they ought to obey the civil ruler or the priest.
>
> (Book IV, ch. 8; 1982: 178–179)

Without sanctioning Rousseau's understanding of history or his theory of the rise of Christianity, we can still find merit in his observation concerning the practical work done by the Church/State split: without the internalization of conscience, an unending conflict will exist within populations comprised of subgroups with complex and competing interests. Yet marginal or emergent social formations have little choice but to utilize this distinction so as to carve out a zone in which to exist – making Matthew 22:21, "Then he said to them, 'Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's,'' a fascinating study in tactical, emergent social engineering.

Rousseau's understanding of "the spiritual kingdom" makes evident that the internalization of dissenting voices by means of spiritualization is well under way in his day as well.[10] "Of all Christian authors," he insightfully observes,

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"the philosopher Hobbes is the only one who saw clearly both the evil and the remedy, and who dared to propose reuniting the two heads of the eagle and fully restoring the political unity without which neither the state nor the government will ever be well constituted" (180). This remedy, as already demonstrated, was made possible by a romanticized sense of early Christianity wedded to a thoroughly individualist sociology where group membership was premised on unaccountable personal choice, taste, and preference – as in Locke's view of a church as "a voluntary society of men, joining themselves together of their own accord" (20) – a presumption we today find among U.S. rational choice theorists of religion. Or, as Rousseau phrased it,

> the religion of the private person, or Christianity, not the Christianity of today, but that of the Gospel, which is altogether different. Under this holy, sublime and true religion, men, as children of the same God, look on all others as brothers, and the society which unites them is not even dissolved in death.
>
> But this religion, having no specific connexion [*sic*] with the body politic, leaves the law with only the force the law itself possesses, adding nothing to it.
>
> (182)

This "religion of the private person" or what he also names "true religion" in distinction to the religion of the citizen and the religion of the priests, "has neither temples, nor altars, nor rites, and is confined to the purely internal cult of the supreme God and the eternal obligations of morality, is the religion of the Gospel pure and simple, the true theism, what may be called natural divine right or law." Making the private/public and spiritual/political binaries explicit, he concludes,

> Christianity is a wholly spiritual religion, concerned solely with the things of heaven; the Christian's homeland is not of this world. The Christian does his duty, it is true, but he does it with profound indifference towards the good or ill success of his deeds. Provided that he has nothing to reproach himself for, it does not matter to him whether all goes well or badly here on earth. If the state prospers, he hardly dares to enjoy the public happiness; he fears lest he become proud of his country's glory; if the state perishes, he blesses the hand of God that weighs heavily on His people.
>
> For such a society to be peaceful and for harmony to prevail, every citizen without exception would have to be an equally good Christian.
>
> (183)

His argument? Public peace depends upon the privatization, spiritualization, and thus the containment of existing dissent – a position eerily similar to

Salman Rushdie's previously quoted comments in *The New York Times* regarding the need for a Protestant-styled Reformation of Islam (Rushdie 2001).

Despite their political differences, like Rushdie today, Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau were political actors who effectively utilized the same rhetorical technique in their pursuit of a "civil" society wherein one group's interests are writ large in public and all others develop techniques of interiorization; all of these writers employ the private/public binary, or the religious/political binary, to ensure some sort of power sharing (imbalanced though it may be); although it is hardly an innocent technique, it does avoid, to some extent, the sort of physical coercion often employed when competing groups' practical and material interests collide. As Hill observes in his study of post-restoration England: "All dissenters came ultimately to accept partial freedom, *religious rather than political.* [I would add that, by means of precisely this distinction, and the countless practical implications felt throughout any society classified in this manner, the] ... English nation ceased to be coterminous with the Church of England" (emphasis added). He then goes on to conclude:

> After 1689 it was discovered that the existence of the two nations [i.e., the English Church and the English State] did not mean anarchy, or loss of government control. Once dissenters had accepted their position as a subordinate part of the nation, with freedom of religious worship at the expense of exclusion from central and local government and from the universities, a *modus vivendi* could be worked out. ... Dissenters, or most of them, now asked only to be left alone.
>
> (40)

Hill's conclusion deserves emphasis: "*Tolerance [e.g., the English Toleration Act of 1689] proved a more effective way of controlling dissent than persecution. ... [T]he breakdown of one type of authoritarianism tends to lead to the temporary victory of another authoritarianism*" (42).[11]

With all this in mind, we finally return from Europe to North America when, shortly after Rousseau penned *The Social Contract*, a bill was introduced, into the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia, entitled a "Bill Establishing a Provision for Teachers of the Christian Religion" (in 1784). Proposing tax support of such teachers, the bill was contested in the following session of the Assembly by James Madison who had written and distributed his "Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments." In his opening lines we find familiar words:

> The Religion then of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man; and it is the right of every man to exercise it as these may dictate. This right is in its nature an unalienable right. It is unalienable; because the opinions of men, depending only on the evidence contemplated by their own minds, cannot follow the dictates of other men.

> ... Before any man can be considered as a subject of Civil Society, he must be considered as a subject of the Governor of the Universe. ... We maintain therefore that in matters of Religion, no man's right is abridged by the institution of Civil Society and that Religion is wholly exempt from its cognizance.
>
> (Alley 1988: 18–19)

Prior to concluding that a spirit of extreme libertarianism was sweeping through Virginia, one must keep in mind that by "religion" Madison meant matters of private "conviction and conscience." This old distinction was again effective; the tax levy in support of Christian teachers was defeated, and the following year Thomas Jefferson introduced yet a new bill in the Assembly, "for establishing religious freedom." Predictably, it was passed. In that bill's preamble the rhetoric of opinion and principles appears once again:

> That to suffer the civil magistrate to intrude his powers into the field of opinion, and to restrain the profession or propagation of principles on supposition of their ill tendency, is a dangerous fallacy which at once destroys all liberty.

However, so-called civil society requires that this "liberty" not get out of hand – or, better put, not get out of mind and not call into question a specific form of constrained practice and organization. Therefore, Jefferson proceeds:

> that it is time enough for the rightful purposes of civil government for its officers to interfere *when principles break out into overt acts against peace and good order.*
>
> (1988: 352; emphasis added)

Or, as the U.S. Supreme Court has argued, "even when the action is in accord with one's religious convictions [it] is not totally free from legislative restrictions" (Alley 1988: 416). Apparently, what belongs to the Church is an idealistic phantom devoid of all behavioral content (apart from politically neutral "ritual" and "worship") and what belongs to the State are all matters material and empirical, e.g., matters social, economic, and political.

Although one could cite recent U.S. examples of Appalachian Pentecostals denied the right to handle snakes or Rastafarians punished for using ganja, one of the earliest examples of this rhetoric in use in a U.S. legal setting comes from a 1879 Supreme Court case, Reynolds v. United States, 98 (U.S.) 145. This case, brought against a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (i.e., a Mormon) and assistant to Brigham Young, involved a charge of polygamy (Alley 1988: 349–356). Despite demonstrating that "the members of the Church believed that the practice of polygamy was directly enjoined upon the male members by the Almighty God, in a revelation to Joseph Smith, the

founder and prophet of said Church," George Reynolds's conviction by the lower court was upheld by the higher court. "The only defense," read the higher court's majority opinion, "of the accused in this case is his belief that the law ought not to have been enacted [due to his action being prompted by his religious convictions]. *It matters not that his belief was a part of his professed religion: it was still belief and belief only*" (Alley 1988: 355; emphasis added).

Having contextualized the work of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, and having historicized more recent discourses on tolerance and rhetorics of interiority, quickly tracing them from their appearance in early-modern European political theory to their continued use in contemporary legal and scholarly work, we come to William Arnal's analysis, which has informed much of the preceding:

> one of the current political *effects* of this separation [of belief from practice and Church from State] – one of the political ends served currently by it – is the evisceration of substance, i.e., collective aims, from the state. That is to say, the simple positing of religion is a covert justification for the modern tendency of the state to frame itself in increasingly negative terms: the secular state is the institutional apparatus by which the social body *prevents* the incursion by others into the personal and various other goals of individuals, rather than being the means of achievement for common projects and the collective good.

Arnal goes on to conclude that "[t]his very definition of the modern democratic state in fact creates religion as its alter-ego: religion, as such, is the space in which and by which any substantive collective goals (salvation, righteousness, etc.) are individualized and made into a question of personal commitment or morality" (2000: 32). A practical example of the legacy of this powerful technique is found in a recent book on religious minorities in the U.S. in which the author, Eric Mazur, writes in the opening lines of the Preface:

> the fundamental victory that had been won for religious freedom in the debate over the Virginia Declaration of Rights, Article 16, written by George Mason to grant all "the fullest toleration in the exercise of religion," was amended by James Mason (with the help of Patrick Henry) to make all "equally entitled to the full and free exercise of religion."
>
> (1999: ix)

Contrary to Mazur, I would say than "the fundamental victory" was won for the State; by means of the rhetoric of tolerance it has successfully forged sociopolitical conformity (i.e., civility) since the seventeenth century. For by the time of the late twentieth century we now seem to take for granted that "religious freedom" and "the free exercise of religion," is a substantial, tangible thing that somehow trumps other sorts of freedoms. In seeing the distinction between

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the two phrasings he quotes as being between "granting someone permission *to do* something while reserving the right to later deny that permission," on the one hand, and "recognizing a person's inherent right *to do* something whether you like it or not" (ix; emphasis added), Mazur seems to have accepted a tightly constrained and circumscribed zone of "human doing" (i.e., the freedom to adopt certain rituals and forms of worship) that was offered to the seventeenth-century's English dissenters – those who, to recall Hill on this point, accepted "partial freedom" to meet privately to practice rituals at the expense of their ability to participate openly in other forms of public life.

To rephrase: I have no doubt that Mazur understands that the freedom "to do" that he is celebrating has obvious practical limits to it that are highly policed. After all, as he acknowledges, "we must remember that the task of American constitutional order is to provide religious freedom while preserving itself [i.e., American constitutional order]. … There are limits on religious freedom, limits of which we are constantly reminded by constitutional order itself" (142). That some small, and tightly controlled, degree of freedom "to do" does exist is, of course, nothing to sneeze at, especially if you are a citizen of a liberal nation-state and also a member of such sub-communities as those called the Mormon Church, the Church of Scientology, Jehovah's Witnesses, Santeria, Neo-Paganism, a member of the Communist party, an anarchist, or a practitioner of vodoun, a Native American attempting to use peyote, and a Rastafarian attempting to use ganja. So of course I would agree with authors such as Helena Kennedy, when she writes: "Tolerance has a pivotal role in helping to define and realise [*sic*] so many freedoms within our society" (2000: 117); my fear is that in rushing to celebrate, enjoy, and extend these so-called realized freedoms, we too easily overlook the manner in which these so-called freedoms have been defined, to whose benefit their definition contributes, and the manner in which they are almost invisibly policed. For, by joining liberal commentators and focusing only on how to extend these freedoms to yet new groups we miss the contributions to be made to critical analysis by those who reconstruct the histories of, and the roles played by, these freedoms. In other words, discourses on protecting, extending, or limiting, religious freedoms are part of the policing activity of nation formation, whether carried out in a liberal or conservative fashion. For to focus on these – just these and only these – types of actions and ways of organizing, as if "worship" exhausted the sorts of behaviors that can conceivably fall under "the inherent right to do" that is *allowed* by the Constitution, means that one leaves unidentified the practical, historical constraints on forms of doing and ways of organizing necessary for any nation-state to reproduce itself smoothly and successfully.

In a world of such massive practical difference, I find it productive to understand the current preoccupation in social democracies with religious freedoms and tolerance to be an instance of what Michael Ignatieff, following Sigmund Freud's lead, has characterized as "the narcissism of minor difference" (Ignatieff 2000: 100). As Freud wrote in a paper delivered to the Vienna Psycho-Analytic Society in December of 1917, and first published the following year:

> it is precisely the minor differences in people who are otherwise alike that form the basis of feelings of strangeness and hostility between them. It would be tempting to pursue this idea and to derive from this 'narcissism of minor differences' the hostility which in every human relation we see fighting against feelings of fellowship and overpowering the commandment that all men should love one another.
>
> (1964: 199)[12]

The status of the commandment notwithstanding, this technique is handy for distracting attention away from observable similarity and need and reproducing various competing sub-group identities by limiting debates to discourses on essentialized, interiorized, and minor variance. As Ignatieff comments with regard to debates on race – that "relatively minor difference" between humans based on observable skin color – "[e]conomic differences within groups of identical skin colour [*sic*] can be much more decisive in determining the life chances of individuals than differences between racial groups" (100). To make his point he draws on the example of Marxist organizers in the U.S. south who, between the 1930s and the 1960s, attempted to shift the debate from separate racial identity to shared class interests. Such a shift, they reasoned, would assist southern working-class whites *and* blacks, who shared far more than what seemed to distinguish them, to organize and thus change the material conditions of their collective lives. Such a shift did not take place, however, and despite obviously important and groundbreaking changes taking place in race relations in the U.S. over the past forty years, dramatic economic disparities have increased between lower classes of all races and regions, on the one hand, and a relatively small number of U.S. cultural, political, and economic elites, still largely comprised of white males, on the other.

If one can argue that the preoccupation with racial identity – a presumed inner, even biologically based experience manifested externally by means of differing skin colors, cuisines, styles of dress, ways of speaking and acting, etc. – helps to reproduce a practical status quo, then how much more effective is the preoccupation with differences and similarities between various groups' speculations on the existence of invisible beings and their speculations on the meaning of the universe? For, by celebrating, extending, and drawing attention to the freedom of religious belief and practices, one effectively shifts attention from the countless other sites where conformity of behavior and organization, not to mention the maintenance of dramatic material disparities, are crucial for reproducing the material conditions that make the idea of the State possible and persuasive. Simply put, celebrating the freedom of ritual practice (a celebration we find prominent within the industrialized, social democracies, systems where much depends on the smooth reproduction of disparity) is a sleight of hand whereby groups focus on a small, virtually ineffectual part as if it were the productive Whole, failing to understand "freedom" not to be an absolute, ahistoric value but part of a discourse shaped by a larger grammar of conformity and control.

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This is why I find discourses on religion, the freedom of religion, and tolerance to be so interesting for, in agreement with Hill, such techniques "proved a more effective way of controlling dissent than persecution."[13] Today, as the inheritors of this rhetoric, and the social world it has made possible, we perceive ourselves to be fulfilled, individual members of some of the most successfully and widely reproducible social formations the world has yet seen, celebrating our "God-given freedom" to believe whatever we like. Yet we exist within powerful infrastructures that prompt us to maintain a startling conformity of behavior and social expectation – everything from our unprompted ability to stand patiently in orderly, straight lines outside movie theaters, to our unquestioned willingness to work all our lives to pay mortgages in order to own private property.

So, when discussing the politics of "religion" we implicitly are discussing pairs of concepts, such as sacred/secular, that in themselves are meaningless but which, when held in varying degrees of tension, make worlds possible insomuch as they provide spaces in which contestability can (and cannot) take place. That the distance between these so-called metaphysical concepts is slippery and that the spaces they make possible are inherently negotiable means that specific rhetorical instances of these pairings are artifacts of specific political moments, recoverable by means of a genealogy (I think here of Alles [2001] study of "the holy" in the work of Otto). As Tim Fitzgerald has most recently phrased it, with regard to the modern sacred/secular pairing:

> This conceptual separation was a product of the struggle of new classes against the restrictions imposed by the church [understood, here, not as a religious institution but simply as one more institution vying for control], its unaccountability, and its control of thought and action. Only by defining in a new way the realm of the "religious" and the realm of the "secular" could the separation of church and state be achieved and a bourgeois civil society be developed. ... It amounts, in effect, to the replacement of one ideological system by another.
>
> (2001: 111)

As Fitzgerald goes on to conclude, "the religion-secular distinction is the new ideological system in which the principles expressed by 'no taxation without representation' are central and definitive. ... [W]e cannot research 'religion' as though it were something distinct from, or independent of, the central democratic capitalist principles" (111).

But conceiving of piety and private religion as "something distinct from" certain forms of public political practice is crucial for this unifying rhetoric's effective displacement of dissent. One of the more useful, recent examples of how this is achieved is Rousseau's often cited notion of civil religion (see *The Social Contract*, Book IV, ch. 8; Rousseau 1982: 176–187), especially as it was re-popularized in the late 1960s by the U.S. sociologist, Robert Bellah (1967).

Reminiscent of some of Eliade's defenders, who coin such suspect neologisms as "non-political nationalism" or "messianic nationalism" in their attempts to minimalize his obvious political rhetorics and involvements, Bellah took what many historians would simply understand as a routine form of nationalist rhetoric (e.g., references to God in U.S. Presidential inaugural speeches) and retooled it as the much more palatable "civil religion" – the expression of a general, inner conviction shared among members of a nation, manifested in state pomp and circumstance, and the means whereby civil society and public virtue are instilled and ensured. Predictably, I cannot see historians of nationalism finding this category to provide them with anything new to study – unless, of course, they turned their attention to study civil religion theorists as nationalist propagandists – making oddly appropriate Bellah's own observation that the notion of civil religion "turned out to be far more tendentious and provocative than I at first realized" (1978: 16). It is tendentious indeed, in the direction of promoting, by means of aestheticization, a particular brand of U.S. nationalism. It is provocative to the degree that no one seems to have caught on that this so-called descriptive term is fueled by a specific political rhetoric. For, insofar as this category has now been applied in the analysis of cultures worldwide, we could go so far as to identify a particular brand of "global religious republicanism that he [Bellah] identifies with the destiny of American religion itself" (Kelly 1984: 225).

I therefore assume that political theorists and scholars of nationalism would find this term to be an instance of obscurantism – insomuch as it spiritualizes what are all too obviously political concerns – thus finding its use as but one more site of nationalist rhetoric deserving of study. For example, in attempting to distinguish civil religion from the sort of political chauvinism he associates with outright nationalism (i.e., national self-worship, as he might have phrased it), Bellah asserts – for how would one persuasively argue the following thesis? – that civil religion *at its best* comprises

> a genuine apprehension of universal and transcendent religious reality as seen in or, one could almost say, as revealed through the experience of the American people. Like all religions, it has suffered deformations and demonic distortions. At its best, it has neither been so general that it has lacked incisive relevance to the American scene nor so particular that it has placed American society above universal human values.
>
> (1990: 179–180)

Or, as phrased by Michael Novak, not long after Bellah first penned these words in 1970, civil religion is

> a public perception of our national experience, in the light of universal and transcendent claims upon human beings, but especially Americans; a set of

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> values, symbols, and rituals institutionalized as the cohesive force and center of meaning uniting our many peoples.
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> (1974: 127)

In asserting that civil religion, "at its best," is a chosen people's genuine apprehension of a religious reality, an experience of national cohesiveness in step with universal human values, Bellah's and Novack's circular logic and normative claims beg the very questions that other scholars seek to answer. In other words, whereas such writers are captivated with answering questions concerning the role of religion in U.S. society (e.g., Bellah 1987), we could instead problematize this brand of scholarship and ask what is the practical role played by this rhetoric of religion as something "universal" and "transcendent," and thus distinct from (and at times deformed and distorted by) the messy world of history and politics?

Just as "patriotism" is the way in which we consume our own domestic nationalism,[14] so too "civil religion" – or even what Benjamin Franklin, in 1749, had called "Publik Religion" (1961: vol. 3, 433) and, one hundred and ten years later, what Martin Marty had called "religion-in-general" (1959: 32, 86) – is an effective tool not only for "joining the unchurched to the religiously subscribed in a lexicon of meanings" (as described by Kelly 1984: 223), but, in doing so, for domesticating one form of active and public political talk and action, lending it an air of inevitability, piety, sanctity, and placing it above so-called petty, partisan politics and thus beyond any form of effective critique or commentary. It is therefore a technique useful for authorizing and deauthorizing alike. Take, for example, the uncredited entry on "civil religion" in the *HarperCollins Dictionary of Religion*: while acknowledging that it refers to "the set of religious or quasi-religious beliefs, myths, symbols, and ceremonies that unite a political community and that mobilize its members in the pursuit of common goals" (Smith, Green 1995: 274), the article ensures that readers understand this obvious nation-building technique to be clearly distinguished from the messy world of power politics. By briefly canvassing scholarly opinion on the *morality* of the thing this category supposedly allows us to study – "Scholars remain divided on the religious and moral significance of civil religions" – the writer unwittingly demonstrates the political utility of this way of classifying what, in virtually any other context, we would have no difficulty understanding as overt political action.[15] It thus enables its users to organize all the more effectively, for while recognizing that they are actively engaged in "unit[ing] a political community and ... mobiliz[ing] its members in the pursuit of common goals" they are able to segregate these overt political practices within the realm of emotion, morality, piety, and belief. This wonderfully effective depoliticization of politics is all the more apparent in the closing lines of the dictionary entry: "Although subject to abuse," the writer comments, "they [civil religions] can inspire positive national accomplishments, contain sources of moral judgment, and serve to correct nationalistic pretension." Once again, a

certain form of political action is made possible by distinguishing public from private, contestable from incontestable, allowing us exclusively to understand and value certain forms of public action and organization by means of interiorist rhetorics (e.g., morality). Immersed in this binary rhetoric it never dawns on those who employ this category that classifying overtly political practice as merely a civil religion is itself the height of "nationalistic pretension." Thus, the very classification "civil religion," much like "religion" itself, is what Eric Hobsbawm might have called a "powerful assimilating mechanism" (1992: 280).

Be clear, however, on the following point: in making this critique of "civil religion" I am not aligning myself with such critics as George Kelly who lament the role liberal scholars such as Bellah have played in watering down the impact of religion (by watering down religion itself) in recent U.S. politics. Instead, I press such critics even further; for when Kelly writes that "the genius of our civilization is in holding the two [i.e., the realms of religion and politics] distinct," (1984: 242), I fear he assumes some substantive or ontological distinction between these two spheres of human experience and action. Instead, echoing the epigraph from Foucault that opened this chapter, I would contend that the genius of our particular form of civilization is in its (our) ability to persuade its members (ourselves and our peers) that there are in fact two distinct zones, one of experience and insight and the other of action and organization. Socrates's mission is indeed useful for the city.

Whether intended or not, such different figures as Rousseau and the U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower both seem to have understood the political utility that resulted from this dichotomous system. The former went on at great length concerning the political utility of a vague set of private beliefs in non-empirical matters. "Now, it is very important," he observed,

> to the state that each citizen should have a religion which makes him love his duty, but the dogmas of that religion are of interest neither to the state nor its members, except in so far as those dogmas concern morals and the duties which everyone who professes that religion is bound to perform towards others. Moreover, everyone may hold whatever opinions he pleases, without the sovereign having any business to take cognizance of them. For the sovereign has no competence in the other world; whatever may be the fate of the subjects in the life to come, it is nothing to do with the sovereign, *so long as they are good citizens in this life*.
>
> (Book IV, ch. 8; 1982: 185–186)

"The dogmas of civil religion," Rousseau concludes,

> must be simple and few in number, expressed precisely and without explanations or commentaries. The existence of an omnipotent, intelligent, benevolent divinity that foresees and provides; the life to come; the happiness of the just; the punishment of sinners; the sanctity of the social

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> contract and the law – these are the positive dogmas. As for the negative dogmas, I would limit them to a single one: no intolerance. Intolerance is something which belongs to the religions we have rejected. … [A]ll religions which themselves tolerate others must be tolerated, provided only that their dogmas contain nothing contrary to the duties of the citizen.
>
> (186–187)

Or, as Eisenhower far more succinctly observed: "Our government makes no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith – and I don't care what it is" (cited in Herberg 1955: 97). This is an astute judgment, not because civil government requires the sort of intrinsically ethical basis provided by deeply felt religious values (as I am sure Eisenhower meant) but, given the critique of this chapter, it is an astute observation because uniform behavioral and organizational systems (i.e., form) are possible only when the inevitable contradictions, competing interests, and outright dissent (i.e., varying contents) that exist in any social group have a place to go – a very deep, emotive and *non*-performative place. That place we have come to call "religion," "faith," "spirituality," "conscience," and even "Human Nature." A similar argument could likely be made for all aspects of modern identity politics (i.e., discourses that presume an essential, inner, shared identity based on gender, ethnicity, culture, sexuality, etc.).

So, to answer Alan Wolfe's rhetorical question, "Are we better off when religion is as broad, but also as thin, as the kinds of faith one finds on American college campuses today?" (2002: B10), one can answer that *it all depends who his faithful "we" signifies*. If it signifies an as yet undomesticated minority group, then they certainly can use this technique to their practical advantage, to domesticate themselves while bringing along with them certain social markers of relative distinctiveness, ensuring a small but nonetheless important degree of autonomy by means of appeals to their specifically "religious" or "cultural" or "ethnic" heritage, embodied in a small but, to the group, significant number of cuisines, dietary regulations, styles of dress, greeting rituals, private ceremonials, dialects, hair styles, etc. (A case in point is the late 1980s and early 1990s trials over the practice of Santeria in Hialeah, Florida, in which the sacrifice of chickens was unsuccessfully contested by the city council [see Mazur 1999: 1–4].) If this "we" refers to an integrated yet nonetheless marginalized group whose members seek to organize to effect practical change so as to integrate themselves further into the status quo, then (just as with dominant groups which also employ this rhetoric) "religion" can be a powerful organizing technique to authorize and universalize some set of specific, local interests. Thus, contests over such admittedly important yet nonetheless local issues as higher wages or the right to participate fully in the institutions of a representative democracy (thus, ironically perhaps, further reinforcing the institutions of the nation-state, rather than contesting them or exempting oneself from them entirely) take on the significance of epic battles in which the local stakes, gains,

and losses are writ large on the canvas of the universe itself. "Sin," "suffering," "punishment," "liberation," and "redemption" then become some of the rhetorical markers that help such groups to organize and sustain their movements.

The opposite case would be some posited, oppositional "we" that seeks not integration but outright contestation with dominant principles and practices. In this case, the interiorized space made possible by the discourse on faith can be just as important a technique for organizing and authorizing practical action. For example, consider the writings of the onetime Egyptian public schools inspector, Sayyid Qutb (b. 1906), who published his little book *Milestones* (also entitled in English *Signposts along the Road*) in 1964, after having lived in the U.S. from 1948 to 1950 (on an Egyptian Education Ministry grant).[16] Having seen firsthand the "bankruptcy of the West," his opening line makes his premise clear: "Mankind today is on the brink of a precipice ... because humanity is devoid of those vital values for its healthy development and real progress." With this starting point, he goes on to outline a political program of action based on (i) restoring Islam to its "original" form (since it is now "buried under the debris of the man-made traditions of several generations" [Qutb 1993: 7]) and, then, (ii) saving civilization ("Islam is the only system that possesses these values and this way of life [i.e., ideals and values "previously unknown in the West, that can restore harmony to human nature"]" [6]). Of specific interest is the third chapter, where we read that, although this program for "restoring harmony to human nature" is rooted in a faith (8) and a belief (138), it must be realized in an explicitly political program (i.e., "a way of life"):

> The Muslim society cannot come into existence ... simply as a creed in the hearts of individual Muslims, however numerous they may be, unless they become an active, harmonious, and cooperative group, distinct by itself, whose different elements, like the limbs of a human body, work together for the support, and expansion, and for the defense against all those elements that attack its system.
>
> (40)

There is a deep irony here, for as I understand the Protestant Reformation, this was what in fact was accomplished there: a coordinated rhetoric of pristine social origins, textual meanings, and interior faith was successfully used to organize overt political action that made it possible for disconnected authorities at different governmental levels, all across Europe, to oppose the centuries of accumulated "debris of man-made traditions" (in this case Roman Catholic) and exert new forms of control over reorganized lands, wealth, and people.

As Sheldon Wolin describes it, in the case of John Calvin's Protestantism, "it was nothing less than a comprehensive statement covering the major elements of a political theory" (1960: 179). However, unable to look past the different, even apparently contradictory content (i.e., Christian vs. Muslim doctrines), commentators seem incapable of seeing how political rhetorics such as, for

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example, Calvin's and Qutb's employ the very same techniques of contestation and organization (for different but equally political ends, of course). As phrased by Roxanne Euben,

> the rationalist categories that dominate current social scientific scholarship on Islamic fundamentalism are particularly problematic because the more our stories about politics – about authority and what constitutes legitimate political action – are wedded to a rationalist epistemology [that distinguishes rationality/irrationality, belief/practice, private/public, etc.], the more difficulty we may have in compassing the significance of practices and ideas guided by and defined in terms of belief in divine truths unknowable by purely human means.
>
> (1999: 51)

Subscribing to just such an epistemology, Rushdie's advocacy for a Protestant-styled Reformation in Islam, is certainly not recommending Qutb's plan. Instead, such overt action is no doubt an example for liberal commentators of how "a faith" is co-opted by radicals who are conceited enough to think that they too know how the world ought to be organized. That the complex and often violent events we have come to know as the Protestant Reformation can now be so widely understood simply to have been an interiorized doctrinal dispute between the faithful – begun, or so the old story tells us, by a lone free-thinker nailing his bold theses to the church door – indicates just how successful some of these political techniques are for realigning power and privilege. Only the naive would fail to see them still in use today.

Of course, advocating oppositional organization and overt political action that takes place well outside of people's private "hearts and minds" (as outlined more concretely in the "call to arms" contained in the last four chapters of *Milestones*) is a dangerous form of speech for it runs counter to a depoliticized Islam-of-the-heart. Little wonder, then, that soon after its publication, *Milestones* was banned and "was considered grounds to indict its author for conspiring against the ruling ideology and system of government" (as phrased in Ahmad Hammad's foreword to the English edition of Qutb's text that I am using). That Qutb was arrested and then executed by Nasser's government in the summer of 1966 – ironically, perhaps, a government he had once supported – is thus hardly surprising (regardless whether one agrees or disagrees with his views). Given this, that he is today seen by many to be "perhaps the most influential thinker for the religio-political insurgency of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, and for Sunni Islamic fundamentalism more broadly" (Euben 1999: 53–55), should then also come as no surprise.

To return to answering Wolfe's question, if his "we" signifies the members of a thoroughly integrated, dominant group, then although the use of the suitably vague and interiorist rhetoric of religion necessitates that members of this group not physically coerce others and force their local practices on their equally

provincial peers, the efficiency by means of which privatization declaws actual dissent does pave the way toward the successful reproduction of an uncontested hegemonic status. It thus ensures that their one local picture of the world easily stands in for a "matter of fact" in opposition to the many competing, "mere opinions" that comprise the necessary background noise and color of dominant social life. As many others have noted before me, I have in mind the accepted but necessarily marginal status of colorful "ethnic" styles of dress and spicy "ethnic" foods that greatly help to naturalize and normalize the dominant and apparently non-ethnic (i.e., default) culture. After all, "white" or Anglo-Saxon (or whatever one calls it), food is hardly considered "ethnic" and whereas the U.S. "South" has widely recognized and much heralded southern food (with significant regional [e.g., Cajun] and racial [e.g., soul food] differences in various types of southern cuisines), I cannot for the life of me think what "northern food" would signify in the U.S.

The disciplinary rhetoric of religion, then, is ideological in Kenneth Burke's sense, for, like all discourses, it comprises "an aggregate of beliefs sufficiently at odds with one another to justify [and thus contain] opposite kinds of conduct" (1968: 163).[17] For example, as demonstrated by Eddie Glaude Jr., the Biblical narrative has historically been used very differently by U.S. whites and U.S. African-Americans; whereas members of the former drew heavily on the notion of the U.S. as the New Israel, members of the latter group found far more useful the imagery of the Egyptian captivity. "Here we have an example," he writes, recalling Burke's notion of ideology, "of how battles are waged within ideologies, drawing on the same language [and rhetorical techniques, we might add] for quite different ends" (forthcoming; see also Glaude 2000). And this internal "divide and conquer" contestation is very useful to one idea of the State and those whose specific interests are writ large across it, for, in the words of the politically liberal Pew Charitable Trusts, which in 2001 awarded twelve grants totaling over twenty million dollars under the aegis of its religion program, "we believe that civil society is strengthened and democracy bolstered when citizens develop an appreciation of the various religious traditions that hold deep meaning for so many Americans."[18] I agree; specific "we"s do benefit from rhetorics of deep meanings, but they all benefit in rather different ways and to significantly different degrees.

"Religion" – whether it is seen as a private feeling to be experienced, and then expressed by the subject, an inner faith that informs and propels ethical action, or the unseen source from which supposedly moral or authentic public action and organization originates – may very well be among the most important modern technologies of manageable selves/groups. Rephrasing Mazur's book title, what is fascinating is thus not so much the Americanization of religious minorities, but instead, that the socio-political process he refers to as "Americanization" might better refer to the successful technique of containing competing minority differences and potential dissent within the self-policed and inviolable sphere of "religion." This is simply the most recent

phase of what, from the sixteenth-century on, has been the practice of making specifically *religious* minorities, groups defined and controlled by means of an inner preoccupation with the life of the spirit. In return for the right to exist on the margins of power these groups' members have little choice but to manufacture a toothless public persona in their struggle to reproduce a non-threatening version of themselves in an alien environment. Although he theorized on the social and psychological role played by those social institutions he presumed were obviously religions – suggesting there is considerable distance between his theory and that which is being offered here – I believe Freud was onto something, but only if we use his work instead to discuss the role played by the concept religion itself. "The outcome of the struggle," he wrote in 1928, with regard to a revelatory dream told to him in a letter written by a U.S. academic, "was displayed once again in the sphere of religion" (1952: 246). The recent trend in the U.S. to reporting that one is "spiritual" and not "religious" (a distinction comparable to Martin Luther's rhetoric of *sola scriptura* vs. the institutions and hierarchy of the Church) may very well indicate that an even more privatized sphere of display has been developing, a development in step with the public triumphs of late capitalism, poised on the brink of globalization. The outcome of the practical struggles and contests that are already taking place across a shrinking globe will likely be displayed and displaced in the sphere created by "religion" as much as "spirituality."

Harkening back to the epigraph from Foucault that opened this final chapter, this modernist discourse on religion, faith, and spirit is but another way of "teaching people to occupy themselves with themselves," which in turn "teaches them to occupy themselves with the city." Or, as Chomsky was quoted in one of the two epigraphs that opened this book: "[t]he beauty of our society is: it isolates everybody." This suggests, then, that the scholars and ideological managers who casually wield and apply such classifications play an essential role as caretakers for both the governable self and the city insomuch as the very use of these classifications disciplines what is all too public and thus contestable, ensuring that portions of it become private and isolated within a politico-legal fiction: the impenetrable citadel of the heart and mind. Perhaps this means that our scholarship on religion – as opposed to our thoroughly historically grounded scholarship on the discourse of religion – is more an exercise in conflict management and self-help than it is a bold analytic activity.

My hope is that there is more to do than just care for a particular idea of the city, an idea that requires us to mis-perceive one province as if it were the metropolis. The critique that has slowly built throughout the preceding chapters holds out a model for a rather different sort of intellectual, those who happen to use "religion" in their studies of social formations. For, following Foucault, I maintain that "[t]he role of an intellectual is not to tell others what they have to do. By what right would he do so?" As he goes on to conclude, and, borrowing his words, as I now conclude as well:

> The work of an intellectual is not to shape others' political will; it is, through the analyses that he carries out in his own field, to question over and over again what is postulated as self-evident, to disturb people's mental habits, the way they do and think things, to dissipate what is familiar and accepted, to reexamine rules and institutions and on the basis of this re-problematization (in which he carries out his specific task as an intellectual) to participate in the formation of a political will (in which he has his role as citizen to play).
>
> (Foucault 1988a: 265)

Notes

1 The early work of Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1963) cannot go unnoticed when discussing the history of the category "religion."

2 It is understandable that some can read Foucault otherwise. A few pages later, speculating on the reasons that prompted the institutionalization of sex by means of the discourse on sexuality, he writes: "What was at issue in these strategies? A struggle against sexuality? Or were they part of an effort to gain control of it? An attempt to regulate it more effectively and mask its more indiscreet, conspicuous, and intractable aspects?" (1990: 105). His repeated use of the pronoun "it" in the preceding suggests that behind the discourse on sexuality there lurks some more real thing: sex. Applying this to religion, it is conceivable that liberal theologians and humanists alike can use Foucault to recover what they maintain to be a deeper, essential nature to religion that eludes reductionists, whom they equate with those who seek to control the essentially creative and free force of religion *cum* spirituality. Reading Foucault in this manner, however, is a convenient sidestep around the issue, since apart from various discourses on sex, and the various institutions from which they arise and to which they contribute, there is only human beings behaving. Likewise, apart from various discourses on religion and their institutions, there is simply human beings behaving.

3 I identify his work as influenced by Cantwell Smith because Smith's nearly 40-year-old book, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, is the only work on "religion" that Idinopulos cites (see 9, n. 18). This is not to say that newer works are somehow more valuable; however, I cannot see how anyone can discuss the historicity of "religion" without taking into account Jonathan Z. Smith's many contributions to this topic, contributions consistently made over the past twenty years.

4 For example, during a recent lecture at the University of Alabama on integrating web technologies into classroom teaching, Natalie Gummer of Beloit College showed her audience a site devoted to a series of web links, developed by her students, for sites devoted to the religions of the world. In the brief abstract describing a site devoted to the Vatican, the student had written that the Vatican was the "worldwide headquarters" of the Roman Catholic church. Whether intended by the student or not, classifying the Vatican as "headquarters" immediately took it out of its usually religious and apolitical realm and dropped it squarely in the middle of the world of international politics, business, and military activity. The question to be asked is why it sounds odd to classify the Vatican as the headquarters? What set of values, and what social world, is being challenged by using this term? And what set of values and social world are reproduced when labeling it in some other way?

5 My thanks to Pam Sailors, of the Department of Philosophy at Southwest Missouri State University, for helpful comments on Hobbes.

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peated use of the pronoun "it" in the
e on sexuality there lurks some more real
conceivable that liberal theologians and
ver what they maintain to be a deeper,
uctionists, whom they equate with those
and free force of religion *cum* spirituality.
is a convenient sidestep around the issue,
, and the various institutions from which
, there is only human beings behaving.
religion and their institutions, there is

ell Smith because Smith's nearly 40-year-
ion, is the only work on "religion" that
o say that newer works are somehow more
ne can discuss the historicity of "religion"
Smith's many contributions to this topic,
ast twenty years.
he University of Alabama on integrating
ng, Natalie Gummer of Beloit College
a series of web links, developed by her
ons of the world. In the brief abstract
the student had written that the Vatican
the Roman Catholic church. Whether
g the Vatican as "headquarters" immedi-
d apolitical realm and dropped it squarely
al politics, business, and military activity.
s odd to classify the Vatican as the head-
ial world, is being challenged by using this
world are reproduced when labeling it in

nent of Philosophy at Southwest Missouri
Hobbes.

6 Such a shift allows us to see analyses based solely on doctrine as simply the descriptive level in need of historicization. For example, Tracy (1999) has three separate sections to his study of Europe from 1450 to 1650: doctrine, politics, and society and community. Reading such a work by means of the shift I am advocating breaks down this division of intellectual labor, so that doctrine is but one means whereby political contests are waged.

7 "A letter concerning toleration," published in 1689; eventually three rejoinders were to appear, the last of which was published after Locke's death.

8 The chapters in this edited volume, originally published by Edinburgh University Press in 1999, are a collection of addresses (delivered publicly between 1988 and 1998) from the University of York's Morrell Trust annual lectureship on toleration as a philosophical concept.

9 For instance, he has little choice but to discuss such things as "overtly religious conflicts such as the Crusades, the Muslim conquests, and the Wars of Religion" (156) as if the rhetoric of destiny and divinity that propelled such early geo-political conflicts was the substantial issue over which groups were fighting, rather than the widely accessible technique whereby practical interests were encoded, communicated, and normalized.

10 Despite asserting the existence of a spiritual kingdom, in footnote 44 in this same chapter Rousseau shows ample evidence that he was able to generate a social theory of seemingly religious offices – at least those offices with which he disagreed.

> It should be noted that the clergy find their bond of union not so much in formal assemblies, as in the communion of Churches. Communion and excommunication are the social compact of the clergy, a compact which will always make them masters of peoples and kings. All priests who communicate together are fellow-citizens, even if they come from opposite ends of the earth. This invention is a masterpiece of statesmanship: there is nothing like it among pagan priests; who have therefore never formed a clerical corporate body.

Although employing the private/public distinction for his own ends, Rousseau has much in common with contemporary scholars intent on historicizing so-called spiritual claims. In the above quotation he makes it clear that he can discuss communion and excommunication divorced from the theological manner in which devotees themselves discuss these rituals.

11 As was evident in my earlier use of Hill's work, to a degree he seems to vacillate on whether religion is in fact distinct from politics (or, as argued throughout the preceding chapters of this book, simply a specific form of political rhetoric) and whether discourses on toleration are purely political (or, as many liberal scholars of religion seem to maintain, have a morally superior aspect to them). For example, in the sentence that follows the one just quoted, and which ends his essay, he writes, "Only when both sides have exhausted themselves can the possibility of *neither* winning outright be grasped, and the small voice of reason make itself heard" (42). Given his essay's attempt to problematize what others take to be the apparent common sense and inner momentum to discourses on tolerance, this line's emphasis on "the small voice of reason" undermines his thesis that discourses on tolerance are at their heart political techniques.

12 As noted by the *Standard Edition*'s editor, Freud takes up this theme once again in his 1921 essay, "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego" and in the fifth chapter of *Civilization and its Discontents*.

13 To be fair, Mazur correctly identifies the limits of tolerance, as in when he concludes that there are indeed problems in store for "those communities whose worldviews cannot accommodate the ultimate authority of an increasingly non-religiously iden-

tified federal government. Those religious communities whose ideologies conform to – or do not threaten – the temporal and spatial ideology of the constitutional order will find the means to avoid continued conflict with it" (143). However, seeing the federal government as increasingly non-religious suggests his insight as to the practical limits of tolerance is different from the one argued in this chapter.

14 I have yet to find a persuasive means to distinguish these two, since the very distinction seems a nationalist technique. For example, despite the usefulness of some of his work on the politics of tolerance, Ignatieff attempts to distinguish patriotism from nationalism insomuch as the former is the tolerant form whereas the latter is intolerant. However, if discourses on tolerance are, by definition, necessarily intolerant at key though usually undisclosed points (thus collapsing the normally understood distinction between these two), then any further distinctions premised on the substantive difference between tolerance and intolerance are also doomed to collapse. This is apparent when Ignatieff then goes on to write: "The intense love of country one meets with in the United States, or occasionally in Britain *in time of war*, is more properly called patriotism than nationalism. As an uncontested emotion, patriotism can be, though it is not always, *free of intolerant aggression towards other nations or peoples*" (86; emphasis added). If going to war is not an example of "intolerant aggression towards other nations or people," then I'm not sure what is; therefore, despite Ignatieff's best efforts, patriotism ends up being indistinguishable from nationalism.

15 I recall Amy Dockser Marcus, former Middle East correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal* writing in the "International News" section of the Toronto *Globe & Mail* on October 4, 1996, a survey of the conflict over the city of Hebron, or al Khalil as it is known to its mostly Palestinian inhabitants (see also Marcus 2000). After detailing the conflicting Palestinian and Israeli claims concerning their legitimacy to control the city – claims which in both cases were propelled by religious rhetorics steeped in references to the ancient Canaanites and Abraham – she quotes an Arab archeologist who says flatly, "This is about nation-building." As I recall, when I first read this I laughed because in 1992 the supporters of the then U.S. Presidential candidate, Bill Clinton, had used the phrase, "It's the economy, stupid," as their slogan. Unlike many scholars of religion who persist in studying the so-called sacred or transcendent themes of this or that event, I thought to myself, "It's nation-building, stupid," was something that this archeologist astutely understood.

16 My thanks to Bruce Lincoln for sharing with me an early version of the first chapter to his *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11* (2002b), for bringing Qutb's work to my attention, and suggesting other sources.

17 I am indebted to an unpublished article of Eddie Glaude's for bringing Burke's understanding of ideology to my attention (see Glaude forthcoming).

18 See http://www.pewtrusts.com/grants/grants_item.cfm?image=img3&program_area_id=7.